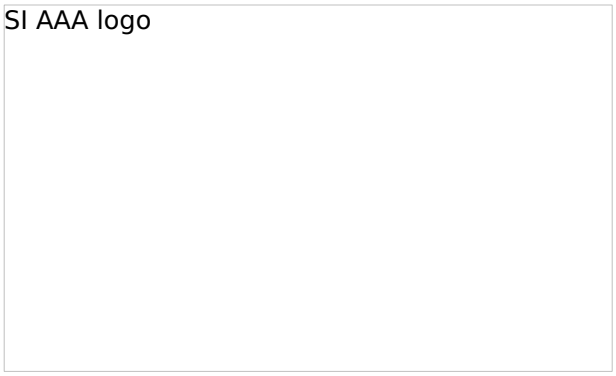

Oral history interview with Mark Klett, 2010 Dec. 10-11

Funding for this interview was provided by the Brown Foundation.

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Transcript

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Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Mark Klett on 2010 December 10 and 11. The interview took place at Klett's home and studio in Tempe, AZ, and was conducted by Robert Silberman for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Mark Klett reviewed the transcript in 2021. His corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

ROBERT SILBERMAN: This is Robert Silberman interviewing Mark Klett at Mark Klett's home in Phoenix, Arizona, on December 10, 2010, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number one.

MARK KLETT: Actually it's Tempe, Arizona, but that's all right.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Tempe, to be accurate.

Well, let's begin at the beginning, Mark . Where—when and where were you born?

MARK KLETT: I was born in Albany, New York, and it was September 9, 1952.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: And your childhood and your parents and upbringing?

MARK KLETT: Yeah, I was raised in—outside of Albany, New York . We lived in a—well, at first, a little town called Slingerland—no it was called—no it was Delmar, eventually town of Bethlehem . Then I grew in the town of Delmar, southwest of Albany.

My parents—my father grew up on the Hudson River, south of Albany, so that was his childhood home . My mother grew up in California, in the Central Valley of California about 50 miles from Fresno—a little town called Dos Palos . And my dad and my mom met in World War II, when he was teaching flying in that area.

When I was about two years old, we moved to California, to Fresno, but we only stayed about a year or so . My dad got in an accident and was laid up for a while . He was a pilot, and at that time, he was trying to make another career change, got in an accident, and it didn't work for them financially, so he came back to New York state, and that's where we eventually stayed.

So I grew up there with—I have a brother and sister . I have an older brother, Nick, who is seven years older than I am, and a younger sister, Linda, who is two years younger than I.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: And you were a pilot at an early age as well?

MARK KLETT: Was I? I did—I did learn how to fly, yeah . I—my father wanted to teach me flying because he was an instructor, which is what he did in World War II . And so in high school, I took lessons, some—mostly from somebody else; it started a little bit with him, but he wasn't the most patient guy to study with.

So I did—I learned how to fly . I flew an airplane before I could fly a—drive a car, actually . I had a—to get my solo—my first solo when I was 16, when I was allowed to do that. My mother had to drive me to the airport so I could do it.—I flew the plane over the house, and, you know, so on.

But after, um, after high school, I didn't fly anymore, because it was just too expensive . My dad, my mom, and my sister and I flew out to California when I was—just after I graduated from high school, we flew out—rented a plane—it was a friend of my dad's—rented his plane and flew to California. And my dad flew the plane out and I navigated. And on the way back, I flew it and he navigated. But that was the last time I flew. It's been a long—a long time.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Okay. And just to jump ahead [laughs] before we come back to your childhood: You haven't done that much from—you've done high building photography, but not that much aerial.

MARK KLETT: No, I haven't done any aerial photography, actually, I mean, other than very casual photographs out of light planes and stuff. That really hasn't actually appealed to me a whole lot, the idea of aerial photography, for some reason.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Just curious.

MARK KLETT: Yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Back to the—back to your childhood: What about how you came to photography; but also, were you exposed to either photography or the art world at a young age?

MARK KLETT: Um, not really the art world. My parents weren't—were not art people. I mean, they actually were interested in craft and art—making art. But they didn't have any connection or any knowledge of sort of the larger art world. So we never went to things like museums, except for the—like, the natural history museum or something in New York, in Albany, but—in New York State Museum is one I remember.

But they were interested in making things. And my dad, uh, was really good at working with wood and working with metal. And in fact, this table that you have that recorder on, this table was made by him in the early '60s. So he was—they were kind of craftspeople; I mean, they were interested in craftsmanship. My mom was—got interested in pottery and making things ceramic, you know?

But neither one of them had any training. And they felt that there was no way to make any money out of it. My mother ran a small gifts—gift shop for a while, where they tried to import things from other countries and so on, because they were interested in that, but it didn't work out financially. So that was their only exposure. And so my exposure to art, in that sense, was pretty limited.

And the other thing that was part of that was that in New York state at that time, if you were a high school student, you were either on a two-track system. You' were either going to get, um, a diploma, a high school diploma, or you're going to get a, what they call, a Regents diploma, which was something that was a little bit more structured and that helped you get into college.

And the Regents diploma was heavily biased towards science and math. So, you know, when I was in high school, you know, um, it seemed like the proper thing to do, if you want to go to college, to try to get that diploma, which put you on this track with very few electives that would be free for—and I really couldn't—didn't have time to study art, so I didn't take any art classes.

But the one thing that I did do and I was able to do was take some—or work with a guy who had a little dark room in the high school who taught kids on their own how to make photographs and how to use the dark room.

I got interested in photography because, um—well, first of all, my father was an avid photographer. He was an avid snapshot photographer, but he was a little bit unusual. He always used a stereo camera. He bought a Stereo Realist camera in 1949, I think it was. And he used that camera religiously until 1984 or [198]5, when he switched to video. [Laughs] It was kind of a interesting kind of switch, but he always said, you know, "Why would anybody want to look at a photograph if they can look at the photograph in three dimensions," you know?

So he bought the stereo camera, and he used to shoot Kodachrome slides with it. And over there, in that corner, there's the stereo projector, which he used occasionally to project the slides for people to look at. But mostly, they were little handheld viewers that Stereo Realist used to make, and you'd pop the slide in there and push the button and you'd see the image in stereo. So that was our—that was our family heritage, was the stereo views that he made.

And he was actually quite a good photographer. He made really nice decisions about compositions, and, um, you know, how to frame things, vantage points. His sense of making a picture was really quite good. And he made pictures to commemorate things, so he photographed every celebratory dinner, you know, that we ever had of—all the holidays, you know, so—and it was just kind of interesting to look back on it now, because you see these pictures of—if you could put them all together of, like, every Thanksgiving, you know, and it's

made from the same relative position, you know, vantage point—the people are the same, they're sitting in the same places around the table; even the meals sometimes is pretty much the same, because it's the same thing, you know, every holiday. And it's kind of an interesting thing spanning this—you know, over the years. You see this recurring thing being done.

And so he made photographs, you know, to kind of celebrate and commemorate, and so he—that was our—my real first exposure to photography. I mean, that didn't interest me very much as a kid, but, I mean, I was a willing participant in that, because I enjoyed looking at the pictures and being a part of that whole thing.

But when I was a teenager—and I can't remember exactly how old I was; I was probably 15 or 16, I think—my mother—well, we were visiting some family friends, and they were fairly wealthy, and they—their kids had a lot of great, you know, things and toys and, you know, stuff and whatever.

Well, this one year, one of the kids had started a hobby of photography, and he created a little dark room under their—in a little closet area that they had, they had set a little dark room for this guy. And he was making a picture. And so he—we went over there and we visited them. He showed me the dark room, and he showed me how it worked. And we went inside and he turned on the safe light.

And he had a little enlarger, and he put some picture in there, and he—I think it was a picture of his sister's eyeball, a close-up of her face, you know, just her eye. And he projects the image onto a piece of photo paper, which was blank, of course. And then he—he then slips it into the developer, and there it becomes this picture of this young girl's eyeball. And I thought—her eye, and I thought, "Wow, that's amazing." You know, I'd never seen that before. And I just—you know, was really taken by it.

And I told my mom. And she—I guess, thinking, you know, here's a teenager who needs something to do—she immediately took me right out in the next week, and we went down to the—one of the local camera stores in Albany, and she bought all the stuff that we needed to make prints. And it turns out that we didn't need the equipment, because my father had an old enlarger that he had been storing—it belonged to somebody, I don't know who it was, it was an uncle or something. It wasn't a very good piece of equipment, it was pretty rickety and old, but we had it. And we had some cameras and some other things. And so it turns out we had everything we needed, except for the materials. And so we bought the paper and the chemistry, and I set it up.

And I didn't really have a camera at that time, but my brother had some negatives, because he had a camera, and my father had some old negatives. And so I started taking their pictures, and their negatives, and started to make some prints, so I could learn how to do it, because I was really just interested in the print. So I started making as many prints as I could, based on the stuff that we had around. And, you know, fairly quickly, I ran out of that, and I needed to find some new material. So, um, I needed a camera.

I guess sometime around that same time, maybe I'd been given a camera. It was an old Kodak Instamatic camera. It was one of those kinds that had the cassettes, like a little—wasn't the 35 mm canister, but kind of a cassette. You stuck it in there and you took the pictures. And I guess—I think I might've gotten that in about '67 or something like that, 1967. But I, um, found a way to get—I guess they were selling black and white for it too, and so I got some black and white film.

So I started making some pictures. That was the first time I really started to make my own pictures. And my motivation was actually just to have something to make prints from. I wanted to print the pictures in black and white.

Um, a little while after that, seeing I had a growing interest in it, my father told me that we had a larger camera. We had inherited a 4-by-5—or we had access to it—I guess my aunt still had it—it was my uncle—had a 4-by-5 that was a press camera, like, a Speed Graphic.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Speed Graphic. [Laughs.]

MARK KLETT: Yeah. And it was actually an—it was the U.S.—it was a U.S. Navy camera. He was a—my uncle was in the Navy; he was a naval censor in World War II. And so he had somehow got all this stuff. And he had this camera. It was in a box and it was in really good shape. It was this, you know, Speed Graphic camera with a flash and the whole works and everything with it.

And I guess, knowing that I had this interest, somehow that then came my way. And I got this 4-by-5 and I started playing with this 4-by-5. And I think I had maybe one or two film holders for it, so I had to—you know, I got the film and read up on how you're supposed to do this and loaded the camera. I think my brother had some experience with it, or he knew something about it. And so between that and reading up about it, I figured out how to do it and I started playing around with making pictures—I had one lens, I think it was 135 millimeter, which is sort of in between normal and wide-angle lens and started to make pictures with this thing. And that was kind of my intro.

At the same time, referring to this—the dark-room thing at the high school, the local—the art teacher at the high school had a little club that—he helped, um, kids that wanted to learn how to—how to do photography. And he—you know, he was kind of an amateur photographer. I think he might have done a few things commercially for local people or something, but—so there was about three or four of us. And we congregated, and he gave us access to this little dark room he set up at the school.

And the purpose of that was to make pictures for the yearbook. And so I started to make pictures for the yearbook, so I got on that committee or whatever, and so that my kind of real start, you know, in some official way. So I guess maybe the first photographs I ever saw, you know, of mine that ended in printed form came out of the yearbook when I graduated as a senior, and that was 1970, so I think it was—I made a bunch of pictures for that.

And that—you know, photography was just a lot of fun for me. I mean, it was very experimental, and I was just enjoying it and didn't really know anything about how it related to art or anything, really.

One of my dad's friends was in a local camera club and, thinking that I might enjoy that, he took me to one of the camera club meetings when I was a high school student. And they had a competition, and they—you know, some guy won the competition for some picture he had. And I just remember thinking it was kind of strange the way that they set up these competitions and the rules that they had for the—what the pictures had to conform to. And there were different categories; you know, you had landscapes and portraits and, you know, different things. And I—and I just thought, you know, it seemed a little bit odd to me that people were, um, actually making it something like a sporting event, you know—that they had—you know, it was of, like—[laughs]—the Olympics, or running the—you know, running competitions at different sporting events, and I thought it was a very strange thing. But, I mean, I didn't think it was really for me. I felt, "Well, you know, it's okay, but it doesn't seem like it's that—going to be that much fun." So I didn't really pursue that, but I just kept making pictures on my own.

About that time, the same guy at the high school—this is something I vaguely remember, but I've thought about it a few times since then—there was a guy—the guy that taught—that taught us a little bit about dark room work in the high school, one day, he said, I have—I want to show you guys this film. And he—and he brings this film in to—and he sets it up and he projects this film.

And it's about this old guy, this old photographer—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: [Laughs.]

MARK KLETT: —you seem to know what I'm going to say—this old guy. And he's got a young assistant, and she drives him around and he takes pictures with this big old camera—it's a really big boxy-looking camera. And he takes pictures of things like, you know, trees and weathered wood and, you know, just stuff like that. I had—I had no idea what this is all about, but I felt, "Well, that's kind of cool, you know? This is sort of interesting."

And I didn't really even pay any attention to who it was, but later, of course, I realized that it was Edward Weston. It was the film about Weston, and—you know, so he was showing us, you know—and it was probably the first time I'd ever heard or even thought of anybody who was a, you know, photographer, that actually did this, that that's what they did. And it wasn't, like, you know, taking pictures of weddings or, you know, some commercial thing, but, I mean, he did it because this is what he did. And I—that was—that was an odd thing to me, but I thought it was really interesting. You know, "this is cool this guy does this, you know?" So—and I sort of let it go. That was—you know, that wasn't—didn't seem like it was part of my world, but it seemed interesting to me.

So by the time I left high school, I had had some exposure to photography; you know, black and

white, and I did a little bit of color transparency too for the yearbook.

Oh, and the other thing that happened was, um, when I was 17, I think, or 16 turning 17, I—since I was getting more serious, I really wanted a single-lens reflex camera. I thought that was the thing to get. And I thought, you know, I'd really like to have a single-lens reflex camera.

But, you know, they were expensive. And, I mean, my parents were sort of, you know, real middle class. They weren't—were not even upper-middle class; they were pretty—I mean, they—we didn't really lack anything, but we just didn't a lot of money, you know, around the place. And so, I mean, that was a big item, and it was sort of really difficult to afford something like that.

And so I really wanted one, and I asked my parents if I could get one. And so, that Christmas, thinking that maybe, that's what I would get—I ended up, I didn't get the camera, but my dad gave me a shotgun, so actually—[they laugh]—because he thought that boys that were my age should have a hunting gun, which—you know, which was great; I was appreciative of that. But I still wanted the—you know, wanted the cameras. I did get one eventually, um, just before I graduated. And I used that a little bit before I graduated from high school; I didn't have a lot of time with it. But—so I had sort of fulfilled my desire to then, you know, get into 35 millimeter, which seemed like the thing to do.

My father, to sort of placate me for a while, um, he gave me an old camera that he had, which was an old Argus C3. In fact, do I have it? That's it right there. Well, that's—yeah, that might be it right there. That's an Argus C3 on the shelf there. But that's something he had, you know, because—but he—you know, as I said, he gave it up to go to stereo photography, so that was something he just—"well, here, why don't you use this," you know? And I used it, but it was really difficult. That thing was a brick, you know—it's really difficult and heavy and stuff.

So—but no, that—so I finally got the coveted 35 millimeter camera. And then I—and then I went to college. I mean, it just sort of all came to an end.

And, you know, I—being on that track of science and, you know, trying to think ahead about what I was going to do in my life, and having a job and so forth—I mean, I had not even a clue what I wanted to do, but one thing that seemed potentially interesting to me was working outside.

You know, I had thought about, um, architecture, actually, as a career, as I liked buildings and I liked design. I liked the idea of that. But not having any art training at all, I wasn't really sure what it was all about.

My father, by that point in his life, he had—my father had gone through a number of careers after he left flying. My father, for a while—just to give you a little background on that—when he was a pilot in World War II, he taught flying. After World War II, he became a pilot for TWA. So for a period, he was a pilot. And this was before I was born, actually, he used to fly overseas. So he'd fly to Europe and to Egypt. He met King Farouk. You know, he's had this really kind of interesting history.

But he gave it up during a pilot strike just around the time I was born, just a little bit earlier than that. He started a business, his own business, in selling radios and televisions, and he was one of the first dealers selling televisions in the Albany area. And he decided that this overseas traveling wasn't good for family life, so he gave that up. It turns out that the business didn't last that long, so he went into another career, which was, um, construction.

But for a while, he was in this radio-television repair business, and also repairing freezers and refrigerators and stuff like that. I used to—when I was a really small kid, I used to go with him sometimes do house calls, when we—you know, you actually literally go into somebody's house. And that's when the TVs had tubes in them, you know, when—we'd take the thing out and we'd pull the tubes out, and he would let me test the tubes on this tester, you know. I was probably, you know, like, six or eight years old or something.

But anyway, he had multiples careers. And by the time I was in high school, he was involved in construction. He worked for the state—Dormitory Authority of state of New York. He was one of their constructions managers. So architecture as an idea came to me because of his influence. But I rejected it later because I didn't like the idea of sitting at a desk and not being outside.

So a cousin of mine said he was considering geology as a career, and I thought, "Oh, well, that might be interesting, so—you could get outside. And I like looking at rocks, so maybe I'll do that." So I thought about that as a career, and I kind of made up my mind I was going to study

geology.

And I ended up going to—choosing St. Lawrence University in northern New York, because they had a very renowned geologist up there, a guy named Bloomer. And so they—Doc Bloomer, he's called the "Rock Doc."

ROBERT SILBERMAN: [Laughs.]

MARK KLETT: I saw there was an article on him in *Life* magazine one time that I saw. And I thought, "You know, this is—this sounds cool; I think I'm going to do this." And so I went—I decided to go to St. Lawrence and study geology. So that's why I ended up going there.

They really do have an excellent geology program at St. Lawrence. It's a small liberal arts university, about 2,000 students, but their—and they don't really have graduate programs; they just have undergraduate programs, but their—but their geology program is—it produces a large number of graduate students. They have a very high number of—very high percentage of people who are going to Ph.Ds. in that program. And in fact, you know, the people here that teach at ASU—I've asked them before, you know, and, "Oh yeah, we know about St. Lawrence." They get a lot of good graduate candidates from that school. And it's just been known for that for decades. So I chose that very purposefully because it was well-known as a place to study geology.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Mark, if I can just jump in for a second—

MARK KLETT: Yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: —before we bring you to your, no doubt, wonderful freshman year—I mean, it is fantastic that the first picture you saw in an enlarge, the magic moment was of an eye.

MARK KLETT: Yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: And it's quite amazing. [Laughs.] Your father was doing stereo views. Most people—[inaudible]—Western world—Western photographers who made stereo views most people.

MARK KLETT: Yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: But I just want to ask sort of two questions. One is, um, what kind of pictures were you taking during those years, I mean, apart from what you had to take for the yearbook?

MARK KLETT: Oh. [Laughs.] Yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: I mean, were you taking portraits, were you taking landscapes, a little of everything?

MARK KLETT: You know, that's a good question. And I think it was a little bit of everything. I—the first—the initial photographs that I took with that little Kodak Instamatic, they were just of friends. And we were young teenage kids goofing around, so we were just playing and posing for the camera and stuff like that. So I think that I was just photographing my friends just to get a picture to print.

I think it started to change, though, when I, um—when I got the 4-by-5, and I had to put it—I could handhold it, but it wasn't something that you wanted to handhold, I think, because I was using the ground glass on it to look at the image. So I was resting it on something, or my dad gave me a rickety tripod that I put it on.

So—and then—and then I think I really was influenced by that Weston film, because I remember, um, I mean, kind of intentionally making a picture that looked like one of his. I haven't thought about this in a long time.

But, you know, he—my dad, when I said he was into crafts and stuff, one of the things that—I mean, he loved California, and that's why he wanted to live in Fresno, but he felt he just couldn't make a living there. That's why we came back to New York state. But every so often, when I was a kid, every few years, two or three years—every two years, I guess, on average, we would drive to the West to visit my mom's relatives. She had—she had a big family. She grew up in a big

Catholic family, and they had a lot of kids, and so I had lots of aunts and uncles and cousins and, you know, there's just dozens of people out there in one area. So we used to get in the car and drive out to the West.

And then when we were there, we would go to places like, you know, Point Lobos and Carmel, and we were visiting those same locations—my dad—that Weston, you know, was in. My dad would gather things like driftwood from—you know, from Manzanita. And then he would take it back and he would take a sandblaster and he would blast these things into this kind of beautiful, you know, stripped-down form. And he would make, like, a candle holder out of it, or a light, or something like that, you know? And he would try to sell it in the gift shop. And he would—he would wrap it in brass wire, you know, and then that—and at the end of it would be a little thing to put a candle in or something.

And, you know, he was really pretty good at it. I mean, he had—he had a lot of skill with metal. He knew how to—you know, because he knew plumbing, and also he knew how to solder things and, you know, put stuff together. And so he would make these things. And so his purpose was to, you know, make these kind of beautiful things.

I mean, we—my mother always subscribed to *Sunset* magazine. So we always had these reminders of, you know, the West in our house. We had a little book, I still have it here somewhere, called the—it was my first exposure to photography of the West that they had in the house. So they didn't have any books in the house, but they had this one book, *The Glory of Our West*, which was this little folio of color images of the West. And they were actually—[inaudible]—color photographs inside that, which was kind of bizarre. And anyway, they had this thing. And so they had this constant reminder of the West, and so my dad, you know, making these pictures of—or making these sculptures, you know, sort of these little pieces out of driftwood and so on.

And then once—some of the first photography that I did with a view camera was making pictures of those things. You know, I was making pictures of the driftwood, and—you know, because—and I remember, this is kind of like the Edward Weston—I mean, I think that film, there was some influence there. I mean, I really haven't thought about that before, but I do remember this vague influence of using or thinking about the view camera and thinking about the things, and there was this correspondence that was there. I mean, I'd have still lives and I was—so that with the—because I needed to understand how the camera worked and I was trying to figure out, you know, how to focus it. And you know, there were very limited movements on the camera and I didn't know how they worked anyway. But you know, just to get a picture to form on the camera, I had to do it.

And so I remember the first pictures I took with a 4-by-5 were still lives. And then later I started to make other pictures for the yearbook, and because they needed some color pictures, I shot transparencies. And I had to learn how to use a light meter, which—my dad had an old—I think it was a Weston light meter—no relation, I guess, but you know, the old—no battery, just the photovoltaic cell, you know, kind of thing. So I learned a few skills there to learn how to do that.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Were these—

MARK KLETT: And those pictures were—well, they weren't like portraits; they were like pictures of, uh, of kids. I mean, I remember pictures of—like my friends. They were flying kites, you know, and I'd try to figure out an interesting angle, like get down into the, um, bushes, you know, or the weeds, like so they're kind of growing up like flowers and they're in the background, you know. I mean, I just—where I'm trying to explore like different ways of making pictures that might be interesting, and so I'm pushing the camera around and getting it really low to the ground or, you know—and I remember manipulating it a little bit to try, to, you know, find an interesting position from which the picture might be seen.

I mean, some of that had to do with—or maybe that had to do with my dad's thinking. The thing about using a stereo camera, you know, and one thing I paid attention to with his pictures that he made was that, you know, he would make other pictures besides commemorative snapshots of the family. When we were traveling, he would make pictures of the landscape, you know, or places that we were. And when he—whenever he did that, he would try to include a foreground in the picture, because, you know, the stereo effect doesn't work unless you have something in the foreground. So he would consciously try to put something in the picture so that you'd see this depth. And I paid attention to that. I mean, he was purposely moving around to where, you know, he had something interesting to see. And so I thought a lot about the idea that you needed to have something in the foreground too or something that you could see through or,

you know, even if I was using my—that 4-by-5, I was aware of that idea of doing that. So you know, I think that was an influence.

And the stereo, I think, is very interesting medium to work in, because it does change one's perspective on making photographs. I've often said that I think that there's a really good Ph.D. dissertation to be done on the relationship between stereo photography and what we think of in the West—stereo photography and like mammoth plate or, you know, survey photography. Most of the time we're—concentrate on these sort of singular images that these 19th century photographers would make, for example. And—but the same—at the time, they're usually making stereo pictures with a different camera, and there's a direct relationship, I think, between the two. But that relationship's almost never studied, because the stereo photographs are never valued as highly as the other photographs. That's a little bit of an aside.

But I think now, you know, reflecting on the idea that my dad's stereo pictures influenced my vision, I think that that's one of the things that I do remember about them, is that—how he, you know, thought a lot about trying to get depth in the pictures and that did influence my thinking about places to make pictures and how make pictures.

So I do remember those like year—yearbook pictures and stuff , trying to consciously do that—[laughs]—you know, pay attention to things like foregrounds and stuff like that.

But for that purpose, you know, I didn't—I wouldn't call them landscapes, because I don't think in New York state at the time I thought much about landscape—the landscape there at all. But they did have—they did take place, some of them, outdoors—a lot of them outdoors and, you know, have those elements in that there, so that they were—primarily my early photographs were of friends or situations that were staged for a purpose, like the yearbook photography, but you know—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: When you were, uh, being trained—[laughs]—not just the Weston film but other things, by the high school instructor—

MARK KLETT: Yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: —or talking with your dad, were you looking at camera magazines at all, or just for technical how-to stuff, any of that?

MARK KLETT: No, I didn't actually look at magazines at that time. I think that—I had a book or two. I think there's very simple books like Kodak how to do it books or something, you know, how to take better pictures or some kind of thing like that, you know, where they just talked about things like depth of field and some basic compositional things. Um, I don't remember that I ever felt like I was adopting rules for work, but I think it was definitely useful to me to think about or to learn about the idea of aperture and, you know, what happens when you stop down versus open up and, you know, things like that. And I—so I think I read about that kind of thing so I had an idea about how to work.

But you know, I'm the kind of person that would just experiment with a camera too. So you know, I would set it up and then focus on something and open it up and then stop it down and look at the ground glass and see what was happening, so I could—I could experience the result. And so I always had kind of an experimental nature, you know, and so I would play with things like that, and that was really my—always my method.

So I've always learned through doing something, and so if I read about it, it was probably at the same time or even after that I was playing with it and reading—oh, yeah, that, I get that line, it—that makes sense or formalizes something that I had experienced in some way. But I sort of had a singular lack of curiosity about that. It was—I mean—and it—I mean, it might seem odd, I guess, that I didn't, you know, do this research and try to track down other things. But at the time, I didn't really care to. I was happy just to do it. I was happy to play with a camera and make things happen and try something and try something else.

And the whole world for me was experiential, you know, the whole world of photography. Just try it and see what happens, you know, and then look at the result. And it was a very happy thing to do. I mean, it was very carefree and no consequences of any kind. It was just really—just really fun, you know. And I think—that's the way I think photography, in some ways, should be. And it was kind of unadulterated too, in a way, you know. There was no expectation. There was no sense that it belonged to anything or needed to belong to anything or be a part of anything.

So you know, it was purely just the fun of grabbing a piece of equipment and playing with it and then experimenting. It was a little—you know, it was kind of science in a way, but I didn't think of it as science. I just thought of it as kind of fun, you know, stuff to do. When I got into college, then things really changed.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: [Laughs.]

MARK KLETT: But you know—but that was—that was my high school experience.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: That's great.

MARK KLETT: Yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: One other question before you get—we get you to college, which is, why though or where did the love of the out-of-doors come from? Were you—was that just a kid being out of doors, or were you camping with your parents or—when you took the trips to California, what made you say I don't want to be at that architectural drafting desk, I want to be outside?

MARK KLETT: Yeah, I'm not even sure. I—you know, I think it's interesting. I—but we did do a little bit of camping on those trips out to California, but my parents weren't great outdoors people. I mean, they didn't—they didn't do things like camping. They didn't, you know, take us out, you know. I mean, we camped out of logistical necessity, you know. I mean, it was just cheaper sometimes to camp, and we were driving in this big family station wagon, you know, with five of us, you know, driving back and forth. And so we would do that.

I did join Boy Scouts when I was, um, you know, in like, you know, between elementary school and junior high, you know. So I was—in that era, I was a Boy Scout. And that's probably where it started because, you know, we had a guy who was the leader of the Boy Scouts—the scoutmaster, I guess you'd call him—he was way into camping. I mean, he just—he loved it.

So we would do these trips, and I really liked them. I thought this was a lot of fun, you know. We even did winter trips, which were kind of grueling—[laughs]—they called them freeze-outs, you know. We used to go camping and we'd be, three of us, huddled in this little tent, you know. Nobody had, in those days, down bags. I mean, we didn't know what they were, you know. We just had these kind of, you know, cheap cotton bags which you'd throw a couple blankets over and stuff, and you'd huddle together and kind of freeze.

But you know, we'd do things like—you know, we were the kind of dog team, you know, pulling the sled around and—[laughs]—we'd, you know, have to boil water and, you know, build a fire and boil water and stuff, you know. And it was like a race, you know, to do this. It was kind of fun. It was—it was a neat kind of thing.

So I did get some outdoor training through that, and I really enjoyed it, and I thought, well, this was—I like being outside, this is a lot of fun, and I'd—I think I'd like to do it more.

And then I met some friends somewhere in high school or junior high. I think it was late junior high, maybe ninth grade or something like that. I mean, they were teaching us how to read topographic maps, and I thought this is cool. I thought looking at a map was really neat. You could look at this map, and you could take it out, and we—my friend and I, we actually got the map and we walked out, you know, a quarter mile from my parents' place. And there were a lot of fields around us, you know. We kind of—there was a sort of rural location. Across the street from where I grew up in this building my father built, which was an apartment building, there was a field where they used to graze sheep for a long time, and then all around us were woods, you know.

And so as kids we used to go out and hike around the woods. And that was another thing I did really early on, was I remember, early on, taking hikes with my brother sometimes or, you know, going out into the woods and experiencing this place that, even though, looking back on it now, I mean, you're looking at like a half a mile worth of unadulterated, you know, woods or something before you get to the next road or buildings, it just felt like this immense place, you know. And we could go out and really experience the trees and, you know, play at the creek and, you know, just like kids do, you know, play with rocks and trees and, you know, build things and forts and, you know, swing on these vines. And you're doing all these kind of great things that the kids do.

And that was a real experience that I think is real important for kids to have, you know, in terms of their relationship to place. And so I was building on that.

By the time we got to maps, it was like, this is great. We're kind of conceptualizing. [Laughs.] I didn't think it at the time we were doing it, but it was like a—that's what it really was. It was like you're looking at this representation and you can really tell where you are, and look, that's that hill over there, and here's this creek going through it. And you know, we just had this great fun walking around identifying where we were on this map and realizing that you could actually create a document or you could create this representation of this place, you know, that you experienced on this piece of paper. And you could also then take your experience and actually locate it on a map and say this is where I did this, you know. That was really kind of a cool thing.

And that was another thing that related to the idea of maybe studying geology, was that if it had to do with stuff like that, I was interested in it, you know. And so yeah, that was—I mean, really, the whole idea of—I wonder—that's not some—there isn't a truck out there, is there?

ROBERT SILBERMAN: No.

MARK KLETT: Okay.

So that—I mean, that was, I guess, part of it, that—you know, I guess going back to childhood, I mean, that—being outside was just—I mean, my parents used to say just go out and play, you know. [Laughs.] That was a different period. I mean, they didn't—I mean, our—with our kids, we worry about that kind of stuff. But we're in a more urban setting, you know. Where they—where we were in those days, I mean, they didn't worry it. They said just go on out, but come back in, you know, for lunch, or you know, come back at—and they wanted—my parents wanted us to get out of the house, you know—get out of the house, get some exercise, you know, play.

And we did. And we used to do—any time of the year. In the winter we would go sledding or something, or hiking around the snow, and we would ice skate on the creek. And so there is a lot of, you know, outdoor activity that I guess led to my interest in being out there.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: [Laughs.] And then what happened when you got to St. Lawrence and college and studied in geology?

MARK KLETT: Yeah. Yeah, well, I—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Were you a rock collector as a child? I mean, you must—

MARK KLETT: No, not really. I mean, I—you know, I guess like any—like a lot of kids, I just liked to look at rocks and so forth, but I didn't know anything about them. I didn't really have a collection. In fact, I didn't really collect much of anything as a kid. I don't remember having any—you know, what I did as a kid is I used to build models. You know those plastic models that you could buy?

ROBERT SILBERMAN: I did too.

MARK KLETT: And I used to build, you know, model airplanes and cars and, you know, stuff like that.

And so I was actually—I was actually more interested in the little detailed things that you'd put together, you know, and paint them and—you know. So the idea of model building—appealed to me more of than collecting or even natural things, you know.

But in college—so I started to study geology, and, um, it—well, you know, I liked it, but it wasn't—it wasn't bowling me over, you know. I mean, I thought, well, this is interesting—and then I took my first class with the "Rock Doc," you know, "Doc" Bloomer. And it think it was—might have been his last year just before he retired.

And he was a very interesting character, and he was a very entertaining, um, lecturer, you know, so I could see why he was very popular. But I guess in some respects it sort of didn't challenge my imagination, in a way. But I still liked it, and I thought, well, this is okay; you know, I'm going to continue with it.

But at the same time that that was happening, it turns out that there was a group of geologists there—geology students that were into photography. And I'm not sure I can explain why, except that it just happened to be at that particular group. And there was probably five or six people in the geology department, and they were upperclassmen. They were seniors—juniors and seniors and so on that were into photography, and they had a little kind of club.

And, um, so, I think they were interested in it more from the technical end of it. I mean, I think they liked making pictures, but they were kind of more into the technique of it and everything. And it turned out there was this club called the photo service at St. Lawrence. And the photo service was a student-run organization that—of, you know, not very many people. It might have been a dozen people altogether or something, or even less, in this small group.

And what the photo service did was take pictures for the yearbook, you know, for the PR department of the university. And in exchange for that, the PR department would give them a small amount of money—I mean, it was a decent amount, but not like a professional fee—to go to cover certain events and take pictures and so on. And they had a darkroom in the basement of one of the dormitories, which was in fact the dormitory I was living in at that time, when I was a freshman.

And it was a fairly nice little darkroom. It had two rooms, one room for film processing and another one for enlarging, and very nice equipment, a couple of 4-by-5 enlargers and some really nice film equipment for everything from 35 millimeter to 4-by-5. And the whole organization was pretty much dominated by these geologists, that they were—they were running the place.

And they had a basic loose kind of structure, and you agreed to work with them, and you know, you were given assignments on occasion to go out and photograph this or that and then turn the pictures in. And you had to go down there and print the pictures, and the PR people would tell you which ones they wanted, and then you would print them. And in exchange for that, for doing that, then you had access to the darkroom and a certain amount of free materials. I mean, you could use a certain amount of paper for your own work, and I was never very clear about, you know, what would you—what you were allowed to use. But there was—it was evident that there was plenty of money around.

And you know, in those days, photo materials didn't cost that much. I mean, you could buy these—we had these big boxes of Agfa, of—of what—was it Brovira or—yeah, Brovira, I think—you know, that was a classic Agfa paper—and different graded stocks. You know, we had these big 500-sheet boxes of them, you know. [Laughs.] So there was lots and lots of paper around, and lots of chemicals and everything.

So I thought, well, that's pretty cool, you know, I can join this club, and I can—I can make some pictures so I can continue my hobby, you know, this thing that I like.

And—but then they said, you know, well, we're going to—we want to, you know, get some better training here, because the university didn't have, uh, classes in photography. They had—they had art classes, but nobody taught photography. So it was just something that they didn't—I don't know if they didn't consider it art or they just didn't have anybody that knew how to do it, but they didn't—they didn't have any photography offerings. So if you wanted to learn how to do photography, you were on your own.

So they said, you know, we're going to—we're going to bring somebody here. We're going to do a workshop, and we've done this before, and we all chip in 50 bucks, and we bring in this guy, and he'll do us a workshop for a week, and his name is Paul Caponigro. So I didn't know who Paul Caponigro was—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Yeah.

MARK KLETT: —but I said: Okay, what do we do? And he—this is—well, he's going to teach us how to do the zone system. So—but what we need—we need to be prepared for this, so you need to do some work before Paul gets here so you're ready.

So they taught me the fundamentals of the zone system, like here's what you do: You photograph these egg cartons, and one of them is painted black, and the other one's painted white, and you've got this one that's gray, and you know, you photograph these. And they—and we—they explained to me that—the theory behind exposure, development and how that works. And of course these are scientists, and so I thought, well, this is—this is cool. I get it. You know, I understand this.

And so I did. I spent, you know, a month or whatever out of my free time, you know, taking pictures with my 4-by-5, photographing these egg cartons and whatever, and trying to figure out my proper, you know, ASA and my proper development times and all this kind of stuff to get ready for the master to come in and do the workshop.

And so we did. We—it was—we had this winter term. It was in January. They had the semester divided so that January was a—what they called winter term, and you had this month where you took these special classes. And so we had—we all chipped in a bunch of money. And I think in those days, you know, you could get—Paul Caponigro would come to St. Lawrence for like—for a week for 500 bucks, you know. And it was—but this was like 1971, January '71.

So he came. And I think there was maybe 10 or 12 of us in this class that we put together, and so we used the photo service as the darkroom for the thing. And Paul came, and it was an amazing experience. I mean, that was the thing that changed my thinking about what photography was, and I really then realized that there was something else to photography than, you know, what I thought it was. I didn't know what it was before then, but—so he—you know, he was less technical than I thought. Well, he—of course he knew all this stuff. He knew the zone system and all that, but he didn't really care that much about it. [Laughs.] It was, you know, okay, he's more interested in the pictures, you know.

And so I remember going out with him and the other guys to this field—we were going to do a field day out, you know, photographing in this little town. I think it was Herkimer. And so, you know, St. Lawrence is up in northern New York—it's up in Canton, New York, up by the St. Lawrence Seaway, so you're almost in Canada when you're up there. And this is January, and it was cold, you know. I know you come from a cold place, but this is—it was below zero, and I think it was—I think that particular weekend or week or whatever it was we were out, it was, you know, close to 20 below in the mornings. And it warmed up later, but it was really cold.

So I remember we went to this place and—it wasn't Herkimer. I forget where it was. Colton, maybe—I can't remember now the name of the place, but we ended up going to this little town, and I remember I made one or two pictures outside, you know. [Laughs.]And then it was just too cold. And I went inside this barbershop, and there was these guys getting their hair cut and stuff. And the guy was real friendly. He goes, yeah, come on, you can photograph if you want. So I remember taking a couple pictures in the barbershop and doing some things. But I was having a great time. I mean, this was a lot of fun to me, no matter if it was cold or not. But you know, I'm a young guy; I'm like 18 or whatever by that point.

And so when we get back—and so we process the film. And I remember—I've got the 4-by-5, so I'm processing 4-by-5, and Paul has 4-by-5 too. So we're down in the photo service darkroom, and we're going to do the film together. And in those days, we used to use these open tanks that had these metal hangers that you'd put your film in, and you'd dip them in the tank, and you'd pick them up, and you'd tilt them at a certain angle, put them back in the tank, and then pick them up and tilt them at the other angle. And you did this at regular intervals to agitate your film.

And so I had been practicing this, and I was trying to be very precise because I had learned the zone system. And so I would set the clock, and I'd—exactly at 30 seconds after, I'd pick this thing up and agitate, and then I'd put it back down, and you know, I did this at, you know, at 30-second intervals or whatever to make sure I had consistent—and I didn't miss a second, you know. I was going to be right on this thing.

And I was a little nervous because, you know, Paul was going to develop his film right next to me, and it was just the two of us. And we were in this darkroom, and there's the sink, and then the sink is open, and you've got your tank, and it's—and the tank is open. So when you're ready to develop, you have to turn the light off, you've got to load your film into the hangers, and then you've got to put them in there.

And so we're both going to do this. And I'm thinking, oh, boy, I'd better be—I'd better get this just right, you know. This is going to be tough. And so—and so we do that, and we start. And we—you have to prewet, and then you go to the developer. And so I'm in there, and I'm watching the clock, and we're developing our film, and it's all completely dark, and I—he's right next to me on my left, and I'm thinking, boy, I can—you know, I can hear him. He's doing it and I'm doing it, you know, and the timer, you know, is going.

And then at one point he kind of—I—he—I feel his hand. He reaches over on top of mine. He goes, I just want to see how you're doing it. Oh, great, you know, the master's giving me some advice here. So I do it, and he goes, okay, tells me something like, you know, be a little bit smoother or, you know, a little less fast or whatever. And I thought, great, this is great, you know.

So we're doing it, and we're getting towards the end of the development time—it's probably 10 or 12 minutes or something. And I'm thinking, okay, we're getting close here. And then—and then I hear him, and he walks off. I'm hearing him walking off to the other side of the darkroom, and I'm thinking, oh, no, he's going to miss his—he's going to miss his agitation. What's he going to do, you know?

ROBERT SILBERMAN: [Laughs.]

MARK KLETT: I mean, the timer—it's almost there.

And all of a sudden, there's this flash of light. I mean, just a little brief, like, flash. And oh, my God, and I put my hands over the top of my tank to try to prevent the light from hitting it.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: [Laughs.]

MARK KLETT: And then I look over there in the corner, and then I see this little red glow kind of walking towards me, walking, you know, kind of like a little arc.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: [Laughs.]

MARK KLETT: And it's him over there in the corner lighting up a cigarette, and he's walking back to the tank with his lit cigarette, you know, and I can see the little glow, and I'm like what? What? Did we just ruin the film? He goes, "Don't worry about it; we're two-thirds through the development. Nothing happened," you know. [Laughs.] He was like—he was totally fine with it.

Then I realized the guy's pretty relaxed, you know. Okay, so maybe I can settle down here a little bit. [Laughs.] So we finished the whole thing, and everything was fine, you know.

But then later in—so in the workshop, you know, I'd make my prints, and I'd put them up, and—you know, he was very, um—he was very, um—nurturing kind of guy. I mean, he was—so he was praising the work. I mean, he really—he really liked the work that I did, you know. He's—I remember, um—well, Tom Southall told me this later. I'll get into that in a minute. But he said—he told me I'm a natural.

And I thought: Wow, I'm a photographer, you know? And so I mean, he was very praiseworthy of a lot—everybody. I mean, he was, you know, I mean, teaching people that, you know, may not—he knew how to make people feel that they wanted to keep going and stuff. And so it was great, you know. And so I thought, oh, that's great, maybe I should do this more often, you know. This is really—maybe there's something to this.

And so, um, one of the guys in the workshop—I just mentioned Tom Southall. He was one of the—my colleagues in the workshop. Tom was a—Tom was a year ahead of me at St. Lawrence, so he was a sophomore at the time. But he was an art history—art and art history major. And—but he made photographs. And he was—he was not—he was one of the non-geologists in the group. He came from the art side.

And so Tom was in the workshop too. And you know, Tom, who now is a curator—and you know, Tom, at the moment, teaches—or is a curator at the University of Florida at Gainesville, in the art museum. But you know, he's worked at the Amon Carter Museum and the High Museum and so on. He figures into my career and my life pretty prominently, actually, especially, you know, from this point on.

But you know, he and I got to know each other in that workshop. And he and I and—Tom and I and another guy, who was in the English department, actually—ended up going out with Caponigro one night, I think one of the last nights he was there, for dinner. And so it was the four of us. And we went out to some small place in Canton, and it was like a burger joint. And so we all ordered burgers, I think, and we were sitting around this table, and Paul was talking about photography and what it meant to him. And I remember this one moment. He said—Paul said, "What I'm really trying to do is touch the hemline of God." [Laughs.]

ROBERT SILBERMAN: That stuck in your mind. [Laughs.]

MARK KLETT: And that was—[laughs]—that was like, whoa, that's what photography can be about? You know, I had no idea at all. I mean, I remembered looking at Tom thinking: Whoa, you know, are you—[laughs]—are you getting this, you know? And you know, I mean, that just—that kind of thing had never occurred to me, that somebody could think that it was a spiritual quest,

you know.

I mean, of course now I know so much more about that and the period and his influence and Minor White and Ervid, that that combination and what was happening at Aperture and you know, all of that. And so now I understand the context for it, but at the time, you have to understand, I mean, I didn't know anything. I was just this kid taking geology, and I'd been—had been making pictures on my own and thought it was a lot of fun, and I just hadn't any idea that there was an art form behind it whatsoever.

And here's this guy talking about, you know, the hemline of God, and I thought, that's just incredible, you know. And I don't know if I understand this, and I don't know what this is all about, but you know, I'm just amazed that this is—and also, just—I mean, you had to just sort of see him. I mean, he was absolutely passionate, you know. So you had to understand that this came from, you know—he wasn't just saying this, you know, casually. I mean, he was saying it with great conviction.

And after spending the week with the guy and really getting to know him a little bit and to like him and to, you know, really feel that something was happening—to understand that was just remarkable. You know, I didn't understand it, but I understood, you know, that my eyes were just suddenly opened to something I hadn't realized was even there before.

So you know, he left, and we were all just like spinning, you know. I mean, it was an amazing experience. And after that, I'd gotten more and more interested in photography, and Tom and I became friends. And he and I used to exchange, um, you know, conversation about our photographs all the time at a more and more intense level. Eventually, the—a lot of the geology guys left the group because they graduated, and new guys came on, and they came from other areas. Some of them came from art. Some of them came from, you know, different areas at the university, but they were all interested more in this idea of it as an art.

And we had other guest artists later. We did the same thing. We would pool money together and maybe get some university money because there was money for a lecture, you know, somewhere. So we had Jerry Uelsmann come up, and he'd—and do something for a week, maybe for a few days he did a workshop. It's kind of interesting because I know Jerry now, and we have a different kind of relationship, but at that time it was really funny to see—fun to sort of see him and meet him. And then we had—Les Krims was another one we had come up.

So we had quite a variety of different, you know, vantage points. I remember in those days there weren't that many photo books. I mean, don't forget this was like 1971 to '74. So we were getting as many photo books then, or Tom was, as he could find. And he—you know, Tom was from Bronxville, and he, you know, spent a lot of time in New York going to museums. And you know, he was my link to the art world. I didn't know anything about it, but Tom was very curious and very active in pursuing interests. And you know, he would constantly bring stuff.

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MARK KLETT: We had *Aperture* magazine in those days. It was kind of our only real journal that we had to look at. But—[coughs]—excuse me.

But, you know, he was bringing books that you could find. He would go to New York and he would bring up books, and we had things like, um, Larry Clark. You know, we were getting some pretty different—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: *Tulsa.*

MR. KLETT: Yeah, *Tulsa*. We had—we had Les Krims, you know—[inaudible]—we knew about him. [Coughs.]

We had whatever we could get our hands on, basically, in those days. It wasn't very complete, but it was just stuff that—I mean, this is—you know, you haven't Internet there; you've got to go to a bookstore, you know? So I wasn't going anywhere. I didn't—I didn't go to New York, I didn't have access to bookstores. Tom did. So it was really—Tom was my lifeline to the art world. And he was an—educated me about the art world. So he bringing this stuff from New York and—when he went to MoMA or someplace, he would—he would buy this stuff.

And then, occasionally, on a couple of occasions, over certain breaks, I would go visit him in Bronxville at in New York. And he would take me around to—and so, the first exposure I had to

New York museums was with Tom. And he would take me to MoMA or to the Whitney, or, you know, these places that I'd really never been to before.

I mean, when—even though I was growing up, like, 150 miles from New York or whatever, my dad hated New York and he would never go to New York.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Upstate—a different world.

MARK KLETT: He hated the city. He just hated big cities and wouldn't go there. So we—I never went as a kid; I never went to New York. So this was, you know—I remember, I went to New York as a high school student on a class trip was the first time. But, you know, I didn't—I never went to museums, and so this was—my first exposure to art museums was, you know, with Tom as a—as a college student.

So that's when, you know, I started to think or understand something more, that there was a world of photography out there, and it was in—it was—it was part of an art form, and there an art world of photography.

And I remember—you know—and Tom is an art history student, so he's saying, "Well, you know, you haven't—you haven't read or you haven't looked at, you know, Newhall's *History of Photography*?" And I went, "Well, what's that," you know? And he—"No, you need to read this." And so I got Newhall's *History of Photography*, and I read Newhall. And so this is sort of my beginning.

And then he said, "you know, what about these other histories?" And so we started—you know, we would other—we would—we would start looking at other histories and other things about photography. So I started to get an idea about photography.

The other thing that happened, which I thought was very unusual—St. Lawrence had a—had a small collection, which was, you know, smaller collection. It's grown over the years, and it's a—it's a lot better now, but it was—they had a pretty good collection then, which included photography.

And they had been buying some photographs. And I don't who or why they were doing it, but they had—they had a small collection of photographs that included a bunch of Ansel Adams prints, Paul Caponigro's prints and some others. And I don't remember at that time who was always in it, but I remember the Adams and Caponigro's, because one of the things that they had was a loan program. [Laughs.]

You could—[laughs]—you could literally go to the art, you know, gallery that they had and talk to the curator there, and they had a room that was filled with stuff. And, you know, if you wanted to take a printout that was framed and you wanted to put it up in your room for this semester, you just signed a form and you took it out.

So I took out a couple Caponigro prints and I put them up on my wall. And I remember, I had the apple, you know, that looks like the universe, and I had the tree stump that's kind of like Mephistopheles or, you know, kind of leaving that work—it becomes the kind of bird coming out of the tree stump. And I had those prints and I—they were great prints. I just stuck them on my wall for the semester. You know, the whole—I think I had them pretty much the whole year—actually, my senior year—in my—on my wall.

They had prints in the girls' dorm of—I mean, these great Ansel Adams views. They had *Moonrise*. [Laughs.] And they had—they had one of the—[inaudible]—pictures. And they had these just sitting out there in open view as you walked the girls' dormitory, these really beautiful prints.

That was not that long out—I mean, not much earlier, I mean, not—after I left, shortly after I left, the *Moonrise* created a sensation with the prices going up. I remember writing a note back to one of the art instructors who were saying, "You still have this on the wall? You better get this off the wall." So—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: When you were going through this process—I mean, that's such a great experience, an encounter with Caponigro. It sounds like when Henry Callahan, if I remember correctly, was in a camera club in Detroit, and Ansel Adams came, and it was the same eye opener.

MARK KLETT: Yeah. Yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: "This could be different; I could do different things with photography."

MARK KLETT: Yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: But then, apart from the assignments first that you had to do for PR, what kinds of pictures were you taking? And was this all black and white then—

MARK KLETT: Yeah, it was all black—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: —or were you putting some color on it?

MARK KLETT: Well, um, yeah, I did, actually. So I do—I did do some color towards the end.

But in the beginning, it was all black and white. I did—I kind of, actually, in spite of my having gotten a 35 mm, I didn't—I stopped using it, except for some things. I did use it for a while, but I kind of quickly kept, after the Caponigro experience, favored the black—the 4-by-5.

And so I was making everything. I mean, I was doing more landscapes then, but I didn't see myself conforming to any kind of subject. But a lot of the pictures—you know, there were landscapes, there were pictures that I would stage where I would set up a picture and I would walk in to the picture, say—because I was—I was very, you know, just sort of more into the interactivity of it, too. And I don't why that happened, but I guess I would set up a picture and think, "well, need something, you know? Maybe I'll find a way." My father had given me these wind-up timers you could put on a cable release, because he had—he used them so he'd get in the picture too.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: In the family pictures?

MARK KLETT: Yeah. So, I mean, I had a couple of those and I would—so I could take it and wind it up and then run into the picture or something. But I was experimenting, again. I mean, I would try—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: You were postmodern before the fact.

MARK KLETT: [Laughs.] Yeah. I mean, I was—I was trying to experiment, you know, with the pictures—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: It's great.

MARK KLETT: —trying to do different things.

So I remember—I mean, I made self-portraits, I made landscapes, I made pictures of, um, you know, people, friends. I mean, I did even some—a couple of nudes, you know, with girlfriends. I mean, I did a number of different things. Just sort of—I'd see something and I thought, okay, let me try that, you know? I would just try some different things.

But I was definitely into the idea of the image and the quality and the printing, of course; that was still the thing that interested me.

I did do some color later, because Tom got into it. And so Tom decided that he wanted to learn how to do color. So, you know, again, he was the leader for me. And so I—then I started to learn —try to learn how to do color too. And so by the time I left St. Lawrence, I had done certain preliminary work in color.

And in those days, you had to do it in a tube, you know? We had these—I forget what they were called. There was—they were these stainless steel tubes, and you would—they had end caps on them, and you would put the paper in the tube, expose it, put the paper in the tube, and then put the cap on, and then you would put the chemicals into the tube, and then it would—it would float in a tub of water that was temperature-controlled. So the water temperature was controlled by the tub, the water was in the tub. And you would spin it. You would—had, like, a little ring around it, and you would spin the ring so it would turn in the tube, and then—into the tray, into the tub of water. And it was a fairly elaborate process in those days, like, I don't know, five, six chemicals or something you had to go through. And, you know, I mean—but that was—you know, it was an early kind of home processing for color. I mean, it just—that's all that was available.

How are we doing? Okay?

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Yeah.

MARK KLETT: So I did learn from him the basics of how to make a color picture, because he had—he had learned it somehow through reading a book or processing or whatever. So—and everything we did, we had to do by ourselves. I mean, we did—we developed the negatives by ourselves, we developed the prints by ourselves. I mean, everything we did, there wasn't anybody around Canton that could do it for you. No such thing as, like, film processing.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Okay.

MARK KLETT: But anyway, um, so I did start to do some color before I left, because I just saw it as kind of an interesting thing to try to do.

I mean, I—the other thing I did as a student was, once I saw Uelsmann's work, I started to make prints like Uelsmann. And so I thought, "this is great, I love this. You know, I'm going to take these." And I understood how to do it. You can take an image and you can print it onto a picture, and if there's any unexposed part of the paper left, you can use that to print something else, you know? And I could figure that if there's anything that was white, it meant that there was no exposure there; you could print something else into it.

So, I mean, I understood the principle of it, so I started to do it. This was before Jerry came. I remember Jerry came and he juried a little show that we had, a little student show. And he did in front of everybody, which was kind of neat. Or he talked about the work later, and he looked at our work in sort of a group critique kind of thing. And I had my pictures that looked like his, and I remember him saying to me about one picture, "Well, you know, instead of doing it this way, you might do it this other way, and that way, you could kind of get rid of the Bela Lugosi effect you got right here." [They laugh.] That was kind of—you know, kind of fun.

Years later, I have to say—this was—this was something that happened years later, I did—around that time I did, um, a poster for the student art show. We had an art show every year, and I did this poster for them. Or they used one of my pictures for the poster. I had this picture of my girlfriend, and she was—she was nude, but you saw her from behind, so you just her—the outline of her figure. She was sitting on this couch. And because she had—her skin was real light, you could—I projected onto it this cloud, you know? It was kind of a hokey kind of thing. But anyway, there was this sort of—so she became, like, this cloud thing.

And so I made this picture. I don't know if I did it before Jerry was there or after Jerry was there, but I did this picture. And they used it for the poster for the show. Well, I mean, Southall had one of these things. And he had it for years, and he keeps it—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: [Laughs.]

MARK KLETT: —the guy's a real packrat. So he kept threatening—he kept—he kept threatening to, like—he still does today. He said—he was threatening to take my old work and to start—and show people what I was doing, because it's kind of embarrassing—[inaudible]—but I never get that embarrassed by it. But, you know, he's always kidding me about that, you know, if he's blackmailing me to do something.

Well, one year, I get this thing in the mail, and it's this tube. I open it up, and there's that poster. And then—and there's a signature on it that says, "Mark, I love your early work. Signed, Jerry Uelsmann." [They laugh.] This was—he did this, like, five years ago, he did this. It was really funny. And then Jerry wrote me about it, he goes, "yeah, that work was pretty good, you were—why didn't you keep it up, you know?"

Anyway, but I did—so I did a lot of the things—you know, if it—if it looked like somebody did it, I just tried it, you know? So I had this very, very eccentric portfolio of all these different things of pictures that I had just been doing to try different things. Um, so—but at the time, I wasn't really thinking about that. I mean, I just was making pictures that I thought were interesting.

Then, one picture I made—there was a Uelsmann-like picture of a composite of different images. It was a composite of a fireplace from a fort that was down in Maryland somewhere, and on top of that I had printed some birds, like, kind of flying out of the fireplace. So it was kind of like a Uelsmann-like photograph or composite.

And I submitted that to *Aperture*. And they printed it as a—as a—like, an ad, for, like, Nikon cameras, because they used—in those days, they had, like, a back ad, or they have these little ads, you know—photo taken with a blah, blah, blah camera or, you know, this—just to kind of support the magazine. So that was the first thing I ever got published, you know, in a real, like, art journal.

And they misspelled my name. It was, like, Mark Kleet, with two e's. People do that sometimes, and so it was, like, a real letdown kind of thing. But that was when I was a senior in college. So that was my, kind of, like, first time I'd ever had something, like, printed in a real, like, you know, art publication.

But, um, that was towards the end of my stay—I guess, when I was sophomore, though, I was getting so interested in photography, I felt, "Well, maybe I just should switch. Maybe I should just, you know, go to a photo school." And so I told my parents, I thought, "Yeah, I think I'm going to—I'm going to leave St. Lawrence. I mean, I think I'm going to—I want to go to a photo school. Maybe I—maybe I should go to Rochester to, like, RIT or something," and—"But I can't apply now, because it's too late, but, you know, I'm thinking about it." And they were—they weren't very happy about that idea. [Laughs.] But—"Why don't think about it?" "OK." So I thought about it for a while.

I went back to school, and one of my professors, a geology professor, young guy who was new on—new at the university, he said "No, no, don't leave, don't leave. I'm going to find something for you to do that you're going to like, you know? If you want to do art, we can—well, you can combine art and science." And I thought, "Well, what—like, how?" I'm thinking, "Like, he's thinking I'm going to take pictures of rocks? That's the stupidest thing I ever heard of." [Laughs.] I didn't tell him that, but I thought, "That's the dumbest thing I ever of." But that's what I was thinking. I thought, "Well, okay," you know? He goes, "No, no, I got something for you. I'm going to—I'm going to—I'm going to find a way for you to be creative in what you're doing."

And, you know, he made a real effort. You know, he was—he's a paleontologist. So he says, "I got these fossils that need cleaning. You know, you got to dig them out of this rock. I need to get these specimens out." So he finds me this little place where I can work, and he's got a dental drill there and all these attachments, and then, you know, shows me how to use that to dig these fossils out of those rocks. So I spend a month or so, you know, digging fossils out for him and getting to know what's happening with fossils.

And then he's got another idea. He says, "you know, I've got this project where we need to figure out how these different clams were oriented on the surf area so we can tell which direction the water was coming in at the beach at the time they were deposited, so we know something about the coast line. And in order to do that, I need you to make me, you know, 50 or a hundred or whatever of these clam shells, because they're extinct and we need to make, you know, the replicas of that." So I had to figure out how to make a mold and create these replicas of these clamshells. So I did that. I mean, it was—they used it in their research.

And then he said, "I got this other idea. I want to transplant a living clam into a clear clamshell. So you need to make me this clear clamshell out of—out of, you know, resin, so we can"—[phone rings]—so I did that part too.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Before we go back, after this brief pause, to your experience with fossils, you were going to say something about driftwoods and about multiple prints.

MARK KLETT: Yeah, well I just wanted to add about the driftwood that when we were talking about that earlier, my dad's interest in it, that he actually named the building that we lived in the "driftwood building."

ROBERT SILBERMAN: [Laughs.] Oh, Okay.

MARK KLETT: So they had a name and they had the logo and the sign, and it was the "driftwood building." So that's how interested he was in that thing.

The other thing about the, um, printing was that one of the reasons why I felt I could experiment more freely was that, when we—we had these big boxes of paper, these reams of paper, but I would literally take as much paper as I needed to to make a print look exactly the way I wanted to. If that meant 50 prints, I would make 50 prints to get it right. I didn't—didn't matter to me. I just would make—I would make as many prints as I needed to to try to get the picture, the print, as good as I could possibly make it. So I spent a lot of effort, you know, trying to perfect my

ability to dodge and burn and get the exposure and the contrast just right. And eventually, we got into, you know, different chemicals and into processing, you know, making your own developer, that kind of thing. So I was very involved in that.

And when Uelsmann came, the idea that you could even go further in sort of your technical mastery—I mean, you were saying that—I mean, nowadays, the idea of compositing images seems so simple in terms of what Photoshop does, but how complex it really is, how difficult it is to do if you do it using conventional dark room techniques, it's—you know, that's one of the reasons why we were so wowed by Uelsmann was how proficient this guy was at doing something real difficult, you know? So that was one of things that was appealing about it was that, no, you couldn't just make this happen. You had to really work at it to make it happen.

So—but we had the paper to do that, and we—and I did. I totally abused that system and used as much paper as I needed to make a print work.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Dark room mastery.

MARK KLETT: Yeah, that's what I was trying.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Disappearing art, but definitely art.

MARK KLETT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: You were talking about working out in fossils—[laughs]—

MARK KLETT: Oh, yeah, yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: —your experience with your geology teacher at St. Lawrence.

MARK KLETT: Yeah. So he had me—the last—one of the last things he'd do is have me make these plastic—clear plastic clamshells in which he could theoretically transplant a living clam into it, because he wanted to see how the clam bored itself into the sand. So he had this idea of actually putting a living clam into this tank and watching it do things, which I don't think he ever did. I made a—I did make him a clamshell.

But the point was that he was getting me involved in craft-like projects that were also relative to research. And so it was a pathway to the research. Once he got me interested in the clams, and the fossils and what was happening with them, he was showing me rocks that he had collected from North Dakota, where he did his dissertation work—he went to University of North Dakota for his Ph.D. And he was still doing projects out there.

And in the summers, he would—he had just started this, but he had one summer or two summers under his belt where he was taking a couple students out with him to do some research in North Dakota in a place they called the Fox Hills—the Fox Hills Formation.

And so that one year, I think I was between my junior and senior year, he said, "Would you like to come out with me and do some research in the Fox Hills?" which was kind of a great honor to be asked, because, you know, he was only asking certain people. And so I said, "yeah, of course," you know? So I did go out with him.

And he basically gave me a research concept. And so we need to figure out what these buttes are made of. There were these buttes that sort of got into county—Emmons County in North Dakota. And, you know, nobody's really—we know it's sandstone up there, but nobody's really looked at it, nobody's really—we think it's a new formation that nobody's talked about because it's almost eroded away.

So, um, I did. I spent the summer—he taught how to do it. You know, I mean, I had some experience with field work because the geology classes I was taking brought us into the field and taught us some of the basics of field work, you know, how to—how to measure things and, you know, quantify things and write up things and what not, doing—you know, you're doing things like strike and dip and—you know, on rocks, and these different things with geology. So I knew that part, but he took me out and showed me what to do and gave me the basics of it and said, "Here's—you know, let's figure out what the problems are." And we figured out what the issue was and what had to be done.

And then, he and I would kind go our separate ways. I mean, I spent part of that summer just on my own doing it, and sometime, part of it with him. We camped out in the local park in this little

place called Linton, North Dakota, a very small little town. And we had our sort of tents permanently set up there in the town park, and they'd let us do that. And, um, I spent the summer out there mapping these different buttes. Then we found a lot of fossils at that time, most of which were not significant, but we were collecting things.

And eventually, I came to write a paper on that experience of naming a new member of the Fox Hills Formation, and—the Linton member. And so we end up publishing that in a journal, the *North Dakota Academy of Sciences*, the next year. And I went out to North Dakota with him to deliver the paper at the annual proceedings at the academy. And it was well-received, and they published it, and so that was my first geological publication. He made me the lead author on it, actually. So that was nice, and so it was kind of cool.

But one of the other things that happened, important to me at that juncture, was that we were taking a break from the work that I was doing and kind of investigating some other areas there. And, you know, North Dakota's a really flat place. And, you know, there's hardly any geology to look at, except where the ground kind of—these little badlands areas, once in a while, you see this outcropping of dirt. I mean, coming from New York state, I was, like, "OK, where's the rock?"

ROBERT SILBERMAN: [Laughs.]

MARK KLETT: You know, he was like, "It's right here," and it's a pile of dirt, you know? It's just this—there's this old low kind of depression, and you see a little bit of shale sticking out or something. And at first it was very foreign to me. I didn't understand this was actually geology.

But we were looking at this road cut. And we started digging it out to check what was there. And we started coming across these fossils, and it was a very interesting kind of mix of things. There was a lot of fossil leaves. And, um, a lot of this stuff had been baked, because, you know, the coal beds get baked when the—if there's coal underneath, it gets baked and so on. This particular thing wasn't; I think this was just a bunch of shale. But we found of bunch of leaves in there, it was very interesting. We were—we were taking leaf specimens.

And I come across this—I open up this—I dig a little further and I come across this thing that looks just like a horseshoe crab. And I—and I said, you know, "Mark, come here." His name was Mark Erickson, my professor. And I said, "Mark, come here. Take a look at this." And he came over and he looked at it, and he just said, "OK, don't touch anything." And we dug around this thing and we pulled this thing out like it was an archeological artifact. I mean, we were really careful and dug it out. And we're missing one little tip of this—the edge of it, and we could never find it. We kept looking for it, we could never find it.

But it turns out that this was a—this, indeed, was a horseshoe crab that we found. And it was a very unusual find, because of the environment that it was found in. We're looking at this sort of freshwater deposit—more or less freshwater. Because of the leaves involved, we knew that that's what it was. At the same time, at that era, it was believed that all the horseshoe crabs were in salt water deposit. So this was sort of an anomaly. Why was this horseshoe crab in the same area?

And it turns out that—he asked me if I wanted to do the research on it, and I didn't have time because I was—it was my senior year. I was leaving.

But—so he had somebody else do the research on it, and it turns out it was a new genus and species. So they named it after me, but they named it—it had a genus name and a species name. They named the species after me. The genus they named after Kenneth Caster, who was a well-known paleontologist—I think taught in Cincinnati for a long time. And then one of his—so it was casterolimulis kletti. So the limulus was the genus, but the family name Caster from Caster—Kenneth Caster—and casterolimulis kletti was the name of the—and it's in the Smithsonian. The Smithsonian has that original.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Great.

MARK KLETT: The—we—I have a mold of it somewhere around. I guess that what happened is it sort of—the existence of that crab verified one of Caster's theories about the migration of the crab over time, that at one point it had gone from saltwater to freshwater and then back or something, and so this was a proof of his theory. So anyway, I've got this horseshoe crab named after me.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Immortality in science as well as art. That's great.

MARK KLETT: Yeah. [They laugh.] That was—that was my—and it's somewhere in the annals of the Smithsonian are. I don't know where.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Before we go on to grad school, were you thinking—were you thinking at that point in any, um, concentrated way about the relationship between science and art, and what that meant? I mean—

MARK KLETT: I was definitely thinking about it. I didn't know—I mean, I did a—I did this senior thesis, actually, on the relationship between art and science. I don't know what happened to it. I—there was a woman—a young woman who did her PhD dissertation at BU recently, at Boston University, in which she—part of my work is in part of her dissertation. It's a Holly Markowitz. This was last year I think she finished it. But then she sent me a copy of her dissertation. I haven't really read all of it yet, but she told me she'd tried to get a copy of it at St. Lawrence and they wouldn't copy it for her, or else they couldn't find it or something. [Laughs.] I don't know which one—and I don't know if I've got a copy of it. But I think I—I told her—I said I'd be embarrassed, probably, if somebody read it.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Do you remember what sorts of things you were talking about when you had—[inaudible]?

MARK KLETT: Well, I do remember—there was a—there was a—I remember vaguely some of it. I think that a lot of it had to do with—I mean, again, I didn't know very much about art at that time, so I was very limited in my knowledge, but I had read this book—I may even have it somewhere here—it's a reprint of a book. Was the guy's name [Charles] Caffin, I think—of the sort of early 20th century, arguing about the idea of photography in art or something?

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Coffin.

MARK KLETT: Coffin. Coffin? Yeah, I—you know, and now I can't remember. But I read that book, and—at the time—and I was thinking, this is, you know, I've got some issues with this. And I think that was part of it. I think I was trying to deal with what he was saying. And I don't—I don't even remember what I said. I don't remember what he said either. This is so long ago that I just remember being—that that was a—held a place within this argument I was creating. But I don't—I don't even remember what it was.

I don't think, in retrospect, it was probably very good at all, and that's why I'd be embarrassed if anybody found it. But I was struggling to kind of deal with my ideas about it at the time. But I know it was—it was an interest of—definitely an interest of mine. So you know, it played in—it played a factor. So I did this—you know, I think it was just great that Mark Erickson and that the geology folks there actually let me do it, you know. I thought this is a remarkable thing that they're—that they're open to this. I think I was their first honors graduate, actually.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Were you photographing out in North Dakota? I mean, when you went on—

MARK KLETT: No, I didn't. I—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: But when you went on your geology field trips, were you out photographing or just—

MARK KLETT: Yeah. I don't—you know, that's a good question. I don't know if I ever made any pictures out there. I probably did, but I don't know what happened to them if I did. I'm—I had a camera, so obviously I probably brought the 35-millimeter with me, but I probably made, like, geology-type pictures. I don't remember making pictures for fun. I don't think I remember making pictures that I thought were my art pieces or whatever, you know, whatever I was doing for that. I think I—but I remember at the time paying attention to the way those guys made pictures, the way geologists did, which was—oh, you know, just—I mean, Mark, you know, when we went and found that horseshoe crab, was like, don't move, and he's taking pictures of it, you know.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Right.

MARK KLETT: I mean, I remember taking pictures that would be useful to geologic presentations, but I don't remember whatever happened to them. You know, I don't have any idea of what they even look like anymore. But, um—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: So you had a dilemma: art or science. Can they—either or both.

MARK KLETT: Yeah, I had a dilemma about what to do next. Most of my colleagues were going on to graduate school, and—which is what most people did out of that program. That's why I was saying they had a very high percentage of Ph.Ds. come out of that program.

So I had a clear path for that. And because I had done some research, I was in a really good position to do it. But what even cemented it further was that as I graduated, or—and I knew this was happening, that the spring before I graduated Mark told me that they were recommending me for the position that they had with the USGS. They had an—they had a position—the USGS was asking St. Lawrence to provide them with graduates as field assistants for geologists in the field. And they did this through an NSF money that they had. They had an NSF program where they would place college graduates out of geology programs into the field with USGS geologists.

And so St. Lawrence had one position they were allowed to give in this NSF grant, and they nominated me to do that. And I—to this day, I'm really quite stunned by that because there were—there were several other people in my class that in fact did go on to get PhDs that they didn't recommend. So—but I had—I did have, at that point, the most field experience, I guess, because I had done—had done this work.

So I was nominated for that, and I wanted to do it, but at the same time I really didn't want to—I was trying to decide, and I really didn't, in my heart, want to go on in geology. It was just a real choice I had to make. I knew what was coming up. I had done enough of the research, and I had published it, and I knew what it entailed, that if I was—I mean, and I liked it, and it was fun to me. But it also wasn't, you know, compelling to me. It was the kind of thing that I could do. I think I was getting good at it. I think that I could certainly, you know, get through a program and everything, but it didn't feel like it was what I wanted to get up in the morning and do.

And so I thought about photography, and I thought, you know, this is just far more compelling to me. It's a matter of the heart, really. But, at that time, also, Tom Southall again enters into the picture because Tom had already graduated. He was a year ahead of me. And what Tom had decided to do was take the year and go to Rochester and study at the Visual Studies Workshop. Now, the Visual Studies Workshop at that time had two levels of program. They had a workshop program, in which anybody could join and take classes, and then they had a graduate program, which was through SUNY Buffalo at the time. And so it actually—in actuality, the classes were combined. I mean, you had this mix of people.

So Tom was taking classes at VSW, and I would go down to visit him, and so I got to see VSW, and I could see what was going on at VSW. I remember I went down—there an SPE conference one year. I think that was the year I was graduating, I believe.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Society for Photographic Education?

MARK KLETT: Yes, Society for Photographic Education. I remember seeing a number of things, but I went down, and I met people. I met some of the workshop students and the grad students, and I—and I got introduced to who this guy Nathan Lyons was because I didn't know, of course, who Nathan Lyons was and anything about him. But because Tom was there, I then understood who Nathan was, and I got to learn who Nathan was, and I—and the whole idea of the workshop being a kind of alternative program to a university program and a very unusual program, not like a typical university program.

So I was thinking that, you know, maybe this could be an option, perhaps, for me. I mean, one of the—one of the dilemmas that I had was I wasn't sure how I was going to get into a graduate program if I didn't have any background in art. So how could I get in—how could I be accepted into an art program without this kind of background? Was I going to have to take remedial classes, and so on? And of course, I knew what it was—what it was going to entail to go on to graduate school in science. I mean, I've got the GREs. I've got—and this other stuff, and—but that's where my background was. But how's this going to work?

And then I—once I saw the workshop, and I thought, well, these guys, they're alternative. They're not really—they're not—they're not, you know, enforcing this kind of highly academic standard upon what they're looking for. And in fact, what they're doing is they're really pushing the experimental aspects of the medium, and that appealed to me. I thought, this is really quite interesting, what's going on here.

So when it—when it did come to the time of making the decision, I think it—I probably didn't spend a lot of sleepless nights over it. And I think I really finally just—I mean, you know, I—in my heart, I knew what I wanted to do, and so I sent off an application to the VSW and U of—you

know, at SUNY Buffalo—I forget how it worked, but I sent this application off to the graduate program.

When I—when I look back now on—or think back now on the pictures that I submitted, which were a real hodgepodge of different things—there were some Uelsmann-like pictures, there were some landscapes, there—I don't even remember exactly what the pictures were, but there was a real mixture of things in there. It wasn't at all, like, consistent in any way. I know that with that kind of portfolio I would never get into a graduate program today. I wouldn't get close to getting into ours.

But anyway, that's what I had, and I—and I sent it off. Um, and actually, I got in. I mean, I was shocked and delighted that I got in, but—so that kind of sealed it for me, once I realized that I—once I found out that I got in the program, um, then I—that made it—that's where I was going to go, you know, after that. My parents weren't very happy about that decision. They thought that I had a good thing going with geology, that that was a pathway to making a living and having a career, but that doing art probably wouldn't get me there. But they were—they were willing to—you know, they weren't going to stop me, and they were willing to, you know, support me.

They couldn't support me financially. That was the one thing, you know, they said basically, we were helping you, you know, with your loans and everything in undergraduate school, but when it comes to graduate school, you're going to have to do this yourself. And—but you know, the thing is that it didn't cost much because I got a waiver and everything at the workshop. So it really—I didn't have to go into much debt, which is unlike today, unfortunately. Today is really bad, but—so it didn't—it wasn't a big deal, and I did—I did take the job with the USGS in the summers. So I went to work for them, and I made some money in the summers, and I then applied that to graduate school in the—in the fall and winter. So that—it wasn't enough to cover everything, but it got me through a lot of it, and then I worked jobs in Rochester. I had jobs, part-time jobs to make the rest of it work.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: And the USGS—just before we go back to the Visual Studies Workshop—that was surveying out West—Wyoming and Montana, or—

MARK KLETT: No, I was in the energy branch.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Oh.

MARK KLETT: And I—and I worked mapping coal.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Okay.

MARK KLETT: Yeah, that was a time—you know, this was like the mid-'70s. I graduated in '74, so I worked '74, '75, '76 for the USGS in the summertime. And at that—they had a lot of money for coal development then, so I really spent—I mean, I had a pretty good setup. I had a—I had a couple of guys that I—one immediate supervisor, and another guy that was his boss, and the three of us and sometimes four—there was another field assistant—sometimes there was four of us in the field.

We would—first year we lived out of Sheridan, Wyoming, in a trailer that was a kind of a mobile thing we drove up. The next two years, we lived in—or we were stationed out of Montana, one—the second—in '75, we were in a little town called Birney, which is a tiny little place. And then in '76, we were in this guy's ranch, and we just had the trailer on his ranch. So it got more and more remote as time went on.

As I started in, in '75—or '74, rather—they were a little bit—they weren't sure about me, and they—you know, they weren't sure about my skill level because they were just training me. And I remember this one really difficult situation—and my boss thought I might—was kind of like a little bit of a carouser because I used to like to go out with this other guy just to the bar at night, and—you know, I mean, God, I'm 21 years old, you know. And he wouldn't do that, and he used to get up at 5:30 in the morning every morning, and—oh God, and just think to get up to work with him, you know, to go out to work.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: [Laughs.]

MARK KLETT: And I remember mapping this—after he trained me a little bit, then he figured I knew what I was doing, and he let me go off on my own. So I used to go off, and week after week I'd come in with my maps, and we'd put them together on this bigger map, and so on. And he'd

check my—he'd quiz me about things and make sure that I'm not screwing up, you know.

So I remember going this one time—his—I went to this really confusing area, and I spent like a couple of days trying to figure it out. And I realized there was this fault running through it. It was really covered over. You couldn't see the evidence very well. But I got enough together where I could piece it together and figure out there's this pretty massive fault in there. So I drew it into my map, and he looks at that. I put it on there, on his—on the—on the base map that we were both working on, and he looks at it, and he goes, "What is this?" And I said, "Well, it's a big fault." "Well, like, how much?" And I said, "Well, I mean, 65 feet drop, and there's this kind of—this, like, strike-slip, you know, fault or whatever."

And I can see the look on his face like, oh my God, you know. I guess these are guys that they—to them, this is like a major thing, you know. You don't just speculate that there's a fault there. You have to prove it, you know. This is a big deal. So he's like, okay, take me out and show this to me. And I'm thinking, oh God, he thinks I fucked up. I mean, we're—[laughs]—though he thinks that the—like the whole summer is, like, down the tubes, and he can't trust this guy, you know.

So I'm starting to sweat, you know, and this is like—this is the same year that Nixon resigns.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: [Laughs.]

MARK KLETT: And it—and there was that—I kept thinking of this like, Nixon is getting exonerated. I'm going to be exonerated. [They laugh.] And I'm thinking, oh my God, you know, I'm going to be like—I'll have to resign, you know. So I take him out in the field, and I spent the whole day showing him the evidence, and you know, by the end of the day, he's scratching his head going, "You know, you're right." There is a fault here. And I just felt like, yes, exonerated! [They laugh.] I was exonerated.

And then like a week later we get—we hired this airplane to take us up, and we started flying over it, and he goes, yeah, you can clearly see it now, and he was—and he was totally into it because his boss was doing the same thing. His boss was going, "What do you mean there's a fault here," you know. And so that time, my stock went up, you know. So by this time they were like, "OK, this kid's got some—he knows what he's doing," you know. So then—that's why they rehired me after that. And then the next year they said, "You want to come work again?" I said, "Sure."

So I did that for several—for the three years for them. But what happened then, the second year and the third year, was that my boss was called away doing environmental impact statements. So I was left alone for a lot of the time. So I just ended up mapping. I ended up—like I would map about one—about one to one-and-a-half, seven-and-a-half minute quadrangles a summer in a very detailed way, putting the coal beds on the map.

So this was very laborious and kind of detailed work. I literally had to hike out most of the territory. I'd park and then hike into it. When I found the coal beds—and I—basically, I knew where they were. They're just covered up for the most part. This is kind of badlands type topography, like covered over with a lot of grasslands. It was cow country, but there were places where you could sort of see it exposed. And then when you found the coal bed, you would dig it out and then measure it and then plot it on the map, so you could develop this system of where the coal was. The USGS needed to calculate the coal reserves for these areas before they could lease out the land.

Now, I kind of saw it as a little bit of a buffer because the oil companies knew where all the coal was, and they knew—they were only interested in really big beds, like the 40, 50, 60-foot beds. And you could see them pretty clearly from the air, so they were doing the aerial photography mapping. But we were doing it piece by piece because they wanted to calculate every little one or two-foot stringer of coal to get it in there.

So I spent a lot of time out in the field doing this work with him and—but basically on my own. And I developed a sense of being in the landscape by myself. And this goes back to the days when I was a kid, but it also became something that—in the beginning, I wasn't sure—did I make the right decision? I mean, you know, this isn't as much fun as I thought. But later it really was. I started to get really intimate with that territory and that land, and I got to know the land by the time, too.

It was a hot job. I mean, in the morning, it was quite beautiful. We started out very early. Like I

said, my boss was up at 5:00, 5:30 every morning. I was sharing the trailer with him, so I was up too. We'd start off at 6:00, 6:30, you know, in the work, and he would come back at 3:00. I'd stay out until 5:00 usually, and the light got really beautiful, and I mean, I got to where I really knew the rhythm of the place and got to really appreciate even the difficulty that you had to endure, the physical kind of discomfort. I got to really appreciate the land, in spite of that.

And I got to know it very intimately, and I had in my head this kind of image of place that was related to experience and related to map, just like when I was a teenager going and looking at maps. Yet I was making the maps, in a sense. I was putting the stuff on the maps. And so it was this activity of actually mapping and understanding the relationship and how it all fit together, and enduring the experience of place, which was both pleasureful and then, you know, a lot of displeasure too, I mean, a lot of difficulty.

And I began to really feel like this was something that I really liked to do, this idea of fieldwork. And I could really understand how my boss, who was in his 50s, lived for it. I mean, he just lived for coming out there. He had spent his winters in Denver, you know, putting together all these reports and paperwork and stuff, and then couldn't wait to get out and do this fieldwork in the summer. And I—at first I wasn't sure, but later I understood—I know exactly how he feels now about why he likes to do this.

Now, at the same time, I'm going back to Rochester and making pictures in the winter. But it—and I had some cameras with me. But I—and I would—on my free day—I had one day a week where I could go off into town and do things. I would go off and make pictures in town. But I didn't—it didn't occur to me to make landscape photographs at that time because—I made a couple, but the thing was I felt the landscape itself was fantastic to be in. I loved it, and I was getting real intimate with it, but I couldn't figure out how the photography could relate to that. It just didn't—it seemed like two separate activities to me in some ways, that the pictures were so disappointing that it didn't make sense. And the pictures that I was making or could make would just have to do with photographing a coal bed or something that we were trying to document and not deal with the—expressing myself.

I couldn't—I couldn't make the switch. I couldn't make the switch between the idea of fieldwork and what that meant to be out there and look at something, and make a photograph of it. It just didn't make sense to me. So I didn't make landscape photographs at the time, which seems a little ironic to me now. I only made one picture that I remember that I really liked, but other than that, I just separated the activities. Now I'm—now I'm doing geology. Now I'm doing photography. They were two separate things in my life, and it just didn't come together at that time.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Yeah. Before we go back to the Visual Studies Workshop and find out how you moved forward there, what was the one picture you liked—like? [Laughs.]

MARK KLETT: It was a picture I made driving from Sheridan into, um, our camp in probably Birney, I guess, or whatever the other place was, that—on the road there was this rock that was sort of tilted up, and it had a very interesting form to it. And so I photographed this rock that was uptilted, and in the background were these nice fields, and it was color, and so the fields were kind of yellowish, and there was this rock that was kind of buff color. The ground was covered with clinker, which is this kind of red—you know, this red baked shale from the coal beds that had burned.

And so it kind of this mixture of nice color and form and—I don't know. I just stopped. I was driving along, I saw this thing, I stopped and made a picture of it, and I always liked it. But you know, it was the only picture I made, and it was because I was driving to camp, not—I wasn't on the clock doing geology, that I felt that I could do that, yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: A truck went by.

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ROBERT SILBERMAN: This is Robert Silberman interviewing Mark Klett at the artist's home in Tempe, Arizona, on December 10th, 2010, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number two. And Mark, we were going to go on to the Visual Studies Workshop and grad school.

MARK KLETT: Right. So I did enter the Visual Studies Workshop in the fall of 1974, and my first recollection of walking in the door, not knowing what to expect in an art school, was there was a

table set up and there were some people there with some papers and they said—and I said, "I'm Mark Klett." And they said, "Okay." So you know, "Here's a list; what can you do?"

And the list had things like carpentry, drywall, you know, plumbing, blah, blah, blah. And I—and I said, "Well, you know, I can—I can do drywall. I've done that before." They said, "Good. Go upstairs to the gallery and that's where you're supposed to report to and work." And so, I did, and for the first two weeks in grad school all I did was hang sheetrock and then do other things.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Work study

MARK KLETT: Yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Not a work and study.

MARK KLETT: In the Visual Studies Workshop in their gallery and that was—you know, what kind of place is this? I guess, you know—I mean, I understood the whole concept of the workshop, which was—it was sort of student-run and a cooperative. And you know, it was sort of almost like a hippie kind of environment there.

But—so I did and that was my first introduction to it. In those days, because they had two different levels of programming, the actual classes, um, were mixed with graduate students and workshop students. And the first year that I was there, I took classes that were taught by essentially, like, TAs. I mean, we would call them TAs—teaching assistants today in the university setting where I teach now. But they were, you know, people who were graduate students in the program, a little further along. And they were teaching these classes that I was in. And I didn't get to take a class with Nathan. You didn't get to study with Nathan until you were further through the program. It was a three-year program.

So my first year was largely with graduate students and I was not entirely sure what I was doing at all or even why I was there. But I was—I was going on okay, and I got to know my other students. And they had interesting backgrounds too. I'd come to realize that the one thing the workshop was looking for were people that had unusual and different backgrounds. So that's kind of why, you know, I fit in there.

Ironically, Tom Southall, who had got me into the place—or got me interested in the place and got me to know about it—had moved on. He, um, got accepted as an art history student at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque to study with Beaumont Newhall. So Tom decided to move from a practicing photographer to a historian.

And he was unclear about which one he wanted to be. I think at this point he made a decision. So he moved on to Albuquerque at that time. So Tom wasn't there anymore. But I came down, and one of the guys that I went to college with—I actually didn't know very well in college—Tom French. Tom came down too. So the two of us were roommates together and we were for the full three years I was there. Tom later became a graduate student. He wasn't a graduate student the first year, but he became a grad student later.

So I started off and, you know, I think it was a rather uneventful year in a lot of respects. I still wasn't quite sure what I was doing there. But I was getting a lot of exposure to what photography was at this point and what the possibilities were.

You know, the Visual Studies Workshop was very experimental in its outlook in those days; the kinds of work they were showing in the gallery and the kinds of people they were bringing in. You know, think about the '70s as alternative processes, experimentation with things. And they certainly had classes of that.

I remember taking a class that used the early Xerox process. I think the Xerox Company, whatever, they—their original ways of making copies had to do with a copy camera and a big selenium plate that they used to electrostatically charge.

And then I was kind of, like, literally a big copy camera with a big plate at the end of it that you put—you know, it was charged up and you could photograph something and that would end up—I forget the details of how it worked but it would end up being exposed somehow on this plate.

So they had stuff like that. I remember doing silk-screening—photo silk-screening and video—early video. This was reel-to-reel, black-and-white video, you know. [Laughs.] This was pretty must cast-off material. The workshop had very little money, so we were doing a lot of labor.

And I'd run into Nathan periodically, and he would lecture sometimes and we would listen to him. And he would hold court, you know. Everybody was there to study with Nathan, one way or the other.

And so he had these sort of packed rooms, you know, that he would go off on the state of photography or what it meant to be a photo field and, you know, so on and so on. And everybody would pack in there and listen to it.

You know, the place was kind of a tough place. It wasn't a very nurturing kind of environment. You know, Nathan used to say, "I'm not here to pat you on the back," you know. And the year before I got there—they changed it before I got there but they used to have these incredible sessions where when somebody was presenting their graduate thesis, they'd have a show and they would put their work up and then the whole workshop would get together and there'd be this big room.

It's like kind of a warehouse room and everybody would sit in this room. And the poor guy would be, like, in the center of this thing getting peppered with questions about his work and at the end of which everybody would vote, literally, whether the guy should be granted a degree or not. And there were some people that got voted down.

I mean, Nathan was the ultimate arbiter because he was the only guy that was really empowered to give a degree or not through SUNY Buffalo. So he would be the one who really in the end made the call. But they were grueling—I mean, absolutely, you know, unrelenting kind of things.

And people used to argue about what it meant to have an MFA and what the value of it was. You know, this was—was the work good enough, you know, and if it wasn't good enough, it was going to reflect bad on me, you know, as a—as a fellow student. You know, they can't have that happening. So they had these big arguments about what this whole thing meant and to be engaged in it.

And it was hard. You know, it was difficult. But by the time I got there, the voting thing became a kind of silent vote. You put your ballot in a box. It didn't happen—because these things would turn into this mob mentality sometimes, I think, at the end. But anyway, we still had that voting procedure when I was there as a student.

By the time I got to my second year there, there was a new faculty member on board, and that was Michael Bishop. And Michael came in and I didn't know anything about him but I quickly learned about him because he became one of my teachers and the person I worked, you know, the most with throughout my experience at the workshop.

I had three main teachers at the workshop and one was Michael Bishop. The other was a woman named Linda Perry, and she was, um, working with Nathan and had—she had been a graduate of the workshop, and she was actually—became a full-time teacher at the workshop. And the other was Nathan. So the three of them in the end formed my graduate thesis committee.

Michael, who I started to work with at the beginning of my second year, he was kind of tough. He looked at the stuff I did the first year, and he sort of torpedoed it pretty quickly as being too soft and too mushy and too squishy and not much happening conceptually. I have to say that I started off the first year doing black-and-white but by the end of the first year I had moved into color again.

So by the second semester of my first year, I started making color photographs. I'm not really sure why I decided that. I guess I felt that I wanted to do something different and move into a territory that was a little less crowded. And I thought it was interesting and it had a lot of opportunity and I had learned how to do it in undergraduate school, so I decided to get back into it. Michael was into color.

So by the time I got to second year, he was very into it. But he, you know, didn't like what I had been doing, which was I was—I was making these pictures that were 35-millemeter but I'd sort of use a soft-focus lens or something. They were very pictorial. And he didn't like that at all so he let me know that. And you know, once I got over the initial rebuff of the whole thing, I had to agree with him, you know, that he was probably right. There's not much going on here in that way.

So what is there? I mean, what can Michael teach me. And so Michael was very conceptual. He

was very—Michael, I think, was—in my view, he was one of the best formalists of that time.

I mean, he made pictures that nobody else was making in the sense of the picture plain being flattened. I mean, certainly, you know, we know about Friedlander's work and other people's work who played with the picture flattening and understanding the space in that way.

But Michael took it on as a direct issue. He worked in black-and-white, but he also worked in color, and he was rapidly moving into color. He would do these outrageous things. It seemed outrageous at the time—you know, photographing a place—like, here's a street scene and there's an orange cone on the ground. And he would take the picture and turn it all green, you know, or all blue or brown. But the orange cone would still be orange and he would say, "The interesting thing about saturation is that you can make an image that the orange will stay the same but the rest of it will go wacky," and that was the point, you know.

Well, very few people even now since that time in 30-something years have tried to make pictures that are off-color and get away with it. But he was doing it. He was pushing things in all kinds of different directions.

I mean, then later in his work he got more straight-off. But he—you know, he would make the color representational. But he would take a picture and just compress the picture space, and lines would intersect.

And I remember thinking, "This is really brilliant, you know, this idea of taking a space and the line from this building would intersect with the line from this sign or this round thing would become part of this other shape." And these things would merge because the picture space was flattened. And I thought, "This is amazing what this guy's doing."

So the other—the other influence I had was a friend of Michael's, who was Roger Mertin. And, you know, Roger—I didn't know Roger very well. I got to meet him but Roger had already graduated, and he was teaching at the University of Rochester. And here he was, Roger, and he was a Guggenheim fellow. So he was this guy who was, you know, pretty far up the ladder as far as I'm—I was concerned.

So I didn't know Roger very well. I knew him a little bit. I got to know him better later after I left VSW. But Michael and Roger were pals, and they used to hang out together. And Roger was doing this incredible stuff with flash, you know. And this was like the "jiggle-and-flash" they called it, period. You know, and people were using 35-millimeter with a flash and then pop in a flash. And Michael was doing it too.

So I started to adopt some of those techniques. So I made a lot of pictures with a flash and 35-millimeter. I carried around a little pocket-sized—in those days, a little Olympus, which was pretty small. I put it on a belt, you know, and so I had this small camera and the flash was about as big as the camera or even bigger.

And I used to go out there and take pictures of, you know, stuff walking around the neighborhoods, you know, in backyards and alleyways. I don't think the subject matter made too much difference to me. I think what really mattered was the formal aspects.

I mean, and I have to say, I mean, I was learning a lot about picture making, about what made a picture; I mean, how the picture plain worked and the flattening of space and the relationships in the picture and the way color worked. And you know, I was learning an awful lot about the stuff I never knew anything about, which was really composing and ordering and, you know, layering a photograph of all these different visual elements.

But I think it was complete abandonment in terms of what the pictures were about in some ways because I wasn't really concerned about them. I was more concerned about the structure and the image and the way the image could really be created.

And like I said, Michael was a real master of it. He was a definite—and the other thing about Michael which was great was that Michael was very giving, you know. I mean, he—you know, he'd say, "Well, you're try to make these prints, then why don't you go to something big, you know," like, big in those days was, like, 16-by-20, you know.

I could make an 11-by-14 and that was as big as I could go. I bought this processor called the Kodak Rapid Color Processor. It was a stainless steel drum that you then in the dark draped your print around and a blanket held it in place, and there was a little tray. And the drum had kind of

these little serrations on it and they would pick up the chemical and put it underneath the print.

And the drum was filled with water so you could temperature control it. And this was a big improvement over the other things where the print fit inside, so—because it was kind of mechanized, a little bit one step beyond more mechanized.

So I used to make prints with that. And—but Michael had the 16-by-20 version of it, or I guess maybe you could—well, no I guess it was 16-by-20 was the biggest you could go. But he had one of those and it was way beyond my—I couldn't afford one. So he had one of these things.

And he'd say, "Well, why don't you come over and use my processor? You can make some bigger prints." I mean, he was very generous. And he would loan me a flash, you know. He had a great 35-millimeter with a shift lens—a Nikon with a shift lens. You know, it had a little—it's a 35-millimeter or 28-millemeter. I forget which one he had. And you turned the knob and it would shift up and down and you could switch it around. So it was made for architectural photography—a very expensive lens. I couldn't afford one. I bought one later after I graduated. But—so he had this great stuff, and he was not at all worried. You know, he would lend me whatever I needed.

And then he would also—he wasn't at all possessive about his ideas, and that was the main thing because he—I mean, I was obviously moving into territory that he was. And he wasn't trying to get me to make pictures like him. At the same time, he wasn't shoving me away.

He was interested in what I was doing, and he was sharing all this knowledge and everything. "Yeah, if you want to make pictures like me, here's how I do it and why don't you think about this?" He wasn't at all worried about the territory. He said, "You know, just go ahead and do what you want. It's fine. And even if it looks like mine, it's fine." You know, he wasn't territorial about his work.

So I did—I made pictures, and they didn't look exactly like him at first, but later they became much more like him, even after I graduated. But I made these pictures and I was learning a lot from Michael, and he was my kind of more immediate contact. I had a lot to do with him, even socially. You know, we would go to parties and stuff and hang out sometimes and, you know, dinner or, you know, whatever. He was—he was fairly young and, you know, he would go out with the grads and stuff. So, you know, I used to hang out with him. So I learned a lot. I learned about this whole other world.

Like, he came from California—Southern California. And there was a whole world of music that I didn't know about, you know, that Michael did. It was a whole world and a lot of things that I learned about from him.

Then at the same time, when I finally got to be a little bit further on in my work on Nathan, I started taking classes from Nathan then at that point. And they were intense, you know, intense classes. You know, Nathan—for Nathan, photography was black-and-white. Joan Lyons told me that she—Nathan would not allow her to—Nathan would not allow her to paint any room in their house any other color but gray. [They laughs] So they had a house that was different shades of gray. And, you know, that was a time when the whole concept—black-and-white was the color of photography, you know.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Robert Frank.

MARK KLETT: Robert Frank, yeah. So, you know, Nathan was very skeptical about this new color thing that was happening. You know, we saw—and then about this time, I mean, you know, sort of we see it really opening up. I mean, certainly there were people doing color. I mean, Stephen Shore had been doing color. There were other people doing color.

You know, then at one point, you know, MoMA comes out with the Eggleston show announcing that now color photography is okay. I was a little miffed by that whole thing because, you know, it's almost like they had to pronounce that there was color in the world, that well, you know, hell, the thing was happening for some time.

And a lot of us working were really feeling like we were pioneering something. I was just a stupid grad student. But at the same time, it felt like I was engaged in something that was much broader than that. And I just kind of resented the whole idea that the museum would pronounce that, you know.

I mean, I'm sure that's not what their position was. But that's kind of the way it felt to me at the time. It just felt like they were anointing somebody as opposed to saying—I mean, instead of doing a group show saying, "Here's all these people now that are working in color," they said, "Here's one guy that we want to now, you know, anoint as the chosen one." I just resented that whole idea. And people like Michael would never be recognized by, you know, MoMA, I think, was part of the idea too. But anyway, we knew about it. We knew there were people doing it and so on. Here's my printer.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT SILBERMAN: We had to take a brief break for the delivery of the new 64-inch digital printer, which is a sign of the times. Now, we have to go back to the Visual Studies Workshop.

MARK KLETT: Right.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: We were discussing color—

MARK KLETT: Right.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: —William Eggleston's guy, Nathan Lyons' grey walls at home—

MARK KLETT: Yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: —and your work, I guess.

MARK KLETT: So I was in these seminars with Nathan, and I would bring in my color work, and he was very skeptical of it. And so he used to kind of give me a hard time. I mean, that was Nathan's technique a little bit, too, as a teacher. I got to realize later that having a hard time with Nathan wasn't a bad thing.

I mean, it felt like a bad thing because—I remember after one particularly grueling critique, I went outside, you know, and just kind of—you have to just kind of, "Whew," you know, "It's over." And one of the fellows—one of my fellow students came up to me, and she put her arms around me and said, "I hate being in the room when you're having critique—[laughs]—because it's always so kind of rough and grueling."

But the thing I learned about Nathan was that he didn't do that to be bad, to be hard on somebody. He did it to be questioning. And the other thing he did was that I realized he did it after a while because he realized he was getting a response from me. I mean, if he did it and I was responding to it and things were happening, then it was working. You know, and so there was—there was kind of a reason to push.

And I understood, too, about Nathan's technique which was that he always—you know, he would bring up the most difficult things and the roughest things that you didn't want to have come up about your work.

But when he was done, he didn't leave you on the floor. I mean, he really sort of had a way of making it hard but then making you want to go back out there again and do more. I mean, by the end of the critique, you felt like you just wanted to get out there and, you know, you were going to deal with these issues and, you know, kind of make things happen.

And so I felt oddly energized as well as, you know, kind of put down in some—in some ways that was difficult. It wasn't a vindictive or negative thing. It was—it was really more probing and, you know, and the more that he felt that you were responding to that and you were actually giving him something to think about, the harder it was in some ways.

So it was actually a sign of his level of interest. I remember having discussions like that about the work and kind of by the time I had—by the time I was ready to graduate, the last semester of my time at the workshop, I just remember having kind of this amazing conversation with him during a critique.

And you know, there was a bunch of people in the room. You know, we started talking and it's almost like he and I are the only people in the room. We're having this conversation about the work and I don't think anybody else was understanding a word of it.

And at the end of it, I just said, "Well, why haven't we talked like this before?" And he just said something, "Well, you know, people, they think they're doing one thing when they're really not,"

and, you know, he kind of deferred. He didn't really address the question.

But I really understood that that was kind of more part of his teaching technique. And then at one point—I mean, he was really asking very pointed questions, and we got into a position where we were talking about the work where it was less about the questions and more about the content and the meaning and the choices and all kinds of things that were so specific that I think only he and I were even on the same wavelength at one point.

It was a very interesting moment that happened to me with him. But he was tough. I mean, he was tough on color because he didn't understand it. He didn't necessarily like it, and he knew that things were changing and he wanted to understand more about it. And I think that, you know, I was just one of those people that happened to be doing it.

And I was really the only person at that time doing it straight-off color that I was the focus of a little bit of intensity for a while. There was another student at the workshop who had been working in color—Kenda North. And Kenda was—graduated a year or so before me, and she wasn't around much. But I got to know her at the end of my stay in Rochester. She was hand-coloring matrices for matrix film for dye transfer. So she was making hand-colored dye transfers. She was the only other person around the time—any other student who was doing color. Michael was the only person on the faculty doing it.

So there was kind of an intense period there, um, you know, for me. But it was also a very interesting period. Interspersed with this, of course, I was coming back from the summer doing geology.

And one of these times was significant because the last summer that I went to do geology was the summer of '76, and I went out to visit Tom Southall who was in Albuquerque at UNM as a graduate student there. And I did it pretty much every summer. I would have to report to Denver for work and then drive up to Montana or Wyoming.

But before I went to Denver, I would stop into Albuquerque and see Tom, and we would spend a few days catching up and doing photo talk and stuff like that. This last time, Tom said, "I'm going to go up to Santa Fe to see Richard Rudisill at the Museum of New Mexico. Why don't we go up together?"

And so we did and I met Rudisill and told him that I was, you know, on my way to work for the USGS in Denver.

And he said, "Oh, well, you know, there's these two USGS geologists who are trying to relocate and make new pictures at the sites of—you know, photographs made by William Henry Jackson and some other photographers and they're trying to get to the exact place and remake the pictures because they want to study the way the land has changed."

And so I thought, "Wow, that's interesting." I'd never heard of that before and they're USGS guys. I wonder if I could work for them instead of doing what I'm doing." You know, so I put that in the back of my head and I went up and did my job as usual.

But then in the fall, when I got back, I wrote to those guys and it was Hal Malde and, um, gee, I was just thinking of this guy's name the other day and I can' think of it right now. I'll think of it in a minute. Anyway, I wrote to them and I said—Wayne Lambert. It was Wayne Lambert, the other guy.

And I wrote them and said, 'You know, if you're doing this kind of work, I've been working for the USGS and I'd love to do this if I can work for you." And I got a letter back from Malde I think it was and they said, "You know, we love the idea. We think it's a great idea but we don't have any money for it. We're just doing it on our own. So we can't hire you, you know."

So I just said, "That's too bad," and I mentioned it to a friend of mine who was teaching at the workshop.

He was a fellow graduate student—that I had this idea to, you know, it would be fun to go back and repeat these early historic photographs which by this time I knew something about because I, you know, had been learning more about the history of photography and, you know, so on and I'd seen shows at the workshop—or I mean at the Eastman House and whatever.

So, um, you know, he said, "Oh, well you should meet Ellen Manchester. She's a friend of mine

and she's coming back into town for Thanksgiving and, you know, she's got the same idea. She's been thinking about it too. She told me about the same thing," and so I said, "Great, okay."

So when that rolled around, I met Ellen and she—you know, right off the bat she started talking about, "Well, we can put together a proposal and put a proposal into the NEA—National Endowment for the Arts—and we can get some money for this if we do it right. You know, they have a project category and we could maybe get some money."

And she was teaching at Colorado Mountain College in Breckenridge, Colorado, and that was going to be the sponsor. She said, "We can get the college to sponsor it and there's all these Jacksons that were made in Colorado and we can do them and blah, blah, blah."

And I'm thinking, "You know, who is this woman—[laughs]—who has just met me, who doesn't know me from Adam. You know, she doesn't know if I can make a picture or not and she's willing to just jump right into this thing." And I just thought this was totally bizarre.

But I thought, "Okay, fine, you know, let's talk about it." So the next day or the day later, I don't know how this happened but I mentioned it to JoAnn Verburg and JoAnn was a friend of mine. We hadn't known each other real long but we'd been hanging out together a little bit.

She and I were introduced by a Magnum photographer named Gilles Peress. And Gilles was in town to do a story of some kind for—about the educational—the photo teaching that was happening at Rochester. And he was hanging out at the workshop and taking pictures and talking to grad students like me. And he was hanging out at RIT and different places.

So I was talking to Gilles. We spent a little time. We were talking about things and hanging out. And he said, "You've got to meet this woman from RIT. You've got to meet her," you know, and so it's JoAnn Verburg. So he got us together. He introduced Joanne and I.

And so we just—we just started hanging out. We were just friends. You know, we'd go to movies together. We'd maybe go to dinner or something and we just were hanging out and real casual kind of, just as friends hanging out and talking about things. And I liked JoAnn's thinking and I liked her mind. I thought she was really interesting and we had a good time talking about all kinds of different things.

JoAnn was really interested in conceptual art and so was I. You have to understand that what was happening—I should—I need to really say this about the things that were happening at the Eastman House because this was really critical at that time. You know, there was two shows that were I think really important to me.

And you know, one of course was the *New Topographics* exhibition and that—that's a show that—I think it's so famous now and people know all about it. You know, people talk about it and every place I go—I mean, I go to Europe, I go to Asia. Everybody knows about this exhibition. Well, you know, I mean, it was a show that I think very few people saw really in person. And I was very happy that I did get to see it.

So I remember going over to the Eastman House and looking at that show and one of my first reactions to the show was, "Well, where's the topographics?" You know, I mean, I didn't see it because, I mean, I thought that's what I was doing in the summer was—I was making maps.

I was, you know—I knew what the idea of being topographical was and if you—it wasn't even a word but I knew what the idea of, you know, topographical maps and mapping and, you know, dealing with that kind of stuff was. And then I looked at the pictures and I thought, "Well, yeah, I mean, I know what this is like. I mean, I've been out West. I live in a trailer when I'm out there," thinking of Robert Adams' trailer picture.

I mean, I kind of—you know, this is not new to me. I understand this. I mean, this is the way the modern West looks, you know. This is true. But I mean, it's not topographical in that sense. I didn't quite get that part of it. But at the same time, I was thinking, "This is—you know, it's kind of cool that this is the subject of an exhibition and it's very, I think, engaging."

But I don't—I'm not sure about this one part of it, this idea of objectivity or, you know, this other part that Bill wrote about—Bill Jenkins wrote about in the catalogue. And I got to know Bill Jenkins very briefly because, um, you know, he was the curator over there. And all of us of course being young students wanted to show our work to Bill Jenkins and have him, you know, look at it and think about it and so forth.

So I did make an appointment to go see Bill and I went over to the Eastman House, which was just right across the street from the old workshop space on Elton Street. And I showed Bill my work.

And you know, Bill was real interested in it and he bought a couple of pictures and I was just blown away: "Wow, my first museum sale, right there." You know, so I get to know this—I just get to know him very, very briefly. You know, I just get to meet him.

And later of course, this is important for me because he's my colleague now and I've worked with Bill for now almost 28—almost 29 years here at ASU. And we're friends and we do things.

But at the time, I mean, he seemed like this totally, you know, inaccessible and, you know, high-up sort of curator that we all wanted to see. But I still credit him with, you know, giving my first museum, you know, break and buying my work.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: What were those pictures?

MARK KLETT: They were pictures like I was making, you know, for my thesis show. They were the kind of flash-jiggle pictures kind of pictures. I don't remember what they were exactly. But you know, he bought a couple there at the Eastman House.

Anyway, the other—I mean, so that figures—that idea of the *New Topographics* show figures in really important into the creation of what became our project—Ellen and JoAnn and I. I introduced JoAnn to Ellen and the three of us got together. And we got together in Ellen—or JoAnn's apartment and we started talking about the idea of doing a project that would rephotograph these historic survey photographs.

And so that became the origin of the concept of the Rephotographic Survey Project. We didn't really have a name for it at first. I don't remember when the name came actually. But we had to put some kind of name to it.

Ellen said she would go back to the college and write up a grant using their umbrella as the sponsoring institution and their in-kind donations as the matching funding for the project. And she would, you know, then let us see what that was going to look like once she did it.

But at that time, we conceptualized what the project would be about, what we would try do it, what do we want to accomplish. And so we agreed that we would take on the idea of remaking a picture—a historic photograph from the exact same vantage point as close as we could find and to the original vantage point and also try to duplicate the other physical variables like lighting.

We decided we weren't going to try to do the process. We weren't going to go back to wet-plate photography. But we thought, you know, we're just going to try to occupy the space and, you know. But we weren't really sure. We weren't really totally convinced about what we should do for this project.

So one of the things that we decided to write into the grant was that it was going to be a pilot project. And so what we proposed to the NEA was to create a pilot project for doing a rephotographic-type project and we were going to try to figure out what the methodology should be and what we were going to learn from it.

And so that was the real proposal. It wasn't like we're going to come up with this real product because we weren't even sure we were going to do it. But what we thought we could do was at least say we're going to make this the idea of exploring the possibility for doing this kind of work. So Ellen went back and she did a lot of hard work and worked with all the folks at the college.

And they came up with, you know, the grant. We weren't really so much a part of that, JoAnn and I, because that was something that they did there. But I mean, Ellen was keeping us advised about all of this and what was happening. But she really did the hard work of kind of making that happen and then would submit it to the NEA.

Now, the thing about the three of us was that we realized right off we were all going to get along. We kind of liked each other. We liked the conversation we were having and, you know, one of the things I liked about JoAnn was that she was the kind of person that really worked well with other people.

I mean, she just really knew how to, you know, work with other folks and make people feel good

and, you know, work together and so forth. And so it was nice. It was kind of a nice mix. You know, I felt comfortable with these people that I didn't know very well. I mean, I knew JoAnn a little bit but Ellen I was just starting to get to know at all.

And the other thing that—I mentioned two shows at the Eastman House. And the other show that was really important and I'm going to space on the name now because I always get it mixed up with all these. It was the show that was on conceptual photography that Bill put together. And I'm just spacing on the name because I get it mixed up with some of the shows that Nathan put together.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: *Radical, Rational, Space, Time*—there were a whole group of conceptual shows at that time, yeah.

MARK KLETT: That was one Berger did.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Yeah, that was.

MARK KLETT: But no, it was—why can't I think of the name of that show? This is the trouble with having—with getting older, I guess. But I mean, it's kind of—see, Nathan did, like, *Vision and Expression*. But it wasn't that. God, you know—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: We'll look it up.

MARK KLETT: Yeah, I'm just—I hate it when I can't remember these things. But anyway, the show that Bill put together which I thought was equally influential to me besides *New Topographics* was a show of conceptual photography.

And, you know, in there for example you have, you know, John Baldessari, you know, the 36 attempts to throw the balls in the air and get them in a straight line, or you know, Robert Cumming, you know.

And so I just thought that was a really interesting show and I thought this is a pretty amazing idea. Bill now will talk about—and I'm sure the new catalog which I have here for the *New Topographics*, Britt Salvesen talks about some of the important, you know, foundations for a show like *New Topographics*.

And you know, one of them—and Bill talks freely about the idea of Ed Ruscha and some of the stuff that Ruscha had done influencing him and his thinking and a lot of the photographers involved. And you know, that wasn't really important to us at the time.

I remember thinking about—I remember seeing Ruscha's books and, you know, because the workshop had them and looking at the sunset strip and the *Royal Road Test* and stuff like that. I couldn't say that I really understood it at the time. I just sort of thought, "This is intriguing. I'm not even sure that I like this stuff but I think it's really kind of interesting, you know."

But the stuff like the Baldessari and the Cumming work, I mean, I just thought that was great. I really enjoyed seeing that work. And anyway, that was one of the factors that entered into our thinking.

When we came together, it was pretty clear, Ellen and JoAnn and I, that we had these three areas of expertise or real exposure to things that were kind of driving us. And you know, me, I was looking for a way to get out in the field again and I just really wanted to do field work.

But I wanted to do photography now in a way that was sort of topographical but, you know, I didn't want to do the same kind of picture making that, like these guys in *New Topographics* were doing. But I did want to get out maybe in the West again and I wanted to make pictures about this place and the idea of rephotography really was a good way, you know, to do it I thought.

And so I was interested in the idea of fieldwork and topography and, you know, change and stuff like that, what we could learn from it. Ellen was really interested in the photo history which is where she was coming from and she really wanted to know what we could learn from, you know, rephotographing these pictures.

What would they tell us about the history, the way these guys made pictures, you know, about the decisions they made and so forth and also about change and so on. And then JoAnn was interested in all of that same stuff too but she was also interested in conceptual art, as was I. So

we had these kind of mergers of, you know, conceptual art, physicality of landscape and being in a landscape and then photo history.

And those were the three things that really kind of brought us together and then we talked about on kind of a conceptual level when we first met about why we would even do this project and what the stuff that we were—why it was interesting to us to begin with. So anyway, Ellen took it off.

She took all the ideas and everything and took it with her. And she went back to Colorado and she started to put together the grant proposal, which then got submitted. And in the spring, I went to—I went with Ellen down to an SPE meeting once again, an SPE meeting to—and it was in New York.

And so we went down there and we met Kathy Gauss and Kathy was the visual arts director at the NEA. In those days, I mean, a lot of people used to come to the SPE meetings. They weren't that big. And all the curators and people used to come to them. It was really great actually.

So it wasn't just the artists that used to come. It was, you know—now the curators have their oracle thing and whatever. But in those days they used to go to SPE. So Kathy was there and she said, "You know, you guys are going to get funded." We were like, "Whoa!" [Laughs.]

I was like, "Are you kidding? So now we've got to do this, you know." So that was in March. And so at this point I'm thinking I had my show scheduled. I think my show—my thesis show was scheduled for the fall. And I thought this wasn't going to work. So I went back to Nathan and I said, "You know, um, would you be okay if I pushed my show up?" And his response was, "How refreshing!" [Laughs.]

ROBERT SILBERMAN: The first in history.

MARK KLETT: Yeah. Everybody wants to push it back. He said, "Yeah." You know, I told him the story and he said, "Yeah, okay, sure." So I got scheduled like the last show of the semester, the last possible time that you could have an exhibition. I don't know how that worked but I got it somehow. And then my plan was to finish up and get out, you know, so. And I did. I finished up. And you know, I had the last show of the season. I think I might have had the last show in the old workshop actually because the next year they moved to the new space that was the old school of music facility on Prince Street where they are now.

But I was the last, I think, thesis exhibition in the old Elton Street workshop. And got out of Rochester and headed up to, you know, Breckenridge. That was kind of the big transition. Yeah, there was a lot of things that happened that last semester, a lot of things kind of paving the way for me to leave. But I really had a focus at that point. I needed to get out and get done.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Before we move to Breckenridge and back to the Rephotographic Survey Project, could you just talk a little more about what was in the show? And—

MARK KLETT: —My show?

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Your show and what work you did before you left and then you mentioned Linda Perry as the third person on your committee.

MARK KLETT: Yes. Yeah, yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Could you talk about her role in your work?

MARK KLETT: Yeah. Linda was—had been a student of Nathan's and then she was now teaching full-time at the workshop. Her work was really focused on people. So she did black-and-white photographs. I mean, I can't describe her photographs very well.

But you know, she was very much focused on the people in the pictures. I don't call them documentary pictures. They're much more expressive than that sense. I mean, I think the pictures that she—the kinds of things that she was interested in, you know, had to do with human relations, you know, kind of the psychological dramas that occur.

I mean, I'm badly representing her I think. But what I got out of her work was her input into my work and her influence on my thesis work was that she wasn't just interested in the fact that I was making pictures that were flash-and-jiggle or, you know, images that were, you know, very formal which was Michael's interest in things.

She was much more interested in the content, what it meant for me to do it, what it meant for the things to be photographed, what the implications were in a much broader sense and on a human scale of those things. So it wasn't just a formalist exercise.

And so she was always quizzing me and questioning about those things, what it meant to me in terms of my practice and in my process to do that to integrate kind of—well, I think of it now as kind of intuitive practice—into working. And the process of working intuitively is very interesting.

And it's something I think I should talk about in terms of my practice maybe later when we get to the concept that I have of being a photographer and understanding the relationship and my practice over the years and how it's changed and what I, in fact, impart to my students.

But intuitive practice, which is something I really worked on in those days, had a lot to do with making a lot of pictures and then editing and learning from the pictures. And that has to do with is there something in the idea of making the work that relates to yourself, to the world at large, to other people, to life in general.

I mean, it's much, much broader—everything from kind of a very personal to a psychological to, you know, a social, a cultural, you know, larger, much larger concerns. And these are things that I wasn't, you know, automatically tuned into be dealing with. And she was pushing me, always pushing me to kind of deal with these concepts.

And you know, I mean, I think certainly—I mean, even—those are things that we didn't necessarily talk a lot about. I mean, in photography in those days. I mean, there was a period when Minor White and, you know, Paul Caponigro and those guys were—I mean, you looked at *Aperture* and you couldn't not think of the Minor White influence on *Aperture* and what—you know, it sort of goes back to the Paul Caponigro hemline of God idea, you know, that you can deal with something spiritual in a photograph.

Well, we were aware that this was part of the history. But in some ways, this sort of new thing was happening and we were all young guys, you know, doing this stuff and, you know, women and young guys doing these things. You know, we were breaking away from even that.

I mean, it was like it was not an emotional kind of thing. It was more kind of this real, you know, let's deal with how images are made kind of thing, let's attack the idea of image making from—even the idea of formalism was a kind of attack on modernism in some way.

You know, to kind of deconstruct—I can't use that word because it came later. But I mean, to really kind of—you know, I mean, everybody thinks they're recreating the world, you know, when you're in your 20s. And I think that was—we were seeing ourselves on this mission in some way.

And formalism played a large role in that. Well, Linda's position was to temper that really. I mean, there's more to it than that and of course there is. And I think even if we look at the Rephotographic Survey Project, we said, "Well, one of the reasons why we might even be interested in change is that there's culture involved."

I mean, that's really something that—I mean, we took for granted in a way. So we didn't talk about it very much. But of course it was there, you know, because if you're dealing with culture and you're dealing with the way people look at things, I mean, that's always, you know, kind of important. But so that was something that Linda brought to my work.

I mean, yeah, and there's more to it than that. and so by editing the work, by putting the work together in certain ways, by you know, by choosing one picture over another and placing it next to another picture and so on, that—and by the way, Nathan's—I mean, Nathan's whole thing was that images don't exist by themselves.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Sequencing, and Minor White.

MARK KLETT: Yeah. One of his major things—one of his major influences has to do with—for me, has to do with the fact that images do not exist by themselves. I mean, they exist within groups. And even to this present day that's been very, very important to me, even more so now than it was even then.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: And Minor White was a master sequencing—

[Cross talk.]

MARK KLETT: Yeah, exactly.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: I mean—

MARK KLETT: Or even Robert Frank, you know, in looking at Americans.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Right. Were you participating—you mentioned at the beginning this sort of wide open character of the Visual Studies Workshop in terms of experimental media?

MARK KLETT: Yes.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Drum Lines is known for work with book arts.

MARK KLETT: Right.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Of all kinds and all processes—that Xerox machine.

MARK KLETT: Yeah, yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Were you working with book arts in that way because your books are so beautifully organized and presented.

MARK KLETT: Well, thanks.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: But I wondered if you were thinking of sequencing in publishing back then.

MARK KLETT: Well, you couldn't not think about sequencing and stuff if you're working with Nathan and I think that's important. I don't often—in talking about that period I think I'm not getting it enough credit because that was something. It wasn't just a formalist thing. That was certainly Michael's thing.

But you know, I took classes from Joan and I took—the Xerox thing was with Joan and we did silk screening with Joan. I didn't actually do offset printing with her because that was another thing I just didn't have time to get into. But I love the idea of the artist's books.

I used to buy some of them and I had them and I think the whole thing was really fabulous. And I always liked the idea of it. Keith Smith came later in that time period that I was there.

And I didn't really study with Keith. But he was certainly an influence on everybody at the workshop because a lot of things were happening that Keith, you know, had a hand in and brought an influence into the whole conversation of the workshop.

But you know, that stuff was really on a lot of people's minds—experimentation that was occurring and a lot of it was very, very expressive and, you know, very poetic and, you know, not at all formal so, or, you know, in addition to all that. But certainly the form of the image and the form the image was taking was really important and things were happening in terms of experimenting with that.

But the effect of that experimentation in terms of the culminating effect of the work was also, you know, really on everybody's mind. I remember one extremely effective performance that we saw that Tom Southall—I saw with him.

I think he might have come back. I can't remember when I saw this exactly, whether he was—whether it was before I was a student or after I was a student there, but Dave Heath, who did this really great performance thing and slides.

Maybe you've seen it or you know about it but *Le Grand album ordinaire* and which was—he did a slide thing on multiple slide projectors projecting, like, daguerreotype images of people.

It was done to Beatles music actually and other things. It was this long presentation and it was a sort of multimedia thing in the early strategies of it. But it was just these images of people in daguerreotypes and old photographs.

And wow, you know, it was incredibly powerful. And it was kind of—it got to be where it was really an emotional experience. He really took into it the whole level of the expression of what was happening, you know, in terms of the portraits in this thing. Things like that were happening which were really moving, I think.

You know, and that was part of my education too, I mean, understanding that photographs could do that, you know, and there was this multimedia thing that you could then put together. I mean, a single image of a daguerreotype—OK, you know, or a tintype or whatever you see it and, you know, okay.

But when you see this really strong presentation of multiple images kind of building this sense of the presence of people, it's very difficult for me to express because I don't remember exactly the thing that—you know, all the pictures and everything he did.

What I recall is the emotional experience of it all, you know, that he could build that out of a series of historic photographs was just amazing to me. You know, that he could build this very powerful experience of images. Well, you couldn't do it with one picture. It just didn't work that way.

So you know, that was the kind of thing that was always there when we were working with pictures. It wasn't like we were going to set up a bunch of solitary masterpieces and that was the idea. I mean, what we were going to do was put together a bunch of pictures and that group of pictures was going to be the summation of what the work was.

And so the idea that it was edited and it was sequenced and put together in certain ways and were hung together in certain ways in a gallery or whatever it was, that was really an issue. You know, so the content of that was—if you know, I had these great advisors.

I mean, Linda pushing, you know, what could that mean to me and my practice, what could that mean to me in terms of creating a kind of greater meaning that went beyond just the photo.

Michael's really sharp view on the structure of pictures and how that comes together and Nathan as kind of this master of all of it in a way but also the whole idea of multiple and image sequencing and all these different things about how you create meaning through practice ultimately was a specialty of his. I mean, it's the practice itself is actually part of the meaning of what occurs.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: So when it came to your graduation show, how did this come together?

MARK KLETT: Well, so they had this little gallery in there and it wasn't real big but I prepared a series of pictures. And I think there was something like 35 or 40 images in the show and they varied in size from 11-by-14 to 16-by-20, or two different sizes I guess primarily.

They were matted and put up under glass and they were put up in groups so that they kind of formed little clusters of small, you know, groups of sequences or whatever. And they were pictures of—that I had been doing in Rochester, kind of like the backyard, back alleys, streets, you know, houses.

And so that was the main part of the gallery—what I—you know—and these kinds of things that I had been working on, very formal issues but tempered by Linda's insistence that they also carry other value to the work.

And then but what I did was the gallery had this wall that was the front side of the wall was the gallery and the back side of the wall was the bigger space where everybody held lectures and it was our meeting hall. And the backside of the wall was covered with a material—like they used to call it Homasote. You know, it was that builder's material. You can stick pushpins into it and stuff. You can put prints up on it.

And people used to put prints on it. I took all my proofs—I used to proof in 5-by-7 size. I used to take the 8-by-10 paper and cut it in half and make 5-by-7 proofs, you know. And so I had—I used to proof everything and then I'd edit from the proofs. This was part of the process that I used to use.

But at the end of this, I had hundreds of proofs. I just—literally hundreds of them and I took them and I plastered the back wall with this thing. And it must have been, you know, I don't know how—just to give you an idea—I don't really know—maybe 20 feet long or 30 feet long or something like that by eight feet high or maybe 10 feet high. And maybe I'm exaggerating but it might have been 20 feet at least.

And I took the whole thing. I plastered the whole thing, stapled them up on the back of this thing and covered the whole thing with it. And then I did my lecture in there. I had to do my

presentation and give a lecture and stuff which actually went over really well. I didn't get crucified in that. It was actually pretty well received.

But one of the comments I got after the lecture—and I'll always remember this. I was by Sally Stein and I don't know if you know Sally, but you know, she's out in California now. And I saw her last year actually for—I haven't seen her in a while. But you know, and she was—what was she—I don't know what she was doing at that time.

She was at the Eastman House I think. But you know, she's real sharp. She's a real smart—real smart woman. I've always thought a lot of her. I think she's a very interesting person, really, really smart and tough. I mean, she can be real—she can be tough about things.

She comes up to me after she saw the thing. She came up to me afterwards and she said, "You know, you've got it all mixed up. This is the show." [Laughs.] She pointed to that group of pictures and she said, "This is the show." And we had a conversation about it.

And you know, she—that really stuck with me because, I mean, she was right I think. That was really interesting. To this day I've thought about that because we can—I can talk about this later but, you know, in some ways that was the precursor to digital. I mean, I had no idea at that time what that meant.

But I do things today which have to do with—I photograph every day with a digital camera, for example. I teach a class on photographing every day with a digital camera in which you come up with now not just hundreds but literally thousands of photographs. And the issue is editing and creating meaning out of those pictures.

And seeing the practice as more a holistic thing where it's not about editing, you know, 35 great pictures out of it. It's more like the entirety of it. And even though at that time I couldn't understand that, that's the argument Sally was making in a way and the conversation we were kind of having.

But now, you know, 30-something years later looking at what we can do with digital cameras, now it makes a different kind of sense. And I'm totally into that concept now in a way that I wasn't then or I couldn't have been at that time.

But the basis for that was really the whole idea of Nathan's that, you know, we need to work with—we need to see larger groups of images and create meaning out of the larger groups, not of the individuals. So that was an early basis for that. But that—so I did the show and it—you know, I passed. You know, Nathan signed the papers and I got my degree and I left. That was my end of Rochester. Yeah, so we're—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: We're going.

MARK KLETT: Okay. So I mean, I guess the question is other photographers in Rochester. Well I mean, a lot of it was who was at the Eastman House and stuff. You know, and other people that were showing at the Visual Studies Workshop.

But I mean, I looked at a wide variety of things. I mean, Roger Mertin for example, Aaron Siskind. I mean, Aaron was a friend of Nathan's. And I mean, I've certainly looked at a lot of his work.

I mean, I even had a job at one point making copy prints of some of his work for Afterimage or something because you know, Afterimage is a publication there. I remember seeing a lot of Heineken work.

You know, Heineken had a show—[inaudible]—and he was a friend of Nathan's. And you know, there was certainly experimental work that we saw and spent a lot of time looking at. I'm just—you know, I'm kind of spacing on a lot of it. But there was a pretty wide variety.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Well, everything came through. Were there things that you think, like the David Heath, sort of affected you long-term, that sort of stuck with you in odd ways or were they more this was—I mean, the photos scene there at that time was wide open and exciting.

MARK KLETT: Yeah. Well, not that—nothing in particular that comes to mind, I mean, other than, like, those exhibitions I mentioned. I think I just remember, you know, being bombarded with a pretty wide variety of things, wide variety of work. You know, certainly, you know, we were seeing stuff from the West.

I mean, the other program that—at that time the two graduate programs that were really powerful in the U.S. were the VSW program where I was and UNM in Albuquerque. And you know, so I mean, we knew their work too. I mean, we looked at Betty Hahn and Tom Barrow and you know, I mean, we were aware of a lot of work that they were doing and so on.

And everybody was connected and they were friends, you know, so—and everybody knew Nathan and stopped by Rochester sooner or later. Everybody came through and we saw a lot of that work. So you know, I think it was a big mix of stuff, you know, that was really happening. I remember seeing people's work I don't even know their name's anymore.

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MARK KLETT: —I mean, things that—and I'd see somebody's work and it was in 35-millimeter but really big prints or something and go, "That's great, it's really incredible," you know. But it's things like that. I mean, there are just things, very active—very active things happening but almost a kind of whirlwind feeling for me where I had a hard time even kind of grasping it. It was happening, you know, really quickly.

The question about the historic photographs, I had—you know, when I first started looking at Western historical photography, for example, the Jacksons, the Sullivans, that kind of thing, I have to say that I didn't—I don't know if I saw very much original work in Rochester.

I might have seen a few things, you know, in the Eastman House that I don't even recall anymore. I think a lot of it for me was just out of books. I don't remember when—what year it was that Weston Naef's book came out.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: *The Era of Exploration.*

MARK KLETT: *The Era of Exploration*, but that was one that was very influential that I bought. And I actually took it out in the field with me and we used that. I tore the whole thing up. It's kind of torn apart a little bit because we took it in the field a lot.

I told Weston that actually years later. I think he got a kick out of that. The other book that came out around the same time was there was a book called *Western Views and Eastern Visions*. It might have been the other way around.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Oh, Gene Ostroff at the Smithsonian.

MARK KLETT: Gene Ostroff, yeah. That book—that was another one that was influential we took that out in the field too a little bit. So there were a couple of books at that time that were, you know, resource books that we could use and we—I went to and to learn more about that kind of photography.

I remember taking a class at Visual Studies and the classes there were very informal. But there was one class that was kind of an interesting class that was taught—oh, I'm spacing again. Oh, it was taught by a guy named Leroy Searle and also by Alex Sweetman. The two of them team-taught this class and it was kind of an American studies class without being called that.

Leroy—his wife, Annie, worked at the workshop and she was Nathan's assistant—kind of a secretary assistant kind of person. She ran the place. She was great. She used to give us all haircuts and stuff. As graduate students, we couldn't afford them, you know.

Her husband, Leroy, he taught at U of R and he was sort of American studies professor. He was a Ph.D. and taught there. But I think his Ph.D. was in English literature I believe, or it might have been in creative writing but I think it was something like literature. They moved up to the Seattle area. I think he was teaching in Seattle—maybe at U of W later on.

But anyway, Leroy taught this really interesting class on American history using photographs and, you know, thinking about the railroad, thinking about the—I remember, I mean, kind of—you know, merging images of Genesee Falls and the Rochester pictures of the falls with, you know, poetry, um, you know, um, William Carlos Williams and, you know, other—I mean, just a whole range of, you know, American and, you know, poetry from—and writing, you know, kind of from the historical period to 20th century, kind of pool the historical thought about the places and, you know, not just landscapes but, you know, the expression of view in Americana and cultural history and things like that, just a real interesting mix of stuff.

And that to me was kind of fertile ground for, you know, mixing into the idea of the Rephotographic Survey later on. It was a good foundation for a lot of that kind of thinking of how—kind of as diverse fields as literature and, um, photography, which seemed documentary, could really be seen kind of seen together in a way that normally you wouldn't think of them.

I used to think—and I have to say this about the historical photographs and about landscape photography in general—before we started the Rephotographic Survey that I really thought that the whole idea of making a landscape photograph was kind of boring.

You know, I mean, I've said it before because it just—you know, really it didn't interest me. I mean, that's why when I was out there, you know, doing geology it didn't really occur to me to make landscape photographs because I just didn't think it was an interesting genre, I mean, I have to say.

They seemed like a bunch of dead photographs that were in a box. And then though the idea that maybe they could be useful by taking them out and maybe trying to find the location was a way of dusting them off and that idea intrigued me, that maybe they were more useful than being in the box.

But I didn't really see much else beyond them. I didn't know much about them. I'd looked at the print and they were all brown and they looked like, you know, a picture that you could do better now. And, you know, I didn't get it. I didn't get the picture, you know, um, I didn't understand much out it. So but we were going to do this project, I thought, "Well, I don't really have to like the work."

I mean, it's kind of about—it's kind of about doing something with it. In fact maybe if I don't like it, it's every easier because I can just sort of—you know, I mean, we're going to be doing something to these pictures which is a little bit, you know, we're removing them from their context in a way and we're creating something different.

So it was a little bit of—I don't want to say disrespect here but there's a little bit of a willingness to kind of not treat it as an honored object here but just treat it as something that we might find useful in some way.

So I don't know if it's art or not but I'm just going to—we're just going to use these pictures for some purpose in any case. So but I had to learn about the pictures. And so I started to look at them. I didn't see many, if—you know, many original prints. I'm sure I didn't see very many until I got to Colorado. Then I started to see original prints.

At first, you know, with Ellen, um, we would go down to look at something in a collection and sometimes I went with her. I've been there by myself too. As a matter of fact, yesterday I ran into Eric Paddock who, you know, at the time was at the Colorado Historical Society.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Colorado Historical Society.

MARK KLETT: He was just in town visiting. He was with Barbara Bosworth and I guess they're friends. They came up to Tucson. We had lunch with him yesterday. But Eric now is at the Denver Art Museum but at that time he was at the Colorado Historical Society.

I think he was—it might have been just before he got there when I first started looking at their prints. And I even looked at plates. I mean, I was learning about, oh these are what the plates looked like, you know, the actual wet-plates. So that was kind of cool, looking at those, getting a sense of what those—very different than what I expected, you know, what those looked like.

Then the real education for me in original prints came at the USGS. They have just this phenomenal collection of 19th century survey work. And at the time, they kept them in Denver. You know, I think they've all been moved now to Washington. But at that time, they were in their library in Denver.

And we needed to get some copy negatives of these pictures to use for our work. And we've managed to get permission to go down there and do that. And Hal Malde was really helpful in that, um, the geologist.

So we got permission to go in there. And I literally took my 4-by-5, set it up in this room where they had all these flat files and I had clip-on lights with just light bulbs and I put them on some chairs and I put the 4-by-5 in a tripod hovering above the floor.

And I had, like, a blanket or a piece of paper or something down on the floor and I'd pull the prints out. At first, they were being really cautious. They weren't' sure they wanted me to do this. But after a while they kind of figured I was okay and they let me go.

And I spent days in there pulling pictures out of the drawers and then putting them in front of the 4-by-5 and taking copy pictures onto Polaroid film. And I took hundreds of pictures of copies of these because that was the only way you could do it. You know, we had to pay somebody to do it if we didn't do it.

And I saw just hundreds of photographs there and they were just great prints. I mean, there were just in incredible condition because they very rarely had been shown. They've just been sitting in a drawer for a hundred years. And I just went through the whole collection they had and they did have a remarkable set of pictures now that I look back on it and look back on the stuff I copied.

That was my, you know, original setup out there for that. So when we started the project, we had a lot of questions. And I remember going to Colorado, trying to get settled in and feeling like, you know, boy, this is a strange place. We're living at 10,000 feet and you know, Ellen and I, we get in her car and she's got this little Volkswagen. I had a Volkswagen Beetle. She had a Volkswagen Rabbit. It was a new car at that time.

We got in her car and we drive out and this is 1977 and I think it's probably May or June. I can't remember which. And we get out and we start looking for these pictures that she's got of Jackson's of Twin Lakes, Colorado. And I don't know why we chose this one picture because I have to say it was a pretty difficult one to choose to begin with.

I mean, there was very little information in the foreground. There was just a lot of—just kind of a lot of trees and for some reason we set out trying to find this picture, um, near Twin Lakes. And we spent a day out there driving around a bunch of hills and we couldn't find anything. It was like we couldn't find the thing. And I was really starting to sweat.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Not an auspicious beginning.

MARK KLETT: I was starting to sweat. I was thinking, "Okay, well here we are." I mean, I'm actually getting paid. I'm getting a salary off this thing because we put in salaries into the grant. I'm going to get—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: You were designated chief photographer.

MARK KLETT: Yeah. Yeah, I had this title I guess, chief photographer, and I'm going to get paid to do this and I don't have a clue about how to do it. And we couldn't find it and I'm thinking, "I wonder if we can even do this." [Laughs.]

And so I'm starting to sweat it and Ellen says, "Well look, why don't—you know, why don't you go down and talk to Hal Malde," you know, because we, by that time I had read Hal Malde's paper. And Hal Malde had published a paper—and I forget the journal—but he published a paper on something like, um, geological benchmarks through terrestrial photography or something like that. You can get the exact title.

And so I read this paper and it explains in a really interesting and coherent way how the camera can be used like a transit and you can make measurements between photographs.

So he's got this technique down, you know, about how to do this. And then there's another guy—Harrison—A.E. Harrison—and Harrison writes a paper about how you can, um, set up unmarked camera stations or you can find geologic benchmarks through unmarked camera stations or something like that.

And so he's monitoring glacial movement. So like, we read that paper too and these are great papers. They're really terrific papers about how to do this kind of work and it's based on math. You know, I don't get all the math sometimes. But I understand how it's done. So anyway, Malde's the source. So I figure, you know, Ellen's right. We need to go down and talk to Malde.

So, um, I make an appointment to go to see Hal Malde down in Denver. And you know, Hal Malde has been very helpful—I mean, behind the scenes. He's the guy who I'd wrote to before but Ellen has written to him in the meantime and he's written a letter—he and Lambert wrote a letter to the NEA in support of our application. So you know, this is one of the things that helped us get

the money.

I heard later on that that Kathy Gauss told me later that when they had that panel, that our project came up and I don't know everybody who was on that panel that year. I think Tom Barrow was one of them.

And they looked at our proposal for this pilot project for doing this method thing and they all kind of scratched their head I think and they thought, "Well, this is kind of a wacky idea but it's kind of interesting at the same time and could they even do it. I mean, was this even possible?"

And you know, of course me and JoAnn we—JoAnn and I, we were total unknowns. I mean, but somebody on the panel—and I think it might have been Tom Barrow—said, "You know, Ellen Manchester deserves a chance."

And that's what did it. You know, if it wasn't for Ellen, we never would have gotten that money. And so it was because people knew Ellen because Ellen knew a lot of people at that time. So Ellen is the one that really got us the money. Her name and her reputation got us the money.

So when we—you know, and Malde, you know, was very generous and helped us by writing this letter that probably helped too. You know, he was backing us up saying, "You know, we like this idea. It can be done and we'll be a resource for them. So we support it." And so I make an appointment to go down and see Malde. Now, I've got to tell you this little story that's kind of a side story on this because it has to do with my geology.

In 1976, my last year as a geologist for the survey, I was working by myself up in this little place. It might have been—okay, it might have been the year before. I don't remember. I was working—and I was working because my boss had a fender bender.

And I'm on this dirt road way out in the middle of nowhere and I'm stopped to look at something. And this truck comes down the road and it's—it turns out to be a USGS truck like mine. And I'm working for the energy branch and I've got this nice new truck. I've got all this great new equipment. I've got everything that I want.

This truck is kind of beat up and old and there's two guys in the truck. There's an old guy and a young guy. And the young guy I recognize because the year before I met him in Sheridan, Wyoming. And he was working for a French petroleum firm and he was hanging out in the trees at this campground mapping from aerial photographs because that's all they cared about was these big coal beds.

And every once in a while they'd go out there and check something in the field. And he was complaining to me how much he wanted to get out in the field but he was stuck looking at these photographs. So there he is and now he's working for the USGS. And so I recognize him and go, "I know you," and he goes, "Yeah, I remember you."

And so we start talking and we're comparing notes and talking about things and so forth. And the old guy, he's kind of—he doesn't really get into this. And so he pulls out some aerial photographs to take—to use the time. He's mapping from the photographs just on the hood of the truck. And he's got these black-and-white photographs.

And I look at him and I say, "Well, I've got some color photographs. You want to use them instead?" And he goes, "You do?" And I go, "Yeah," and I pull them out and he goes, "Give them to me." And he starts mapping it from my photographs. So we're talking and he's mapping like crazy off these color photographs.

And so we get done and I said to them, "Why don't you come back to my trailer? I've got a refrigerator. I've got some cold beer. You know, why don't you come back? And the young guy goes, "Yeah, it sounds good." And the old guy goes, "No, we've got—we've got to go out and we're going to, you know, go camping."

And so he said, "You've got a place around here that might be good to camp? Have you seen any good spots?" And I go, "Well yeah, I've got—there's a spot I was just at today but it's a little ways in. You've got to drive back in there." And he goes, "That's okay. If it's a good spot, we'll take it." And I said, "Okay."

So I get out the map and I show him where this is and explain it to him and everything. And we go our separate ways and that's the end of it. Well, okay, so I make this appointment to see Hal

Malde in Denver. And I go down to Denver and I walk in this office and I look at this guy and I'm thinking, "I've seen this guy before. I know I've seen this guy before."

And so we sit down and we have a conversation and we talk about rephotography and we talk about how it can be done and what to do. And he's very good. He's telling me, "Don't worry about it. You'll get it. You've got to spend some more time. Here's a lot to think about." And he gives me all these tips and so forth.

And at the end of the conversation, I'm realizing he's the guy. He's the old guy. He's the guy that was in the truck. And I'm thinking, "Oh my God, this is the old guy that I ran into, you know, in the middle of Montana."

And so, and I wondered if he knows who I am. So at the end of the conversation, you know, you've got to understand Malde is a kind of a dry sort of character. And I just said, "You know, I think you and I have met before." And he just kind of nods his head. And I just say, "Well, how was the campsite?" And he goes, "Just fine." [Laughs.] And that was it.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Laconic Westerners.

MARK KLETT: He remembered the whole time and I couldn't believe it. You know, but that was the guy. So Malde—Malde kind of gave me the tips and it gave me some confidence. And we went back out again and this time I chose some pictures that were a little bit easier. Like okay, don't look for the hardest one. I mean, look for something that's a little more easy to find.

So we looked for another picture that we knew we could find. And so sure enough, we could find this place. I don't remember if it was Twin Lakes proper, you know, if you really can go to this place or something else like Garden of the Gods or whatever you can really go to. And so we found these things and then I just went, "Whew, okay, you know, look, this is where it's made from. You can really tell."

You know, so we started to learn the technique. You know, by this time JoAnn had come out. So there was the three of us because JoAnn lagged behind me a little bit. So she shows up in Breckenridge and the three of us are going out and we're starting to get cooking on this thing and we're starting to figure things out a little bit.

So once we had a few pictures under our belt, then we started to feel a little bit better about we could really make this thing happen. But you know, I was not—I had a lot to learn about landscape photography. I didn't really know anything about it. I mean, I had worked with a 4-by-5 before but I wasn't even used to movements, camera movements.

I really hadn't done much of that. And JoAnn knew a lot about it because she went to RIT and they taught these people all this kind of stuff. And we had this camera that the college loaned us and neither one of us had a 4-by-5 at that time that could do the work. I don't remember what happened to mine but it wasn't really good enough for doing this kind of work. We needed a wide angle.

And so they gave us this Calumet camera that had this real long arm on it. I mean, it's a rail. It's a monorail camera with an extra-long rail which is the last thing we needed for this kind of work because we were using a wide angle—like a 90-mm lens on this camera.

So we had to negotiate that thing every time we did it and I had to figure out how to put it in a backpack and stuff like that. But you know, we just worked with what we had. And so JoAnn was teaching me stuff about how to work with a view camera and how to work the movements and so forth which I needed some help on. And then the other thing we did was—I don't know how this came about.

But I think Ellen, because she knew all these people. She had some connection to Polaroid. And I don't remember what that was anymore. I don't remember how she got it or who it was. But somehow we had this connection to Polaroid and so Polaroid said that they would give us some film. So we got them to donate some of this film, this Type 55 positive/negative film.

Of course, I didn't know anything about it. So I had to learn how to use that. So in town I had to learn how to expose the film and process the film properly and get the stuff to work in the field. So we had these buckets of sodium sulfide that we used to carry around.

And you put your—you take your picture on the 4-by-5 and it's in a special holder and you then

pull a lever on the holder and pull the film through the holder and it squishes these chemical pods which then dispense over the negative and the negative and the positive are sandwiched together and they create this positive on the one hand and a negative on the other.

And the positive was, you know, a good thing for looking at. It wasn't the greatest print because it usually washed out in the highlights. But the negative itself was really pretty good. It was a good fine-grained film.

It had very good information in the shadows. It wasn't the best negative for the—up in the shoulder area of the film, the highlight area of the film it tended to flatten out a little bit. But it was a very good film anyways. It was really quite beautiful.

And so we used to use that film and that was a great way for us to determine if we were in the same spot or not. So one of the things we did using Malde's techniques was to modify the techniques that Malde had which were measurements.

He was able to determine or to demonstrate how you could take measurements between photographs and prove that you were in the right spot or whatever, and Harrison as well, in those two papers. Harrison really was very specific about how to do the calculations, about how to determine if you were to the left or the right, up or down or front or back because ultimately with photography that's what dictates your camera position.

You know, you have a three-point coordinate axis and you can move the camera up or down, left or right or forward or backwards. And so what we came to understand about rephotography and trying to relocate the original vantage points is there was a couple of different stages. I mean, one was just getting there.

So you were in the right spot and you had the right subject matter before the camera. Then there was the second stage of the process which was refining the position of where you wanted to be within that. And you know, having more information, more foreground information, middle ground information, background information, having those things—you know, the more information you had the more accurate you could be.

So the idea was that you would try to relocate the position using just your eyeball and then you'd put your camera in the place where you thought the position was supposed to be, what we called the vantage point. And then you would take a Polaroid picture and then you'd start to measure it.

You could make these measurements between the two. You would always bring a copy print out there with out of the original image which is why I needed the negatives to begin with—the copy negatives from the USGS. And then you would do the measurements between them.

And you know, if you did it properly, if you did it right you could determine where you were and what you had to do at that point to move the camera around. So we got good at this. It took a while. I mean, it took a lot of practice.

But I'd say, you know, the first season, you know, we did—I can't even remember now. Was it 22? I think 22 sites—I'm trying to remember. I can check that but I think it was 22. And you know, by the end of that summer we got pretty good at it. We got pretty good at learning how to do it. So there was a learning curve involved in it.

But we got there eventually. You know, um, there was a lot of learning curves because it was about how to use the camera for me and how to use the Polaroid film. It was how to cart things around and do it in the field because it wasn't like working in a studio. I mean, you had to get all this stuff out there, sometimes climbing mountains with it.

We had limited—we had limited the scope of what we were trying to do and this is part of our grant proposal. We decided to limit, um, the first year's work to the Hayden survey of Colorado, 1873. And one of the reasons for that was that we could get access to all the pictures.

The photographs that the USGS had and other people had, we could put together the entire survey of the Jackson images. So we had everything. And since it was Colorado, it was in our home state at that point. So we could find a way to make that work for us in terms of traveling.

So we decided to concentrate on that and narrow some of the variables down. Now, the first year was a little bit odd because we weren't really sure how to do it. I mean, should we all go

together? You know, so we did initially. It was kind of a group effort. I mean, we just had all these people, the three of us but then guests, you know, because we were teaching at Colorado Mountain College—or at least Ellen was.

And I was too in the summer a little bit. We were all doing a little bit of teaching to try to make some money because the grant wasn't really supporting me all together. But so—and we had a bunch of workshops that were going on. And so we had people like Yvonne Streetman come and teach a workshop.

And you know, Yvonne was doing sort of a landscape class. So we took her class out with us and we took her to the Garden of the Gods. And you know, her class became part of the photo shoot. You know, we've got slides and transparencies of the whole group trying to remake the Jackson photograph, you know, at the gateway to the Garden of the Gods.

And I'm actually sitting on top of JoAnn's shoulders because I had to get the camera up higher because the ground had dropped down from where Jackson stood at that time. And Yvonne was here helping out and, you know, all these people. But we had a lot of guests going with us, I mean, that summer.

People just used to come through Breckenridge either for workshops or just to visit. I mean, I'm trying to think of the people we had going out with us. But we had John Holmes who was—I think a guy who was working for some of the photo magazine at that time. We had Peter Galassi and Peter was working at MoMA at that time but he wasn't, you know, like he is now.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Assistant curator, I think.

MARK KLETT: Yeah, yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Or assistant—

MARK KLETT: So Peter came out with us. We had John Fall. We had Chuck Hagen and Chuck was still the editor of *Afterimage* at that time at VSW. Oh God, Kathy Gauss came out with us from the NEA at one point. I just—I can't even remember all the people that came out.

There's just a long group of people kind of curious about what we were doing and we would take them out on a trip. And we'd say, "Let's go find something." And we'd go out and we'd do it.

So they would, um—Kenda North was another photographer. Well, I mentioned her from VSW. But she came out with us. And Paul Berger came out with us one time. And we just had a bunch of people that sort of ended up there and kind of went out with us at various times. Oh yeah.

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ROBERT SILBERMAN: This is Robert Silberman, interviewing Mark Klett in the artist's studio in Tempe, Arizona on December 11, 2010 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number three.

When we left off yesterday, Mark, we had just about reached the end of the first year—[inaudible]—photographic survey project. Would you like to pick up the history and your experiences from there?

MARK KLETT: Right. Okay, so as we ended the first year—or before we did that actually, we decided to reapply for funding to the NEA. And we did put together another grant proposal. And it was successful. We weren't funded for as much money the second year. But Polaroid Corporation then came in with some money. So we were funded by some cash as well as film a second year.

It was kind of significant because the man who was working at Polaroid who was really in charge of granting us that money and film was Sam Yanes. And Sam had another project in mind. It was the beginning of their creation of the 20-by-20 four-inch instant Polaroid camera. And he was looking for somebody to run that camera and interface with the artists that they were going to use to collaborate with that camera. And he really wanted Joanne to do that. Sam came out to Breckenridge and everybody met and we talked and got along and had a good time and everything. And he really was taken by Joanne and her abilities to work with people.

And so he really wanted her to go to—come back to Boston and work with the camera. So she did accept that job. And that meant that she wasn't available to work the second year—in fact,

from then on, in the field. She was still involved in the project but she then was not able to go out in the field. She did go out the third year a little bit with me one week.

But so that changed the dynamic. And what was happening towards the end of the summer two was that Ellen really couldn't go out because she had a lot of duties at the college. So I could see that things were changing pretty rapidly in terms of the collaborative force that we were—that we had become.

And at that same time, we realized that we could—or we should be getting some people on board for the fieldwork. Instead of doing the Colorado survey, we had to diversify the photographs we were working with and expand it into other states, other areas, other regions of the West where the photographers had been working in the 19th century.

So one of the things that we had concluded was that we needed to get a couple more people involved. We had two people targeted. And one was Rick Dingus. And he actually contacted us. I can't remember the exact—how that happened exactly. But Rick was a graduate student at UNM and was working on his master's degree. And as a part of that, he had to do a dissertation paper for the university. And he was doing it on O'Sullivan. So he wanted to rephotograph O'Sullivan in particular, but he wanted to work with us so he could kind of do that research while he was working with us at the same time.

So we ended up hiring Rick to come work with us and be a part of the field team. We also hired Gordon Bushaw. And Gordy was a workshop student the year—the first year—when we had the Evon Streetman workshop. And I was really impressed with his abilities. Gordy was a mathematics instructor at a high school in Washington State, close to Seattle. And he took workshops. And he was a view camera photographer, amateur photographer. But he really had a good sense of how to do this work.

When Joanne took a group up to the Mountain of the Holy Cross the first year, I came up. I had to leave because I had a class to teach. She went up with this group and forgot the copy print of the scene. Gordy remembered it so well that he got them to the spot. And because he had this really good mathematical ability, he was able to do a lot of the calculations in his head actually, which made things go along pretty quickly.

So he was kind of a natural at this. And we hired—we asked him if he was interested and he was. And since he had summers off because he was a high school teacher, he came out.

So we had Gordy and Rick and myself. And we became the field team for the second year. This is when I really did become the chief photographer. And I was in charge of the fieldwork.

So we laid out a plan—and I think that Ellen and Joanne were involved in the conception of the plan for things to rephotograph. And it was a pretty broad group of images, broadly spread over geographic areas. And I then assigned—or I worked with both Gordy and Rick individually a little bit so that I showed them the methods. Gordy already really knew it. But I had to show Rick in particular the methods we were using.

And once they were clear on the methods, then I sent them out and I gave them assignments. And so they went off on their own. And I went off on my own. So the three of us were off on our own doing the work. And that was a real difference from the first year.

I think the second year we did 58—I think it was 58—sites. And they were spread all over the place. They were spread—I think Idaho, Utah, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado. It was just quite a spread geographically. And we—and there was a lot of discoveries that were made. And I think it was a real pivotal year for the project. We, you know, ran across—because we were not just working with Jackson now; we were working with O'Sullivan and a couple Russells and some different people—we were seeing different things.

So it was kind of an eye-opener to see how these other photographers worked. And you know, throughout the whole process for me, I really felt that I was learning a lot about landscape photography. I was—my background wasn't in landscape, as I mentioned before. And I didn't, when I started the project, even think landscapes were that interesting.

But one of the things that was transformative about this experience that happened even more in the second year than the first was that I was, um, really understanding clearly how much decision-making was going on by the original photographers. I mean, that they were intentionally choosing their vantage points and their framing—and not only what they chose to

include in their pictures but what they were intentionally excluding from their photographs. And so I was—I could see the difference between the way that O'Sullivan worked and the way that Jackson worked. And I could see the kind of different choices.

And in fact, in some cases, we were actually going back to places that both of them had photographed. I mean, an example would be Green River, Wyoming where, um, I mentioned—I forgot to mention Wyoming, I guess, as part of our year. But we went back to Green River. And there you see navigating around Tea Pot Rock, you know, you see four or five different O'Sullivans and then one Jackson.

You know, it was kind of indicative of the way that they worked. I mean, Jackson kind of picking out the best general view and the one spot he wanted to photograph and O'Sullivan walking around and looking at the site from—excuse me—different angles trying to—making pictures intentionally from different places and investigating it visually and really asking questions, I think, through the photographs.

And looking at that as two different sensibilities as photographers, I came to realize that the photographs were representatives of their individual personalities, their worldviews and their abilities to express their thinking about this place. And it changed the nature of the work for me.

To me, then, the work was not just some dusty old photograph in a drawer that was just an excuse to get out there. I mean, it really became for me a statement about the world and the differences of human—you know, the kind of statements that people make based on a lot of different factors, not just cultural factors but personalities and the factors of fieldwork, which is another thing that enters into it—you know, just the nature of being out there and trying to get something to work, given the hardships of being in the field.

So all these factors were coming in and it was fascinating to me. I realized how difficult in some ways it was to make an interesting landscape photograph. But at the same time, how much of a commentary it was from the individual that was making it. And it just opened up my eyes to what the nature of that work.

So I learned a lot myself. We covered a lot of interesting ground, you know, from the national parks, like Yellowstone to the, you know, reservation and the Navajo reservation—the pictures in Canyon de Chelly, for example. There was a lot of interesting territory that was covered. And it was a long season and a lot of work was done. By the time that that season was over, I felt really very comfortable with the work and very challenged and still charged up. And I also felt that we had more to do because we hadn't really done enough yet. I mean, we at that point had had quite a number of sites. But we—I was feeling like we were hitting our stride in the work. And we had really established a few things.

Rick had made some good discoveries. He had found, for example, an O'Sullivan picture in Echo Canyon where O'Sullivan had tilted his camera. And that was one of many similar discoveries we made later where O'Sullivan did similar things.

But it was kind of the nature of choices and representation and the ways that photographs selectively—or the photographer chooses to selectively represent a place or the way that one person selectively chooses something different than another person. And those are the kinds of things that got really fascinating about it. So I felt very charged up by that—that whole experience in the second year.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Mark, I don't know if it was that year—I know there's a pair from Yellowstone that I think you talked about—I don't know if it's second year or later—where not Old Faithful but another geyser where the historical photo shows a person plumbing the geyser and you chose a different way. And you had to make a decision about whether to try to get the steam. And it seemed to me that was—that pairing was an example of, in retrospect at least, of different attitudes toward the geysers. Was that happening at the time?

MARK KLETT: Yes.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: I mean, you had to make a decision when you were at the site. But how the values and attitudes were being defined in the process?

MARK KLETT: Yeah, that's a good example. That's the kind of thing that was happening. And I'm glad you brought that up because it reminds me to—I mean, what we were doing was making decisions at that point—we thought at first we had created this methodology. And the

methodology almost in response to something like *New Topographics*, you know—I mean, the whole idea, the premise that Bill wrote in the catalogue was that it was an attempt to redefine what documentary photography meant at least at that time. And that the photographers took great pains, you know, to sort of not put in their sort of choices, which I thought was not possible. I mean, I thought you couldn't avoid that.

And so we—one of the ideas about the methodology was that we were essentially—through the methods eliminating certain kinds of choices. But in reality, of course, we didn't. I mean, there's a thing about—that I understand quite well about sort of conceptual methodologies now and creation of projects is that normally what happens is there are very few purely conceptual projects that just work with a methodology that isn't altered. I mean, normally there is a response to the situation so that the concept of the methods goes through some kind of alteration before the project is over in response to the situation or what's being found.

And that response is a form of intuitive questioning. And so, that happened on our project. I mean, we put forward a methodology. But in the end, what became important was that in response to the situation, in response to the discoveries we were making, there were slight modifications—very subtle modifications to the methods that allowed for certain things to happen.

So I would never claim—and I think people think I do—but I don't claim that we were objective. I don't think that was the purpose. I think what we were trying to do is create a methods approach. But then, the modification of the methods was, in my view, one of the most important things that happened. But it was a subtle modification. We still wanted the pictures to be usable to, say, geologists or people who might want to look at them for landscape change. But that didn't mean that we were not putting our own opinions or interests or some other decision-making power into it. And I think we had leeway to do that. In fact, you can't avoid it.

So in the case that you're mentioning, say, that was the—there was a geyser in Yellowstone that the crater—the Lone Star geyser. In the Jackson photograph, the man is standing on top of it with a cord. And he's like a plum-bob. And he is trying to figure out how far down it goes or how deep it is or something like that. And he's kind of wearing this pith helmet-looking hat.

And to me, it was just kind of the—I saw it as a kind of symbol that—man over nature in a way. I mean, he's a dominant figure in the picture. And he's trying to analyze it, exercise some kind of control in a sense. To me, that is what it represented in my view.

And I think this was a very Jackson-esque kind of picture, because I mean, Jackson's figures are usually standing around something. Maybe their hands on their hips, kind of looking at it saying, "well, we own this now and what are we going to do with it?" You know, that's sort of almost the attitude that comes out of that picture, whereas O'Sullivan's figures are very different. They tend to be more—in some cases—smaller or more diminutive or less in control. You know, you have a sense that there is more of a kind of sublime relationship there or even a terrifying one, which is, I guess, part of the sublime. But it's a very different opinion, I think, in the use of the figure.

Well, when we got to Lone Star, Gordy and I—I did that site with Gordy Bushaw. We walked out to the place. And there wasn't anybody else around, which was kind of unusual, because there was lots of people usually there. And we were trying to figure out what to do with it. And we figured out where the picture was taken from. And we set it up. And so we were thinking about it. And I just think—what would be the counterpoint to that. And I think this was the time at which we started to think that we were not only making rephotographs but we were in some ways, you know, making a statement in response to the location within a narrow parameter of the method.

And then the thing goes off. And so, to me, it was like, wow, this is perfect. You know, this returns the natural autonomy of this feature. There is no way a person can stand on top of it now without getting boiled to death. So I think it was an interesting response to the site.

We made several pictures there. We photographed it from every angle. And I remember the water and the steam and the vapor from that blowing over top of us as it was going off, because the wind was blowing in our direction. And I was concerned because, I mean, that material has got a lot of silica in it and it can ruin your lens. So I was trying to cover the lens and get the picture at the same time.

But it was kind of a great moment. Just to jump ahead though, I have to say, when we did third viewing—we went back to that. We purposefully waited for it to go off the next time. We had to

wait for an hour. We were sitting around with a whole bunch of people waiting for it to go off at that point. I remember there were a couple kids under the tree reading the latest Harry Potter book while they were waiting for the thing to go off.

So but that was an example of that kind of discovery we were making where we saw that there was some leeway in the methods. And in fact, we were making choices. The other thing we were making choices about—and I want to acknowledge it—is when we chose the first year, we chose the Jackson survey as one survey. And we tried to do as much as we could. And we didn't do everything. But we got as far as we could go on that before the time ran out.

The second year, there were just hundreds of pictures. And we had to make some choices. I tried to make a geographical spread, so I was trying to spread it out geographically. But I think in a lot of ways, there was a favoritism towards O'Sullivan. And well, to some degree, that was because of the geography. You know, when you look at who covered the most geographic territory for the surveys, it was O'Sullivan. But—and because he was involved in two surveys—the Wheeler and the King survey.

But the other thing is we just liked him. I mean, I think in the end, I was really interested in O'Sullivan and so was Rick. I mean, so we had this kind of natural tendency to be interested in O'Sullivan's work, especially since we—when we started to visit his sites. But I have to say that if there are other photographers spread geographically that were parts of the surveys, I wanted to cover them too, because it wasn't just about O'Sullivan in my view. But I did like his—I did get to like his work.

The point is that we couldn't ever be totally objective about that and I don't think we were trying to be. I think we were trying to get a good spread there. And I figured that the longer we did it, the more we would fill in and become more thorough in the work. In reality, that never really happened because by the time we got to the third year, we knew that—or I knew that the project had a—was only going to happen for one more year.

So I mean, I can move into the third year, because what was happening by the third year was we were no longer able to get money from the NEA. I don't remember if they did away with it. I think they did at that point. The project was not—the project funding category wasn't there. Or maybe we just termed out or whatever it was.

But we got some private money from a couple people that were trustees at the Sun Valley Center. By that time, Ellen and I had moved up to the Sun Valley Center for the Arts in Sun Valley, Idaho. We were living in Ketchum, Idaho. This was—we moved up there in the late—late 1978, just after the field season ended. So we were there from '78 until 1981. So we were basing ourselves out of Idaho at that point.

So we had some private money. We still had some—we had the film backing stuff from Polaroid. I can't remember if they threw any cash in that year or not. But we had enough money to make a field season work, a limited season. And I asked Gordy if he would come back and work for pretty much nothing, just for travel. And he was agreeable to that, so he came back. Rick by that time was working on his thesis. And I did ask him to do a little project—limited project—on thinking about the future. I mean, what would he use if he were making new rephotographs or new photographs for the purpose of rephotographing them. And what would we take the lessons from the methodology and push it forward?

So he did a small project on that, which we have in the archives and some recommendations on that. But he didn't go out. He really wasn't able to go out and do the kind of fieldwork that he had done previously.

So it basically was Gordy and I. And I was trying to fill in some of the gaps in the third year. And we did—most of the work was O'Sullivan. We went back to Nevada. We did some—I can't remember now the specific order of the things that we did that year. But I think—and it was something like 27 sites or something like that. Altogether, the project did 121 sites, really 122. One, we didn't do anything with, so that was the total project count at the end.

So that year, we filled in. We did the work in Idaho too, Shoshone Falls. And we did a number of things kind of filling in different regions. And Gordy worked on his own primarily and I worked on my own. But we did meet each other in the field a couple times where we did some work together.

Joanne came out and met me for some work in Echo Canyon that summer. And I really felt that

we were really at that point filling out the project. We had got a lot of work done. And we were adding a lot of kind of extra sites to the projects and finding new things and just adding depth to the project. But we were very accomplished at that point and getting good results.

One thing, in between, I think that was important for the project—in between the two seasons, the second and third, we had our first exhibition of the work. And it was kind of an unusual exhibition and the only time it's ever happened. We had an exhibition at Polaroid's gallery in Cambridge at the Clarence Kennedy Gallery, the Polaroid Corporation gallery. And we were able to borrow original 19th century prints from the Eastman House primarily. And we were then able to make our prints the same size and scale as the originals.

This was a bit of a challenge because we didn't have the originals to look at when we—when I printed them—most of them. And we also hired a guy named Doug Munson to print for us who was at the Chicago Albumen Works. And so between Doug and I, we printed this exhibition. And, um, in fact, I think Doug probably did most of it, come to think of it. But I remember the exact thing—but anyway, we had to get copies of some kind from the Eastman House to know what the cropping looked like, because every print in every collection, whether it's the National Archives or in an Eastman House or some other collection, it's going to be the same image but slightly different cropping on the edges because of the way they used to trim the plates and the paper after they made the prints.

So we had to get the exact cropping of that and then we had to print ours to the exact same scale. So it was a bit tricky. We found ways to do that.

And we put up the exhibition at the Clarence Kennedy Gallery and that was our first real showing of the work. It was—we have slides of it. We have documentation of the exhibition. And it never happened again because the idea of trying to get those historic images—it's so difficult to get them, to borrow them that I'm not sure we could ever do it again. Only under the auspices of something—the Smithsonian could probably do it. I mean, Toby Jurovics did that show last summer on O'Sullivan where he got the prints from Library of Congress. But you know, we would have a hard time doing it again. It was very unique.

I remember at that show—I remember Lee Friedlander came to that show. He was at the opening. I don't remember why. But he was there. And at that time, Joanne was working there for Polaroid, so there was a connection for us.

So that was one thing. The other thing we did that was significant in the—and I think it was 1979, and I can't remember now if it was '78 or '79—we had Doug Munson come out and do a wet plate with us. We decided we wanted to see what it would be like to do one site, or a couple of sites, using the original materials to try to rephotograph it with the original materials.

So Doug came out and we went to Green River, Wyoming, and he and Gordy Bushaw and I spent several days in Green River trying to rephotograph O'Sullivan's picture of Teapot Rock. And we had Gordy's truck set up as a portable dark room. We put rubylith, which is that red sort of film plastic they use for graphic arts. We put that on his windows of his camper shell and that made the portable dark room.

And Doug brought out a big camera. He was working with, like, a 10-by-12 inch camera or plate; the camera was actually oversize. And so he brought his equipment out, and we tried to choose a lens; it was pretty similar.

And we set the thing up, and it took us three days to get this image, you know? But part of it was that the lighting would change. We had about an hour, hour and a half or so before the lighting got—wasn't any good anymore, just for the shadows—we were trying to duplicate the shadows. And the first couple of days, there were some technical glitches and it didn't work. And then the third day we finally got one to work.

And it taught me a lot about how difficult that was and how—I mean, how these guys in the 19th century, really, how good they were at doing what they were doing. I mean, it was pretty remarkable that O'Sullivan and Jackson and, you know, all of these guys were as good as they were at making pictures in that landscape.

But when we—when we left the site, we had a couple or several bad plates. And we took one of the plates, and I walked it over and put it beneath a rock, beneath Teapot Rock, just to kind of confuse any future historians—[inaudible]—[they laugh]. And when we went back for Third View, that plate was gone. I don't what happened to it. You know, somebody took it.

But it was kind of a—kind of funny thing. I always wanted to find some artifact from the photographers when we were out there photographing it. And the only time that we ever found anything that I think might have been something from a 19th century photographer was when we did Third View and we rephotographed O'Sullivan's pictures—picture he did from a top of a ridge in Vermillion Cliffs, looking down on the Green River, the Great Bend in the Green River, which is now a reservoir.

And Kyle Bajakian found a little shard of glass that was flat and it was purple with age. And, you know, that's such a remote place. And I don't what anybody would be doing with a flat piece of glass up there—a bottle, maybe, or something that had some dimension to it? But this was a flat piece. And I am convinced that that was probably a piece of O'Sullivan's. He probably broke a plate, tossed the plate over the edge of the cliff, and there was a little piece that was still there on the ground.

And although I can't prove it, I would like to have somebody take a look at that piece of glass. We know it was pretty—it was during the era when there was, you know, still lead in the glass. You could see it aging. But I would be very interested to compare that to original—to one of his plates to see the thickness and the type of glasses that—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: And there is a picture of that, a photograph of—holding that up?

MARK KLETT: Yes. Yeah, yeah, yeah. That was kind of exciting, but other than that, nothing—we never found anything.

Well, after—you know, after the third year that kind of completed the project, I did do one other site on my own in 1980. I just went back to Shoshone Falls and made another picture, because I—what happened in the meantime was, I had an opportunity to bid on a print, an O'Sullivan print on an auction. And I bought my first O'Sullivan photograph. I think I—I think it cost $700. It was 1980, and that was a real stretch for me then, because I was only making $12,000 a year working at the Sun Valley Center.

But I'm awfully glad I did. It was a—it was a—it's a beautiful print, too. It's a really pristine print of Shoshone Falls. But it was one we hadn't done before. So I—the next year, I went down and rephotographed it and made it part of the project, but that was the last site that we did.

After the fieldwork was done, we spent a long time trying to get the project prepared for publishing, and that was a real—it was really difficult. You know, we had a lot of pictures, but we needed text. And Ellen was going to write a text on the history and kind of deal with the historical aspects of it. I was going to write a text on the methodology, and Joann was going to write a text—on the conceptual ideas.

Well, it took forever, because, you know, I was working on mine. And I'm not the greatest writer, and it was hard for me. And it was—since I hadn't ever done it, it was especially hard for me. And in those days, you know, this is not—you don't have a computer, you don't have a word processor. I remember typing this stuff out, and I'm a terrible typist. And I had to—I'd be cutting and pasting and, you know, all these weird things, trying to get the different things to flow better.

So I was—I was working on it. Ellen was trying, but she couldn't really get it together. I mean, she was just—too many things to do, I think. It was just really rough for her. Whatever—what happens in a—in a project like this, is—I think that they have a limited life span. And I've seen this over and over again in my career, that there's a lot of energy that goes into a project when you start, and then it starts to pay off and you start getting some awareness. There's a period where you get a lot of payback, there was a lot of things happening.

After a certain point, though, time takes over and people get pulled in different directions. And this is what was happening even in the third year. I could feel it dissipating. There was still a lot to do but, you know, everybody was being split up. Joann was on the East Coast, Ellen was, you know, working harder and harder—for the center. The center was having problems financially. In fact, by 1980, by 1980 we were off—we were fired, essentially; we were let go by the summer of 1980. And we used to say that we were all re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, you know, last summer, because we all knew we were leaving, but we had to work through the summer. And they gave us some severance pay.

So, you know, we were trying to make things working, but the project was dissipating. So by the time we got to the stage of writing things, it was really hard to get everybody to write what they

needed to write. So, you know, Joann was lagging too. She wasn't—she didn't really have the time to do it. I think I was the only one really working on the—you know, on a regular basis on the writing, and I was having my own problems.

So this is why it took between, you know, 1979 and 1984 to get this book out. It was just a real long time. We had—we had an—we didn't know who was going to do it. We had some interest in publishing it from David Godine on the East Coast, but then David dragged his feet and we couldn't get him to really do anything.

Eventually, Rick Dinguish—Rick Dingus published his dissertation as a book called *The Photographic Artifacts of Timothy O'Sullivan*. And he used the work that he did for our project in that book. I was a little bit unsure about that aspect of it, because I was hesitant to let—for him to publish the work before we did. But on the other hand, he was ready to go, and he really wanted to do it, and he resented anybody trying to prevent him from using the work that he did. So, clearly, I wasn't in a position nor did I want to stop him.

So he published them first, but he went with University of New Mexico Press, and so I felt, "well, maybe that might be a good place for us then to go in the end." So I went to them, and the woman who was their photo editor at that time, Dana Asbury, she was very excited about it. So we ended up going with UNM to publish the book.

And I think it was their first really well-done—they put a lot of money into the printing and they really did a good job with it. So they did a—they did good work, and I think Dana was a terrific editor. So that was, you know, a good experience for us, and it came out, you know, well. But their marketing isn't that—I mean, it's a university press; they don't have the kind of marketing that a commercial publisher does, but I think it served us well.

So that was a long process. In the end, Ellen never did finish her essay. And we had to really move on, because it was—at that point, it was either publish or not. I felt it was really important to move on. And even though Ellen was the director of the project, I feel that, at that point, I was kind of really making—it was me who was making the thing happen.

We had an exhibition. We were part of an exhibition that was also important to us, and it was the one you mentioned yesterday that Paul Berger did in Washington called *Radical*—what was it called? *Radical*—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: *Rational, Space, Time*.

MARK KLETT: *Radical, Rational, Space, Time*. *Radical, Rational, Space, Time*. And I thought it was a very smart exhibition and I liked the way Paul, you know, wrote about it. And so I—we agreed that we should invite Paul to write an essay for us. So Ellen and Joann and—we all agreed on this. So we invited Paul to write an essay; he accepted. So he wrote an essay for the book. And that was kind of in lieu of Ellen's essay, in a way.

That and —Joann did come through that—she wrote her essay and I finished mine, and that's what we went with. We went with those essays, and so that completed the book. The book came out in the fall of 1984, and that was my first publication.

You know, at the end of the project, I really felt that I was done with this kind of work. I thought that I've—"Okay, this has—this has been so much work and it's taken so much effort and I've spent a lot of time with it, but I'm never going to do this kind of work again. I'm really kind of done with it."

And I remember the last site for the project, actually. It was in Vermillion canyon in this—Vermillion Creek, I think it was called. It was sort of—I think it was Colorado—again, it was northwest Colorado. It was right where the corners meet there at Wyoming and Colorado, and near the Green River. And I was looking for this really—couple of really beautiful O'Sullivan photographs, and I spent days looking for where this place was.

And then I kind of narrowed down the location. There was this guy who owned the property there, and he had these signs up all over the place that said, "No trespassing," "trespassers will be shot," you know? And the guy, really adamant, you know? "Nobody—don't come down here, you know the road and everything." Boy, so I avoided that place.

But I went down this canyon—I walked down from the upper end to try to get to the site one day, and I stripped myself bare of my materials just to hike down the canyon. And I got to one spot

and I had to wade through a bunch of water. And I—at one spot—at one point, I got stuck in quicksand in this canyon. And I got myself out of the quicksand, but—and I went around and I walked down and I walked miles on this canyon.

I finally found the O'Sullivan site, but it was too late in the day to do anything about it, and I didn't the right gear on me. And so I said, "Oh, but I got to come back," you know? But I realized it was only about a half a mile from the guy's ranch, this guy's place. So I thought, "Jeez, I don't want to go through the quicksand again, you know, to get this place."

And so the next day, I started driving back there, and I kept looking at the guy's signs. And I ran across these two guys from—they were in the Colorado bureau of mines or something, they were on a truck. And I talked to them and they were saying, "Yeah, don't go down there. That guy is really serious, man, you know? You go to avoid that place." But I just kept thinking, "God, you know, I just don't want to hike down that canyon again. What's the guy going to—you know, maybe he'll shoot me, but I don't know."

So I got—I worked up the courage, and I get in the car—my car, in a little Volkswagen. I drive down to the guy's ranch, and there was this house, and the dogs are out there, they were barking. I thought they were going to chew me out, I'm afraid to get out of the car. I finally get out the car, I figure the dogs aren't going to tear me up, but they're barking and they're growling.

This guy finally comes out and he looks at me, "what do you want," you know? I said, "Well, I'm a photographer," and I pulled up the pictures, you know? And that usually gets people's interest. And they—he kind of comes out cautiously. He not armed, that's a good sign. He comes out and I said, "I'm a photographer." And then he says, "Well, you aren't up to much good, then, are you?" And I said, "Well, I'm looking for this place." And then he comes out cautiously and kind of looks at the—and he comes over to me, takes the—grabs the picture and looks at it. Then he goes, "that's up the canyon." And I said, "Well, yeah, I know. I've been looking for it and I found it yesterday, and I know that it's just right up there, and I just wondered if you'd let me park here and just go up the canyon and get the picture." And then he says, "What do you want to do that for?" [They laugh.]

And that point, I thought, "I'm not really sure. Why do I want to do this? This is kind of crazy." I mean, it was a kind of take-me-back moment that kind of was, like, "this is kind of nutty," you know what I mean? But I said, "Well, I'm just doing this for a project." And he, "ah, go ahead, have at it." And he just let me go, so I did. I went up there to get the picture and came back. I never saw the guy again, I got in my car and I took off. And that was the end of that.

But that was the last site of the project. And I said, "That's it. I'm not doing this again. I'm done with this, you know, this work." And so, when we did the book, I felt that we had completed something.

The other thing that happened that last year around the same area, actually—well, the first—it was the first—it started in the first—the first photography of the season, in 1979. For some reason, I don't know what it was, I just said—I thought to myself, well, you know, I've got all this film, and Polaroid is giving us as much as we want. This is free film, we can just use it and use it and use it and ask for more.

I—you know, I'm—we were at City of Rocks, Idaho, and I was with this guy named Tom Feldvabel. And Tom was a printer we had who was printing for us. Over the summer—we had started to print sets of photographs that summer. And so, I decided that I would, for some reason—we were camping at this little rock, but I felt, "well, maybe O'Sullivan, he photographed right above this and he stayed at this rock too." And I thought—so I thought I would take a picture.

So I made my own photograph. And it's a picture of the rock, which I call Bread Loaf Rock. There's Tom sitting on his haunches on the ground, there's a bunch of art gear lying around; we had literally slept in the cave of this rock. And I'm shooting at this and my shadow is projected from the rock I'm standing into the scene. And I just made the picture with this Polaroid film, and I cleared it and I kept the negative.

And that was the first picture I made of my own, thinking that this is actually a picture that I think it was own work, because before that I just hadn't made any photographs of landscapes. And, you know, what I was doing with my photography at that point, was I was walking around, you know, on my off hours, walking around Ketchum, making pictures like I had done in

Rochester with a 35 mm camera. This time, I had a good camera, a Nikon, you know, F2, with a shift lens, like Michael Bishop, and I was making pictures like Michael with a flash and this shift lens.

In fact, Michael came out and he visited us and he actually made that picture you were talking about with the firemen with the suspenders and the fire going on; he made that in Ketchum, I was there with him. You know, he made—[inaudible]—it was a—it was testing that was going on. Then, you know, I was making pictures like Michael and I was trying to show them. I had a couple of shows. I had a show at a gallery in Seattle, you know? But I wasn't doing great with the work, but I was trying to make a go of it.

But I was getting less and less interested in it. So when I made this picture with a 4-by-5, it was a big jump for me. But I felt comfortable with 4-by-5 at that point. I liked using the film; I was comfortable with the film. And in that way, I felt a little bit liberating for me to make these pictures, to make a picture like that.

I didn't know how to print it or what to do with a print. When I got—I never—I wasn't working in black and white, except for making prints for the project, and they were little 8-by-10s, and I thought, "I don't want to make an 8-by-10 out of this."

Somebody had left a box paper in the dark room at the center. It was a box of 16-by-20 Kodak Kodabromide E surface, 3 contrast grade. And so I thought, somebody abandoned this paper, I'll just use this. And so I used this paper to make a print. I liked the paper, it was interesting. It had a matte surface to it.

I was trying to figure out a way, though, to get the entire frame of the image, because by that time, I had seen wet plates, and wet plates had these, you know, weird edges and funky edges where the photographer had coded the plate and they had their fingers on it or it was missing a little spot or something, and then they would trim that off later, when they made the print. But I thought, this looks a lot like the Polaroid edges. So I decided to print the Polaroid edges on this. So I used a piece of glass to put the paper under, and I printed on top of it, and I made these prints, and I made this print of this scene.

And, uh, then, you know, I was interested in titling it. My colleague at the Sun Valley Center, a guy named Dave Wharton—Dave Wharton was a printmaker. And Dave used to say, "You know, you photographers, you always say, 'untitled this,' 'untitled that,' you know?" He said, "You guys are missing the opportunity. You need to title these things and give it some meaning."

And so I decided to title a picture, and I was trying to figure the way to do it. He was using a silver pencil to title his prints. So I got a silver pencil and I got some India ink and I tried some different things. And I think the first one I used India ink on, but I wrote on it—I said, you know, that this one was first camp of the season, Bread Loaf Rock, and I wrote on the picture, right on the surface on the picture. And it was kind of really liberating and really fun to me to do this, and that was the start of it.

And later that summer, in 1979, I started making pictures. I've made pictures of friends—you know, Dave Wharton, my girlfriend Stephanie Machen, you know—you know, people who were—that we were acquainted with, the visiting artists, you know. We—Mike Mandel and Larry Sultan were visiting artists at that time. We—I made pictures of them and the workshop.

I mean, I just photographed anything. It didn't really matter, you know. I was making pictures with this to just document—they became my snapshots, essentially, and I thought of them as 4-by-5 snapshots. I wasn't looking through the ground glass very long. I'd sort of set it up almost by instinct, look at it briefly and then take the picture. If I didn't like the picture, I'd move the camera or do something else and take another one because I could see the results.

So I made these pictures, and then I'd just casually print them and, you know, like, by the—by the end of the summer, I had a bunch of prints. And I also photographed the last camp of the season, and that was also the same place because we went back to the same place that season—not the—it wasn't the place I was talking about with the guy, the property guy, but it was—we went back a little bit later to go to this place for some other reason, and I rephotographed the same place. But anyway, it was—it was—it was the start of this body of work that became black and white photographs for me.

I went to an SPE conference the next year, and I think it was 1980, and the conference was in the Catskills. I remember John Szarkowski spoke at that, that conference. Um, we—I brought two

sets of pictures to show to my colleagues. One was my—my color work was very similar to Michael Bishop, and another—I had a box of these prints I was doing, these black and white prints, you know.

And I had them laid out, and you know, people were looking at the color ones, going yeah, okay, you know. But they showed the black and white ones, and they were—wow, you know, this is really interesting. I was getting this response that I hadn't predicted. I remember this photographer. It was a guy who taught at RISD for a long time and was a friend of ours—friend of Ellen's, and Ellen had worked with before. He'd been out in the early years of the project—first year of the project. His name is Gary Metz.

And Gary Metz was looking at the work, and Gary said—turned to me and said, "You know, maybe you ought to think a little more seriously about these pictures. I mean, this is—this is actually some pretty interesting stuff." And it occurred to me—yeah, you know. And where is my energy going. I mean, this is where my energy is going. And I remember going back to Idaho, and I had a roll of film in my 35-millimeter camera, and I never finished it. I took that roll of film out, and I never—I don't—I never finished it. I don't think I ever processed it. That was the end. I never went back to that.

I started to take that work a little more seriously—not like really serious, but I started to put my energy into it more. And boy, it was fun. I mean—really enjoyed it. And so the next year, in 1980 and then '81, I put a lot of effort into that work, and it started to mature more. I remember at one point I showed it—I took it to another conference somewhere. It might have been the next year. And I showed it to Peter MacGill. And Peter MacGill and I had known each other for a couple years. Peter was a graduate student at U of A at, I think, the same time I was a graduate student at—or VSW. And Peter, at the University of Arizona, was studying with Harold Jones, and Peter worked with Harold. Harold was the director of Light Gallery in New York, and Peter worked for Harold. Peter later became the director of Light Gallery.

But I'd show Peter my work, and Peter'd say, "Oh, you know, I like this, I don't like that." He was very honest about it, and he'd say, "Well, the work is interesting, but you know, there's nothing we can do about it right now, and—but maybe I'll talk to so-and-so, you know, and he'd throw out suggestions." And I liked Peter's comments, and we liked each other, and we—you know, I liked the honesty that we had and the friendship we had.

So at one point, I remember—he became director of Light Gallery. He—I showed him this black and white work, and he looks at it, and he says, "Well, you know, I think we can actually do something with this now." And I thought, wow, you know, because if you wanted to be anywhere in a gallery, Light Gallery was the place that you wanted to be. I mean, that was the kind of—the really contemporary gallery in New York. That was the one that, in my view, was the one that was most important to be associated with.

Michael was there—Michael Bishop. I mean, it—all—you know, Roger Mertin, I mean—but you had all these, you know, great photographers, all the modernists who were there. And so the idea that he was going to use my work—I mean, he just wanted to include it in this summer exposition, and he did. But later, he kept the work. And so I started to—you know, that was a point at which I thought that my work was maturing to the point that it was going to get out there in the world.

Well, it didn't take—unfortunately, not too much longer after my work was, you know, in Light Gallery as an artist. They closed the place. [Laughs.] You know, so it didn't last very long, but my association with Peter MacGill—that was an establishing point because later I then went to work with Peter when he opened up Pace/MacGill, and we've been friends ever since and had a business relationship ever since that.

But I took the work seriously, but the work at that time was really focused on family, that—the area around Ketchum, Idaho, and my travels. And the subject matter was not limited to any one thing. I didn't think of it as landscape photography, but there were landscapes in it because that's where I lived. And my life was very much an outdoor life at that point. I was—I was skiing in the winter. I was fly fishing in the summer. You know, the outdoor life, to me, was—I was in my late—I was 28, 29 years old. It was—my life was all about that.

So my photography was being integrated with my life as a form of snapshot. I remember thinking, um, you know, just before I left Idaho, that—you know, this is the kind of work I want to do for the rest of my life. I mean, this is kind of my life work, and I felt almost as if I had this sort

of vision—I mean, it was like an epiphany. I had this sort of vision about what my work should be and what it should be about. And it was very strong for me. I felt very empowered by doing that work. So—and I had just a really strong sense of purpose for the work.

So I began this series of pictures that actually took me the next—I did for 20 years, for over 20 years. In the end, it wasn't the only thing that I did, like I thought it might be, but it was a very strong thing for me. The work that I did was published in two books, and the first one was the second book that I published. It was the *Traces of Eden* book, and that was a real important period for me. That came out, I think, in '86, I believe. I can't remember the date. I'll have to check it.

But that book was a Polaroid book. They had a publishing program at that time. Connie Sullivan—they had a relationship with printers and publishers, and they would—what they would do is they would design the books and then market them to a publisher. The publisher would put the imprint on it, but Polaroid would really pay for the production. And they—so David Godine picked that one up and published it.

But what happened—what happened to really make that whole thing work was I had—I showed—I showed my work to Kathy Gauss again. This time, Kathy was no longer at the NEA. She was the curator of photography at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. And Kathy was looking at work, and she saw my work at a SPE conference, and—this new black and white work—and she said she really liked it, and she wanted to do a show. She was doing a new series of exhibitions that they called New American Photography at the—at LACMA.

So she gave me a show. This was my first big museum show. And at the same time, Peter MacGill opened up his gallery, and he had started Pace/MacGill with Pace. So I was kind of the only—I was the sort of young kid on the block. I mean, they had all the old, you know, modernists and, you know, the real famous people in there—you know, Robert Frank and, you know, Siskind and all these—all these people. But I was a kind of new kid that was in that gallery. So Peter gave me a show too.

And, um, that—the show—they were sort of up at the same time. One was on the West Coast, one was on the East Coast, and they overlapped a little bit. I had the show in New York, and Andy Grundberg was writing for The New York Times at that point. He wanted to review the show for The New York Times, but his editors told him, well, you've been doing too much on Pace/MacGill. You've got to do something else.

But Andy—to—and I always credit him with this, and I always appreciate it that he went to LA and looked at the show at LACMA, and he reviewed it from LACMA, and they published it in The New York Times. I had the, you know, bottom of the front page of the arts section. And it was—it came out. It was my first big, you know, review. It came out a couple of days after Ansel Adams died, which was kind of interesting timing for me. It might have been the same day, actually. I'm trying to remember. But that was my first big—you know. So at that point, my career kind of took off in some ways, that—without my own work. I mean, it was—people understood that it came out of the Rephotographic Survey, that there was a reference to materials, but that it was also, you know, my own work.

I guess I should back up a little bit here because what happened in the meantime was I moved to Arizona, and that was really important. I moved in 1982. I came to Arizona in February of 1982—actually, January. I started working at ASU at February 2, 1982. And so I began to make photographs here on my weekends. When I first came to ASU, I was not on faculty. I was a printer technician. I was—I was given a job to print for visiting artists, to make prints for a program. They had an atelier in printmaking that a guy named Joe Segura, who became my lifelong friend—Joe and I worked together.

Joe was a printmaker. He had been to study printmaking at—and become a master printer—at Tamarind Institute. So he was printmaking here as—working for visiting artists. They wanted to create a similar program in photography. So because Sun Valley Center was closing down, I was looking for a job, and they—the people here offered me this job. The reason I got the job, the reason I was offered this job—and I wasn't looking for a job, but I needed one—they contacted me because I—one of our visiting artists up at Sun Valley Center was Joe Deal. You know, Joe was, you know, one of the photographers who knew *New Topographics*. And Joe was looking to print his portfolio, The Fault Zone. And so we invited Joe to come up and be a guest artist, and we gave him the darkroom so we could do that. And I assisted Joe in printing the portfolio, The Fault Zone, so I helped Joe print the portfolio, and Joe and I got to know each other pretty well.

There was another thing before I met Joe—before I—I didn't know—I didn't know him personally, but the summer of 1980, Joe was jurying a photo competition for the Friends of Photography in California they had called the Ferguson Grant. And I had—I'd applied for it with my new black and white pictures. I mean, I—I was going to apply for this thing. I didn't know what to use, and I thought, oh, what the heck. Let's just see what happens with these new black and white photographs. I submitted them, and Joe chose me. He was the juror, and he chose me as the Ferguson Grant recipient in 1980.

And that was a significant thing for me because here was this guy in *New Topographics* who influenced, you know, the Rephotographic Survey, who was now choosing my work, my personal work, to get this prestigious grant, you know. So I thought this was great—I mean, this was, to me, really important. But I never met Joe.

The next—then, in the winter, I met Joe. He came up to Sun Valley Center. I worked with him to print The Fault Zone. We became friends that year. Then he was friends with Jim Hajicek, who was a photographer who taught here at ASU. They went to graduate school together and—at UNM.

So Jim was asking Joe, "I've got this new job. I want to hire a printer. Who do you think would be good at this?" And Joe said, "You should hire Mark Klett." So they called me up and said, "We've got this job we want you to do. And I didn't know anything about Arizona or Tempe, but I needed a job, so I had to do it. I said "OK, I'll come down and do it." So I started here, and I was working five days a week from 8:00 to 5:00 on a staff position. I was classified staff. I was the lowest-paid guy in the art department. But you know—and the weekends I had free, so I would photograph on the weekends.

So all this work I was doing that eventually became the work that was shown at LACMA, that was shown at Pace/MacGill—that was work that came out of my weekends here photographing in Arizona. And so I was building my career slowly, you know, at that time, and this work continued—you know, like I said, it continued for over 20 years. My position changed—I mean, I became—instead of classified staff, I got—I got—I became what they called academic professional, which is a little higher position. You know, in 1984 I got converted into that position.

Then later, I was given tenure. It was kind of a tenured position because it was a—academic professional was kind of a research position, so-called. I mean, if you ran the electron microscope or something, and you were a researcher in science, and you had the appropriate terminal degree, but you weren't teaching, but you were still doing some kind of research, they had to give you some different classification, and then that's what I got. All the librarians were academic professionals, people like that.

Eventually—kind of skipping ahead just to give the career or the job changes, when we changed directors in 1990, that—the money that I was using for our collaborative facilities went away, and so I started to teach more. So in 1990, I began teaching more often for the department. And in 1996, I think it was, they finally said, "Well, you know, it doesn't make sense that you're here teaching and are not faculty. We might as well make you faculty." So they converted my position over to faculty.

Then in 1998, I was—I came in as associate level faculty. Then in 1998, I became—I—the only thing I ever applied for in my entire career, I guess—I applied to become a full professor. And I got converted to full professor at that point. I was given full professor title. And then in—

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MARK KLETT: 1999, I think it was, or—no, no, 2002, I guess—I became a Regents professor. That was a—my director put me in for that. That was a—more of an honorary position. Only 3 percent of the faculty at the university can have that. Most of them are scientists and other people, but there's two of us in the School of Art, Kurt Weiser and I—Regents professors. And it's based on having, um, you know, a strong research, you know, resume, basically. So now, I'm at the top of the pyramid. [Laughs.] I went to—I've worked from the lowest-paid position to like, the top of the pyramid, after—it took me 20 years, but I eventually got there.

And I have to say, when I first came to Arizona, I didn't think I would stay more than six weeks. I mean, I loved Idaho. I loved living up there. I loved photographing up there. I love the outdoor life. But there wasn't any way to make a living, really, after the center folded or changed.

And so when I came here, I drove down in the winter, and I thought, my God, what is this place.

It's this huge city. It's a sprawl. It's just like Los Angeles. You know, I can't possibly live in this place. And I thought, I'm going to give this place six weeks, you know. And that turned into six months, and then turned into a year, and before I knew it, I had been here a long time. Well, the thing that kept me here was the people. I liked the people that were here. I liked working with them.

But the other thing was the landscape. I just thought, this is really interesting, this place. And here it is, in the middle of winter, and I can go out in the desert, and it's fantastic. And as you can see today how beautiful this is here in Tempe. It's going to be close to 80 degrees today, and where it's—you know, up north where it's blowing cold. You know, the great thing about Arizona is you can—you can work and photograph year-round. In the winter, you photograph here in the desert. In the summer, you head north and get up to higher elevation.

So I was making work all the time. I thought, this is a terrific place to work. I mean, I love the landscape. It's very interesting. And I was using the photography as a means to explore. In the same way, it was kind of like my ability to—like the photographers in the 19th century, to go out there and make pictures that were, you know, exploring the territory.

At the point that I realized that the pictures I was making were very similar to the 19th century photographs in a way because the edges were referencing the 19th century photographs. And then the titling was also kind of a reference because they used to number the pictures or, you know, put something in there. And I'd scratch a number into the plate. And I saw the titling in some respects as a—as a reference to that.

Also that—the titling was kind of a reference to snapshot imagery, where people would take a snapshot album and entitle it, you know, with ink—with a kind of white ink or something on the black paper of the album. And I saw them as my snapshots, so that was another kind of reference to it. So I was happy at that point that the process was working well for me. It was a very intuitive process. It was go out, explore, find things, make pictures, and then later, come back, edit and assemble the images.

So that the second book—you know, the *Traces of Eden*, took the title from the show I had at LACMA, which was also called *Traces of Eden*. And so it was a kind of combination of the work at that time and introduction. After that show at LACMA and after the Pace/MacGill show, everything started to happen kind of quickly for me. I just—I was getting published in journals and in magazines. It just happened really fast. There was a lot of attention paid to the work.

And so my career kind of got this big jumpstart, and people were interested in it. And I think between the Rephotographic Survey publication and that, it was kind of a two-hit kind of thing, and I was getting—you know, people were calling me and asking me for shows, and—you know, so my career kind of opened up in a way that it really hadn't been to that point. So I sort of started on the next phase of my career, I think, at that point.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Mark, when you published *Traces of Eden* and had a[n] introductory text by Denis Johnson, the fiction writer, and afterword text by Peter Galassi, the photo curator—but one aspect of it I wanted to ask you about, which is the color pictures.

MARK KLETT: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Were you using both all the time, or color once in a while? How did that fit into your thinking then?

MARK KLETT: Yeah, I was doing—I was doing both at the same time, but I wasn't doing much color. I was doing a little bit. What happened was that in the last year that I was working at Sun Valley Center, one of the workshops that we had that summer was a dye transfer workshop. One of the other guest artists we had, besides Joe Deal, that was printing his portfolio—another person that printed work was John Pfahl. We had John come up, and John was printing some of his dye transfer prints for the *Altered Landscape* series at Sun Valley Center.

And you know, we—that was a very popular series. It was—you know, a lot of people were exhibiting it and publishing it, and, um, you know, between that workshop, which I took, on dye transfer, and John's residency, I was being taught a little bit about how to do dye transfer. So I decided to do some of my own dye transfer photography, and then the way I did it was working from color negative to Pan Matrix film, then making dye transfers.

So I started making my own dye transfer prints in 1980, and I carried that over into the work I

did here at the—here at the university. I had a facility. We called it the Photography Collaborative Facility, and that was when we'd bring in artists to work here. And one of the processes I offered was dye transfer—that I could work with people. And so I started to get good at dye transfer. I made dye transfers a couple different ways. I made them from in-camera separations, and I made them from negatives. For my own work, I worked from negatives.

But because it was expensive and laborious and time-consuming, I didn't do very many of them. Now, I wasn't really crazy about c-prints—you know, I used to make c-prints for my other work that was, like, similar to Michael's work. And that seemed to be fine for me. But when it came down to making these landscape photographs, these other pictures, I wasn't crazy about the c-print because my black and white pictures were on this matte surface paper, and I liked the feel of that. It was kind of an anti-landscape paper. I mean, you know, landscapes at that point were done on black and white, you know, glossy paper or—you know, because it had greater depth. I mean, it was kind of almost blasphemy, you know, to put a landscape photograph onto this matte surface paper.

But I thought that the—half the reason we're doing it—I felt a little bit subversive about it to begin with, and I liked the idea of doing that on a matte surface paper. But the color prints were not—they didn't match, you know. So one way I could get them to match was to print a dye transfer onto a matte surface paper. So what I did, literally, was take the black and white paper, I fixed it out—and you had to do what's called mordanting—you had to mordant the paper to allow the dyes to migrate, you know, in a fixed kind of way. Well, the—a certain fixer would do that, so I used to fix the paper out, so I just had a blank sheet of white paper and then transfer—do the dye transfer onto that. And then that way, the print felt the same as the black and white, so you could show them together.

So I started to make these color dye transfer prints, you know, and—but I didn't make very many because they just were hard to do and really expensive. But the thing was that that book you're mentioning, the *Traces*—the *Traces of Eden* book that did have the color pictures in it, but it was kind of funny, when Godine printed that—you know, David Godine must have had a whole warehouse full of that paper. It was the Mohawk Superfine paper. It's actually a great paper. It's a very archival, very beautiful paper.

He wanted—when he was talking to us about printing the Rephotographic Survey book, he wanted to use that paper, and we thought he was crazy. We—there's no way we wanted to use that paper on the RSP pictures. So later, when he does this book, he uses that paper, which I thought actually worked very well for the black and white prints because that, you know, felt like the prints in some ways. But the color prints got really weird. They just turned really flat, and I'm not very happy at all with the color printing in that book. The black and white prints are okay, but the color ones don't look right. If you see the original dye transfer prints, they're much—much, much better than in that book.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Only on the cover.

MARK KLETT: But the—yeah, the cover looks more like it, yeah—because they needed a coated stock, I think, for the color. But anyway, that's just an aside.

Like, I wanted to say one thing I need to wedge in here. I—there was one kind of important trip that I didn't mention that was a segue. In 1981, I went to Nepal, in the fall of 1981. I guess that—that was—it was 1981 was the summer we were—I'm getting the dates mixed up. 1981 was the summer that we were all fired at Sun Valley Center. So when we left, we were given severance pay and I was thinking about what I was going to do. And I had about 3,000 [dollars]—I had about $5,000 in the bank at that point, I think. And I figured this trip was going to cost about 3,000 [dollars]. I was—I was asked to go on a trip to Nepal by a guy in Sun Valley and some—there were about six people going.

And I thought, you know, this is a great opportunity, but it's going to cost me about 3,000 bucks—you know, either I'm going to stay here in Ketchum and nickel-and-dime the money away, or I'm going to go do this adventure. So I chose to do the adventure. It was a month-long trek through the Annapurna Range, around the Annapurna sort of massif and going—Kali Gandaki on the one side and the Marsyangdi Valley to the Kali Gandaki.

So we—I took the—my 4-by-5, I took Polaroid film, and I shot photographs in Nepal. And it was—it was kind of a real difficult thing because—to try to get it to work there—because I had to wash the negatives, and sometimes I was doing it in glacier runoff, and I'm drying the negatives in a

tent with a—with a candle, you know. It was kind of—it was a difficult field condition.

But I—what it did was it really got me prepared for Arizona because I thought of—I was—before that, I was kind of family-oriented, you know—not family, but friends-oriented, you know, everyday kind of thing. This—at this point, it became travel and, you know, exploration, and—so that work was actually pretty important to setting me up for the Arizona work when—because I—then at the next winter I went to Arizona.

So that—eventually, I did a portfolio of that work with Linda Connor. She and I did a portfolio that we published together that some collections own. I know that one is at the Center for Creative Photography, and they're owned by some other collections. So that was the origin of that work, and it got me prepared for moving to Arizona, frankly, about the idea of doing an exploration, you know, using photography. And I did do some color work for that too, and some dye transfer work.

So there was color work going on, but there wasn't a lot of it. I really haven't been very sure how the color work fits into the nature of that. I didn't do very much of it. I think for the most part, the project for me—that the whole group of pictures from that 20-year period really exists as a black and white body of work, but there are some color images within it, probably not more than maybe a dozen kind of images, but there are some in that body of work.

I really worked on that as my main—my main focus, what I called my work, my personal work, for—starting, really—I kind of saw it starting in about 1982, when I moved to Arizona. And I would say that I think of the kind of official end of that, if there is such a thing—I think the last picture I took that sort of fit into that body of work using the Polaroid material was 19—or 2004. It went to about 2004. And the last, you know, six or so years, there wasn't a whole lot. I wasn't doing as much.

But looking at that period of the black and white, positive, negative, Polaroid—the prints were printed out to the edges, so they're borderless 16-by-20s, for the most part. Some are bigger, 20-by-24; some went to 30-by-40 even. That was—that was that period. Now the book *Revealing Territory*, in exhibition—that was 1992, and that was a—that was kind of the main publication from that work. So the work from—there are several things. I mean, when—that was the major statement, I think, that came out of that work, although it wasn't at the end of the work.

I worked with Tom Southall again, so he comes back into that—the scene for me at this point in time as a curator of photography at the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth. And we—he was interested in the pictures that I was making, and so we put together, you know, an exhibition for the Amon Carter that was called *Revealing Territory*. That came with a publication. I went back to UNM Press for that—Dana Asbury again at UNM Press. And the contributors to the book were Patty Limerick—and you know, Patty—and Patty and Tom wrote essays for the book.

I met Patty Limerick at a conference in 1990 at the—at the—in Snowmass, Colorado, that the Anderson Ranch Arts Center put together called *The Political Landscape*. And there's a big photo conference that—of, you know, people who were working with the concept of, uh, you know, politics or advocacy or saying something message-wise about the land through their photography—were getting together and discussing that. Richard Misrach gave one of the big talks there, but there were a whole bunch of people. You know, I showed my work at that conference, and that's how I met Patty.

I showed my work, and at the end of my talk, a woman comes up to me, and she says, you don't know it, but you're a new Western historian. [Laughs.] And it turns out to be Patty. And so we had a long conversation, and—and Patty also spoke at that conference—but what I liked about her was that she was very inclusive. She was essentially saying, we've got this thing that we call new—the new western history, and you're doing it, and welcome. You know, it was a very welcoming kind of thing.

Well, I didn't know much about it. I didn't—you know, this is the first time I'd really—knew of her and what she did, and I was fascinated by it, you know. Other—then other people I started to pay attention to, like Donald Worster from Kansas.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: We should say Patricia Limerick—[laughs]—Professor Patricia Limerick.

MARK KLETT: Yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Patricia's at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

MARK KLETT: Boulder, right. And Donald Worster from—you know, from Kansas—University of Kansas, you know, William Cronon, you know, from—where is it, Minneapolis? Or is he—no, Wisconsin.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: University of Wisconsin, Madison.

MARK KLETT: Wisconsin, yeah. You know, these are some of the folks that are engaged in that that I then got to know, both personally and their writing. So this was my start of the new western history kind of concept at that conference. And so because the—because I met Patty then, we established a relationship that then became more formal with her writing of the text for that book.

I also wanted to add, at that—one other thing that really happened at that conference that I think was significant was we—a bunch of us got together at that conference, and we had a meeting. We actually had a meeting around a big circular table in this dining room where we all talked about this concept, and it was Ellen Manchester, again, from RSP, and her husband at this point, Robert Dawson—Bob Dawson, Peter Gowan—I think it was—I'm just—I'm not exactly sure who was at that initial dinner. I know the people who became part of this group, but I mean, it might have been Sant Khalsa, and—I don't know if she was there at that time or, you know, Marty Stupich, or—I'm trying to remember who was actually at that. I know Richard Misrach was actually part of that table, and his wife Myriam.

We had a conversation about starting a project that we called Water in the West. And those of us who were interested then became part of the Water in the West Project. Richard decided not to, but we—what we had—that became another—that's a—just an aside, but that becomes—later on, that's—I think that's a kind of important thing. But that got its start at that conference. I mean, we had been talking about it, Ellen and I and Bob—we had—we had been discussing the concept of it before that. But it became a solidified—as an idea there, and we put the group together at that conference.

Then kind of going back to the Revealing Territory, about Patty—she had a significant role in that, in the order of the book. One of the things that I think was important was—you know, I had this—at that point, like maybe a 10, 12-year period—about a 10-year period of work that I was trying to organize for this exhibition. And Tom and I had done the editing on the pictures—you know, what should go in the exhibition and consequently the book. But we weren't sure how to sequence it. And Patty said, well, this is kind of your diary. Why don't you just put it in chronological order. And I thought, that's never going to work. I mean, that just is—that's just going to be crazy, you know. It's going to be stupid. But I—well, you know, I mean, Patty's got great ideas, so let's just try it.

So I put it together in chronological order, and it just totally surprised me. That kind of blew me away because it made sense to me, and not just as a chronological sequential form, but that the pictures—the picture relationships and what they did from one to the other made sense to me. Now this goes back to Nathan—I mean, the idea that you're putting pictures together, to me, had to create meaning, not just be a chronology for the sake of being a chronology. I wanted the pictures to have some kind of synergy, some kind of relationship, that together they would create something.

And in fact, it did. And I was totally surprised by that, and to this day I felt—I still think it's an amazing thing. But I'm not as surprised by it maybe today because I've seen it happen again and again because there's something that happens with a kind of synchronicity or in a chronology that actually does—that does reflect a kind of intelligence that you're maybe not even aware of, that I've seen my students do, I've seen, you know, other people do—that there's something at work in the process that's really engaging, that's kind of beyond your ability—your conscious ability to kind of create an order for it.

So this is why the book looks the way it does. It is a chronology, and a very—I think it's very important that it's a chronology, that they just—they understand that that's the way it operates.

Is everything okay?

So that book then also, I think, significantly advanced, you know, my work for—and also the kind of concept of the meaning for me of the work. But there's this—there's a big shift that's happening in my head, too, at this point. I mean, thinking back on Ketchum and what the work meant for me in Idaho, it was kind of snapshot. It was my family. It was a little bit like my father's photographs, to be honest, you know. This is—this was the documentation of my life, the

integration of the work that I was doing with my life.

But by the time I get to Revealing Territory and the work that's exploratory for me in Arizona and at the Southwest, it—this is being codified in my brain as meaning—a sort of a meaning—the meaning is about place and about the human interaction with place. So it's almost as if you take the concept of *New Topographics* and a man-altered landscape and extend that into the work, you know, for me—my own version of what this interaction was and the idea that there was this interaction over time, over a period of time, and that the photographs themselves were kind of artifacts of my own creation. I was photographing both artifacts and making artifacts of this journey that I was taking in the Southwest.

So for me, at this period of time, I think that in terms of the weighting of the work—although there was this integration of time and space that happened with the Rephotographic Survey, of change and time and place—at this point I would have weighted the place more than time, that it was about this location, about this place, about the Southwest and about things that have happened there.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Could you describe and discuss one or two photographs that illustrate that change, Mark?

MARK KLETT: Yeah, well, there—well, like, one of the early photographs was called *Car Passing Snake*, and so, you know, there's this picture of the roadway. There's a snake on the road, and this car is whizzing past, and the hubcap was sort of giving this kind of squirrely-looking, you know, thing—it kind of looks like a coiled snake as it goes past. And there's a sort of telephone pole in the background and some lines and some distant mountains and—and so this car is whipping past the road, and it's going really quickly. But here's this snake that's sort of moving slowly. And there's this kind of uncoordinated thing between human time and landscape time.

And so that was a time reference to me, but it was also about this place that—you know, this has changed a lot. I mean, later pictures in the book, for example, are more really specifically about place, like—so that's a time reference. But then you get to like—one of my favorite pictures in that book, that's called *Under the Dark Cloth, Monument Valley*. And it's a picture of a ground glass that's actually Linda Connor's camera, and that's her hand, and she's holding the edge of the ground glass, and she's got her Best Western watchband on because she put on for the picture. But we're shooting that at the overlook at Monument Valley, in a workshop that she was actually teaching and I was a guest on. But—and I'm using her ground glass to then frame this—one of the mitten rocks. And you see it upside down in the picture. And the title is *Under the Dark Cloth, Monument Valley*.

Well, to me, that picture was really a reference to the way that we know the West so much through imagery, you know. We know a lot of it through—that particular place, through films, you know. That was its—worldwide, people know that location because of the John Ford westerns, you know, and then it's just famous for that location, you know. And so the idea that I was doing it through a ground glass was that reference to the photography being—really telling us what to think of this place, that we were being instructed in some ways to—how to view it by the photography that had come before us, you know. I mean, to me, the photography was everything from the 19th century to the present day. I mean, it can include, you know, everything from, you know, postcards to—and you know, to historic photographs, but that the legacy was really the thing that told us.

There was another picture that was made near there called *Witness to Sunrise*, and it's a picture of—looking out in the distance, you see Monument Valley, but below it is the San Juan River and the Goosenecks, and there's this—you see this big vast scene, but there's a rock in the foreground that's sticking up at this place Muley Point, or this vast point overlooking the scene. And there's—the sun is hitting this rock, but somebody's figure is cast onto it—the shadow of that figure is cast onto that rock. And I've always thought of that picture that—like the kind of—that that's the shadow in Plato's cave, you know, where—you know, we're not really looking at the reality of the scene. We're looking at the report of the scene—that the photograph is like the shadow on Plato's cave. It's the—not the reality of it, but it's somebody's opinion about it.

And one of the things that I started to understand about my photography at that point was that it was always referencing the 19th century view. Another example would be like the picture called *Campsite Reached by Watery Boat Through*—or *Camp Reached by Boat through Watery Canyons—Campsite Reached by Watery—Campsite Reached by Boat through Watery Canyons*, that's it. Lake Powell—and it's a reference to Powell's journey, but there's this lake and a

speedboat, and we're camping out, and you know—and so there's always this reference to the 19th century there in the picture. But at the same time, the picture is a comment.

And I just—I see that the idea of making a photograph, for me, was like making an editorial cartoon for a newspaper. I mean, it's really a comment about our time and place. And so, you know, for me, I've seen the act of making a picture not as an act of documenting place, but an act of responding to it and making a comment about it. So to me, it—and this is why I got fascinated by landscape photography to begin with. When I saw that O'Sullivan was saying something, that he was making decisions, that it was a form of commentary—that's what I saw—what I was doing was making a form of commentary about the land. So I saw them at that point not so much as my snapshots, although they were, but they were also my comments about the place, about the landscape itself.

And that included the cultural history, the natural history, maybe things about the scene that you even needed to know about the site before you really understood it. I mean, there's a picture of—in that book, of—it's called—oh, it's something about Anasazi doorway. I forget the exact title now—Image Cast by Anasazi Doorway or something. It's this black—it's mostly black, but it's got this shape that looks kind of like a bird, but it's created through the combination of foreground and background forms that are—that are casting shadows.

Well, the photograph condensed that three-dimensional space into two dimensions, and so it has this kind of image of a bird. But the image of the bird is kind of symbolic because it's kind of like—the thunderbird is the—is one of the images of the Navajo tribe, which now, you know—that's the property that it's on. But you have this Anasazi, which is the ancient, going to the new. And so unless you know that about the site and about what the—that there's a difference there from the different periods, and also what—the Navajo and their image, maybe you don't get the full picture.

So some of these places, you know, it's—I'm building in or trying to build in the layers. And one of the things that my—I've always wanted my work to do is to create—generate layers of meaning in the work. So you might look at the picture and say, oh, that's a nice picture, you know, just compositionally, or the place is interesting, or it's, you know, nice. But then the more you know about it, about something about the history of about the place or about—that it has this other level of meaning, too, and that kind of layering, to me, is really essential in the work. And it's one of the things that I kind of want out of the work, one of the things that I kind of demand out of the work in selecting, editing and putting together the work.

I don't know if that was—I forget where I was going with your question, but that might—okay, so we're back on, and—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Yes.

MARK KLETT: Maybe I—maybe I should go back to that—maybe to the relationship of what I was thinking about the work, you know, relative to predecessors, you know. And I—you know, there was that story I just mentioned to you about when my first review came out—it was at the time that Ansel Adams died. And I felt in some ways that that was kind of significant to me in a sort of symbolic way. I mean, I—I've had—I mean, I have to say that, I mean, I've always admired Ansel Adams' work. I mean, I think he's, you know, justifiably, you know, this great photographer. But I never wanted to make pictures like Ansel Adams. But I think for people of my generation, for a long time, he was seen as the kind of, you know, master. And later—in later work, Rebecca Solnit describes Ansel as the kind of Oedipal father, you know, that we—maybe the group of us in this generation, you know, felt that he was the guy we had to kill, you know, to kind of get to the new work. And so there was that feeling that he was the father.

I mean, I think in the end that we all understand and appreciate the quality and the level that he did. So—but I had that one meeting, and I wanted to just relay that story that we had meeting with Ansel. And I did get to meet him a couple times when he was still alive. And it wasn't—I think it was—it wasn't to show him the work that I was doing, like the work for Revealing Territory, but Ellen Manchester—Ellen was really great at setting up meetings with people, you know, that we should go see and show the work to. I mean—and after the first year we did our project in the RSP, going back to that—I mean, she got us set up with Park Service people in Washington who thought we were doing some interesting work, and that's how we got access to Yellowstone, actually, because you know, without them, we wouldn't have gotten anywhere in Yellowstone.

But one of the meetings that she set up, and I think it was—I think it was '78 or '79, I can't remember the date now—was with Ansel Adams. And we were in California for a conference of some kind, and so Ellen set up a meeting with Ansel at his house. And you know, in those days, Ansel would entertain people, you know. If you set up a meeting with him, he would have people come over to the house around cocktail hour, and then he would—he would have like a little meeting with you and a little social hour, and you could have a drink, and you know, it was very nice.

So we set up this meeting, and we went over to Ansel's house, and it was about cocktail hour, and we got ushered in. Virginia ushered us in, and there was Ansel, and we went into this room, and there was a big, you know, like, half gallon of bourbon there on the shelf, and everybody had a drink. We poured us drinks, and we sat down, and we pulled out the box of Rephotographic Survey prints and started looking at them. And you know, we knew that Ansel appreciated the 19th century photographs because we knew the history of him and how his—he was instrumental in bringing O'Sullivan's work to the—to—you know, to the knowledge of the fine art world. And so we knew he would appreciate the work.

And so we brought the pictures in, and we looked them over, and he was looking through them, and he—oh, you know, it's—we were talking about the sites and the pictures and enjoying it and everything. And at the end he says, that's very interesting. It's all very interesting, he says, but of course, it's not art. And I saw—I looked at Ellen, and she just kind of bristled. I could see her sort of sit up in the chair and lean forward. And I knew she was going to start to argue with him, so I kicked her under the table, and she kind of looked at me and I was like—you know, look at her like don't do it, you know. [They laugh.]

And Ansel—he wasn't noticing that. He was looking at the pictures. So we went on, and we just let that go. And we went on to conversation about the photographs and so forth, and at the end we thanked him, and we left, and Virginia ushered us out the door. And we were on the stoop, and she was at the—standing in the doorway, and she said to us, now don't you worry about—don't—actually—oh, don't pay attention to what Ansel says. He's just stuck in his ways. [Laughs.] And I thought that was great, you know, and I really appreciated that she, you know, was caring about what we were thinking.

But Ellen, I said later, you know, we—this is not a thing you're going to take on with Ansel. I mean, you know, he's got a feeling about what art is, and this probably doesn't fit his definition. And I said it doesn't really matter to me if Ansel thinks it's art or not because I think Ansel, you know, probably had his own sense of the transformation of the scene—I mean, you know, look what his work is like—and the idea of being able to visualize it, to transform it and to make it into something. And the work we were doing, you know, was more methodical and, you know, just didn't probably fit that definition. And I—it didn't matter to me whether he thought it was art or not. I mean, that's not why I went there. I don't think we went there for validation. I think we went there for—just to have him look at it and to meet him and to talk to him.

And in fact, I got exactly what I wanted to out of that meeting, which was that confirmation of his kind of opinion. You know, for me, the real issue in some ways wasn't, you know, what was art and what wasn't. It was just what was interesting and what was not interesting. And that—that idea of the fact that it was interesting at all was good enough for me.

You know, the—there was another incident that was sort of similar to that, and that was a workshop I was teaching with a bunch of people in Carmel Valley. It was for the Friends—I think it was for—I think it was for Yosemite or Friends of Photography. Now I can't remember, but the folks at that—there was a whole bunch of us teaching at the same time, and I think it—it was me and Richard Misrach and Frank Gohlke and Jerry Uelsmann and—I think it was Philip Hyde. And Linda Connor—it was a big group of us. We were teaching together at this workshop. And we're all showing our work and talking about it.

And when I got up to show my work, I prefaced it by showing a map of the United States. And the map showed in black the remaining wilderness areas left in the United States, and it showed that the biggest area of wilderness was in the Nevada Test Site, and the second biggest was in the Yuma Proving Grounds in Arizona, so they were owned by the military. And I showed that map as a way of, like, discussing the idea that—for me, that the real job of a photographer at this point wasn't trying to find new wilderness areas and point out, you know, new wilderness places, but was instead trying to determine what the values were—what we valued about landscapes, and that that was—that the fact that it was wilderness or not was kind of irrelevant. And so I used that map, and in fact, it was published in *Revealing Territory* too.

Well, I found it in a book that was called *Man-Made America*, and I thought it was very revealing because the map was actually drawn in the 1960s. So one could imagine that there was less wilderness area in the—at that time, you know, than there was even when they drew the map. Well, I showed that at that workshop, and Philip Hyde took offense to that. And he—you know, he kind of got up and said—well, he said, I think you can find wilderness by the side of the road. And—but that was exactly my point, you know, that I don't—I think what was important was the definition of what wilderness was, you know. In that case, the map was drawn with a certain definition. It was like, anything that couldn't be reached within five miles of a roadway or navigable waterway or, you know, railroad or something like that. I forget the exact specification.

But my point was exactly that, that it's how we define what we think of wilderness or that we want from it that's really important, that the job of the photographer in some ways was to redefine that—was to not think about, well, here's the next great—greatest place that we haven't seen before, or even that we need to use these photographs of pristine wilderness in order to protect them. And I totally respect that thinking. I respect the thinking that Adams was engaged in, that Philip Hyde was engaged in, and I—and I think of what they have done in terms of our national political and cultural psyches as just incredibly powerful, you know, that we've preserved certain places, but that my position was that I think we needed to rethink that, that we needed to think about other ways of understanding our relationship to place.

And this had to do, to some degree, with the thinking of the new western historians. Like Bill Cronon wrote an article, you know—and I'm trying to remember the name of it now, but it had to do with rethinking wilderness. And his point was that—or one of his points was that the whole concept of wilderness is problematic, that the Wilderness Act of 1964, was it—or you know, says—and I remember the quote—it says, "Wilderness is a place untrammeled by man, where man is a visitor who does not remain."

And that whole concept that man as a visitor does not belong there was one of the things that I really found problematic. And what the work I was trying to do was create—was create some sense that there was—that you did belong, that actually—that people always were there. They've always been there, whether they were there in—historically, or that they are now, and they're always leaving their signs of passage, and that we can't ignore the fact that we can just—we can't say that we can go in and then leave somehow.

And then, in fact, in my view, that was getting dangerous because it was creating a separation between self and place. And what I was trying to do with the work was break that down, that the work, in my view—there were certain tools that I became conscious of in the work over time, that the idea of using a part of myself or a shadow of myself or an artifact of mine in the picture—or somebody else's, for that matter—was a reference to the fact that people were there, and that they were engaging and participating in the landscape, so that it was a matter of not just seeing a document of a place, but really seeing that one is engaged.

You're not just a witness to this place. You're not just an observer, but you're a participant in actually creating the view of the place and creating the knowledge of the place—creating any sense of your relationship to it, and that I think what we needed to do, in the same way that Cronon was concerned about, you know, the idea of wilderness and that that had to be rethought—this idea about how we belong needed to be rethought. And my sense was that the Ansel Adams work was saying, isn't this great. This is a beautiful place. But there was no sign of anybody being there.

Now, that—I don't think that means that Ansel said people didn't belong. But the pictures were clear that there wasn't anybody in it, you know. Ansel was—I guess used to say that there was always two people in his pictures, you know, him because he made it and you because you're as the—you're the observer. But my point was really specifically that, you know, you didn't see this interaction, that what we had set up for ourselves was this dichotomy, that there was, on the one hand, the kind of modernist photographs of beautiful unspoiled wilderness—and—but they were being shown to preserve that space. And on the other hand, you had these new topographic photographs that showed more and more how we screwed the place up.

And by the time it got to the political landscape conference, that's exactly what was happening. We're saying, you know, we've got to photograph these places. We've got to stop this. We've got to stop this kind of negative encroachment of things that are happening. We've got nuclear waste sites, you know. We've got—we've got toxic waste dumps. I mean, we've got these different things, and this is—we've got to be advocates against this. And I—you know, my

position on that was, well, yeah, I mean, we do—we do want to do that. But I'm not—what we're seeing here is a dichotomy that's not very good because on the one hand, we've got this landscape where it's pristine, and it's partly pristine because we're not there—one—the reason why it's pristine is we haven't had a chance to muck it up yet. And then we've got this other landscape in which we have screwed up, and in both cases, we don't belong. We're not there. And the thing I was really adamant about in the work was that we do belong. I mean, we do have a place within this.

So I was trying to advocate in the work for this other position that, you know—so it kind of—in a way, it sort of felt weird because I—of the way that the whole field was going at that point was more towards a political landscape. And I wanted to—I mean, I was sympathetic to it, but at the same time, I didn't feel I was totally part of it. So it's kind of like the opposite sides of the same coin, in a sense, that there really wasn't any of that difference.

So my feeling has always been that we need to have this other kind of way of looking at our participation with the landscape. And that, you know—as a side project in the '90s, I did a project with Gary Nabhan, the ethnobotanist Gary Nabhan. And you know, he and I were on a thesis committee together at ASU, got to know each other and understood that we had some of the same feelings. And Gary proposed this project to me: Why don't we work together and create this book, and the premise was that Gary was really upset at some of the things that were happening in the environmental field, which was that people were separating themselves from the land, that they felt that they were a little bit—like it was too egocentric a position, that, you know, we need to protect the land because we're—you know, we're doing something bad to it, so we need to master it, be lord over it even more.

And he just—he went to a conference one time, and he heard somebody talking about that—he felt sick to his stomach; he said, this is just part of the problem, you know. We're not—we're just continuing this separation between ourselves, and we don't really have any sense of how we belong in this place because we've separated ourselves to the point we still think we're master over it. And I was feeling the same thing. I just described to you that, you know, we weren't able to get a sense of our relationship—how we belonged.

So we created this book, and we did this book called *Desert Legends*. And it was a combination of photographs and text, and you know, Gary wanted to use stories that were, um, really stories that would show people that they could belong, and examples of how they could belong in this—in this place, the Southwest. And so in some cases they went back to, you know, Native American stories. In some cases, they—or Mexican-American and Mexican-Indian stories, I mean, combinations of things. You know, some of them were early American stories—you know, Western American stories. But they went back to this—and even plants, ultimately—plants in a way that things would show that they could live over longer time periods, and think about in terms of a long-term project.

And so that was an attempt to address that very issue, that idea of—you know, of where we belong, you know. I'm kind of skipping ahead there, but this all came back from that—the whole idea of the political landscape conference, from this workshop that we did, from Ansel Adams, you know, and his relationship to photography—the whole thing, and so part in parcel.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Could you talk about your photographs in *Desert Legends*?

MARK KLETT: Yeah, you know, that was a—because—well, the kind of interesting way Gary works is that he didn't want to do the project until we had a publisher. I mean, normally I just—I would just do a project, and then we'd find a publisher, but you know, the way he works is, you know, he likes to find somebody who's going to do it, and then he puts the pressure on them to actually do the work, and he's got enough stuff to do anyway.

So we—the thing sat around—the whole idea sat around for I think two years, pretty much, until he did find a publisher for it. And his publishing agent found us a publisher. Once we did that, you know, we—he had a series of articles—or he had essays that he had already written that he thought that he wanted to use, or something like that. So we—I—at that point, I'd read a lot of the work, and so I kind of knew—you know, it wasn't as collaborative in the sense that we did the work together at the same time, with some of the other projects I've done because, like I said, he did have a lot of it done already. But there were some things he didn't.

And so we went out together a few times, and he showed me a few things that were actually pretty interesting and taught me a lot about the Southwest that I didn't know, about it from an

environmental perspective. So I felt a little freer to make the pictures, and I made different kinds of pictures than I did just working—you know, just the string of pictures that I had been doing. I mean, in retrospect, the whole thing fits into the larger concept of the Revealing Territory genre of pictures that I made, and I—if I ever do a book where I kind of reconstitute the total era from 1982 to 2004, I would include some of those in that, but—that larger group. But it was a much more focused group on that, that idea of the border, of our relationship to that place.

And so I went out and made some photographs specifically for that book, and so the pictures that I made, with a couple of exceptions, were made just for that project. So they were a little bit different kind of picture, you know, pictures of—they were actually made in Mexico. Some of them were portraits. Some of them were pictures of people who I ran into on the edges of, you know, the border region, border monuments, things that I knew would go along with Gary's text, so pictures of certain kinds of plants and trees and certain locations like the El Camino del Diablo, and you know, as I said, you know, the border communities in that area. So there was very specific kind of photographs that were a little bit different.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: I think I'm just going to stop it here.

MARK KLETT: Okay.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Because there is only like 3 minutes left. I think it's probably best. Let me remember.

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ROBERT SILBERMAN: This is Robert Silberman interviewing Mark Klett at the artist's studio in Tempe, Arizona, on December 11th, 2010, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number four.

MARK KLETT: Okay. So I was telling—I was telling you about the *Desert Legends* book and that was—chronologically it gets a little—it was a little bit ahead of myself. But I wanted to maybe—maybe we can talk to it and I think maybe it's good to go back and talk about some of the collaborative projects or some of the side projects that were happening at the same time really as Revealing Territory work was being created.

The first one that was a collaborative project was sort of a commission was the Headlands project—what became known as the *Headlands* book. That was a project that was sponsored by the Headlands Center for the Arts which is just north of San Francisco when you cross the Golden Gate Bridge.

You're in this beautiful attractive undeveloped property essentially that was a military reservation from the 19th century to the late 1970s and then was given to the Park Service. So it's now part of the Golden Gate national Recreation Area—the GGNRA. And it—one of the Park partners they have in the park is the Headland Center for the Arts.

And they commissioned this project in which they thought it would be interesting to create a guidebook to the Headlands in which they commissioned I think it was five of us to work on it. They were guided by one of the guys that actually helped us all get together was Jock Reynolds.

Jock Reynolds is now currently the director of the art museum at Yale. Jock was an artist himself and he knew everybody. And he suggested we all kind of come together and work on this. I was doing contemporary photography for it. Mike Mandel and Larry Sultan did the archival research and photography for that project and got them out of the collections.

Paul Metcalf was the writer on it and Miles Decoster was the book designer. So a group of us put this together eventually. It became that book published by UNM Press called *The Headlands*. It was also a time when I—the first time, again, when I actually used rephotography, a little bit for that project. I really thought that I was done with that but I could see there was a use for it in that particular instance.

So I did rephotograph some historic pictures of the military location. But I think it was really an interesting book and one of the times that I began to think about working with other people in other fields. So working with a writer, Paul Metcalf, was a very enjoyable experience for me.

Paul was a very interesting guy. He used to take texts from different sources and weave them together to create a voice of his own out of other people's material which I thought was a very

interesting concept and very ahead of its time. Today we might consider that to kind of a mash-up of text. But that was one of the ways he worked. And he was constantly fueling me every day with information. He'd say, "Listen to what I found today and here's my research."

And then I'd go out the next day and see something that was related to what he was talking about. And he would constantly inform my photography. And so I liked the concept of working with a writer.

Later in other projects that were similar in nature, I did a project with Patty Limerick that was published in *American Art*. I forget the year. It was 1991 or 19—I think it made the pictures in 1990 but I can't remember. And that was a project we did on Rhyolite, Nevada. And she wrote the text and I made pictures.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: A ghost town with a great famous neoclassical room.

MARK KLETT: Right, yeah, exactly. So and places that—I mean, that had been photographed by Weston and other photographs, although I didn't use the pictures for that. But, so that was another example of a collaboration together. Another thing that happened about that same time—I think it was 1990—was a commission I did.

It was actually a suggestion of the gallery that I was working with at that time—Fraenkel Gallery in San Francisco. Jeffrey Fraenkel had acquired a complete panorama of 1878—large-plate panorama of Eadweard Muybridge's of San Francisco. And he asked me if I would be interested in rephotographing that. So I did.

In 1990, I made a rephotograph of that panorama from as close as one can do it these days the Mark Hopkins Intercontinental Hotel. Muybridge had made his panorama from the top of the Mark Hopkins residence in 1878. That had burned down after the 1906 earthquake. But I made it from a similar position in space but higher than Muybridge.

Now, the kind of things that was interesting to me about that and it does enter into my work later on so it's worth, you know, mentioning something about it. I learned something about panorama making from this project. When Muybridge made his panorama, first of all he made a smaller version the year before and got a sense of how to do it. And the smaller version was smaller plates, horizontals.

When he did it in 1878, he made it from the top of the cupola of the Hopkins residence. And essentially what he did was he'd set the tripod up and then rotated the camera around the tripod in space. So he had one vantage—one position, rather, you know, in space to make it from. And he intentionally did it in a very smart way.

He was photographing towards the southwest in the morning. He might have started about 10:00 o'clock. And then he made—and this was wet plates so he had to coat the plates, sensitize it, expose it, develop it. Then he would move on to the next picture and he would rotate the camera a little bit in a clockwise direction.

So he's going to the west. Then he would go to the northwest, then the north and so on. And it took him 13 exposures to do the entire panorama. In those days of course you couldn't make a panorama in one exposure. There was no such thing as a panorama camera. You had to do it in multiple exposures.

So what he did was he overlapped the images just slightly and then he would trim them. He'd print them and trim them so he butted them up against one another and it gave the illusion of a seamless panorama.

And as he did this throughout the day, moving from the west to the north and then the east, the sun was moving behind him. So it was pretty much always at his back until the end of the day. And I forget when the last picture was made. But it might have been 2:00, 3:00 or something like that.

And it was a pretty amazing technical feat to really do that in that time period and on 20-by-24 inch glass plates. It was quite a technical feat to do that. I had to try to recreate as best I could because I couldn't do it from one spot. I was working with the hotel and I had to move around from different rooms because the building was so massive. There wasn't one spot I could stand and get everything.

At first, the hotel didn't want to cooperate because after all, what was in it for them, you know? And I had to be—the position I wanted to do it from essentially were the most expensive suites in the hotel, and like the garden suite, the jacuzzi suite, the presidential suite. And you know, these are very expensive rooms of course and I couldn't afford to rent them.

So I was trying to convince them to get me in there in the space and they were being very noncommittal about it. But you know, what happened was that, um, Fraenkel was working with Bedford Arts Press, which was Stephen Vincent at the time. He wanted to do a book on this project if we could do it. And he wanted to do a fold-out—a folding book.

He had a whole idea for a panoramic folding book. And I thought it was a great idea but I was a little bit nervous because I hadn't made the pictures yet. But he was convinced it was going to work. So he got their publicity machine out there and they started talking about this book that was going to be done. And he got the television stations interested in it about going and witnessing this thing.

Well, once the TV stations got involved, then I had free access. But the hotel said, "Okay, sure," and luck was with me because I had to get the timing right where I had the rooms were available first of all and second, that it was a nice day because I wanted a nice clear day. So I did. I lucked out. I went to San Francisco not knowing if it was going to work because the fog could roll in anytime.

And it just worked perfectly that day. In fact, the hotel even gave me lunch for free. It was kind of great. We had the TV people up there and I was on the evening news, you know, making these pictures. But it made this kind of comparison between the two views that, you know, conceptually was kind of interesting because although the views didn't match vertically, they matched horizontally. And it was some relationship between the most expensive suites in the hotel and the most—and in Muybridge's time it was the most expensive mansion on the hill. You know, it was kind of an interesting parallel there.

But one thing about the panorama that Muybridge made became very important to me. I made my panorama in order. I kind of followed his lead. I got a lens which was very similar. I bought specifically for the purpose—180-millimeter lens for my 4-by-5, matched his focal length pretty well. And I did 13 panels just like he did.

I changed the order a little bit because of the logistics of the building. I had to—I began and ended it with part of the building to match his—he had parts of the Hopkins roof in his picture. I tried to match some of that idea at least for the hotel.

But one thing he did with his panorama I thought was really fascinating was he got about halfway through the panorama and everything's in order. You have to understand they're made in the morning, midday, then afternoon.

But right in the middle of the panorama there's this change. There's a plate that's different. The lighting comes from a different direction. And I didn't notice it at first. At first, casually you look at it and everything goes together and everything flows. But then looking at it more closely and more critically, you can see that, oh, there the lighting is different. It comes from a different position.

And what happened is the plates on either side are made in the morning but that one plate is made in the afternoon, late in the afternoon. So there's a break in the time sequence. Now, I don't know why he did that. But it was very instructive to me because what it told me was that any plate can be remade at any time.

So it's kind of like once you have a template of the space, you can just go back and repeat that. And that's exactly what he did. He had a template there. He had a gap because maybe he broke a plate or maybe he just wanted to be a trickster, which he kind of was in some ways and he remade the plate and there you have it.

So that idea kind of carried over. I mean, so I took that with me. I mean, that book was published—I don't know if it was '90 or '91 or—I forget now what the date was. And it was a very interesting foldout panoramic book.

Steven Vincent, the publisher—then that place folded actually a couple of years later. But he was off on his own trying to find projects at that point. And he thought it would be great to do a series of panoramas in cities.

So he pitched this idea to Merry Foresta at the Smithsonian. And I don't know how that happened exactly. But Merry was interested in the idea. So I started talking to Merry about this concept. And so in fact then the Smithsonian did commission me to do that piece, *The New Panorama of Washington, D.C.*

So I took the idea from Muybridge and then put that into the Washington, D.C., panorama. That panorama was difficult to figure out at first because I spent a long time with Merry touring Washington trying to figure out where the best place would be to make the panorama.

And we looked at the top of the Smithsonian tower at the museum, the old museum. We looked at the Washington Monument. We looked at, you know, the post office, which we eventually chose. And we tried to get up on the Capitol dome. That was one of the things that we really thought might be a good place to do it from.

We could never get permission to get up on top of the Capitol dome. I went to my congressman and my senators and tried to get them to help. And they did try to help but the Architect of the Capitol would not give us permission to get up on top of that dome. I don't know what the politics were.

I think there might have been some—a little bit of animosity there towards the Smithsonian or something. I'm not sure what it was. But there was some reason why that guy did not want us to get up on top of that dome and we never did get permission to get up there.

So—and I'm not convinced it would have been the best spot anyway. But I think that the post office location was actually a really good location for it. So I went up there with Merry in September with the idea of making a panorama.

And we had permission—you know, the location has—if you've ever been up there, they have this open view but they have a bunch of wires—piano wires—that prevent you from throwing anything out and it also prevents the pigeons from coming in.

So we had to spread the wires to make the pictures and we got permission to do that from the Park Service. The Park Service runs the place. I liked the idea that it was the house of culture and that's what the NEA was—the NEA.

So I liked the idea of doing it from there. It was a good central location and location did really kind of matter for our purposes. So I made a panorama from up there in September of that year. I think it was 1992, I think. Yeah, it was the election year.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Yes.

MARK KLETT: And so—and it was a pretty straight-off thing. It was an idea of the 13—I followed Muybridge's lead—13 panels that make the panorama. And I had to move around the top of that space and put them together. So you have this panorama and I thought, "Well, it's interesting, and I guess that's it."

You know, but I didn't feel quite settled about it. So a couple months later, the election happened and Bill Clinton got elected. And I thought, "This is a great opportunity. You know, we're going to have a governmental change here, you know, the Bush to Clinton change."

So and what happened was the way I made the panorama, it actually overlapped. We had the White House in it twice at the beginning and the end. So it made sense conceptually to me to go back and remake that panorama.

So I asked Merry if we could get permission to photograph the inaugural parade from up there and make that the middle because the middle of the panorama was the Pennsylvania Avenue coming down the center of the panorama. So we tried. We tried to get permission through the Smithsonian to get up there. And of course that's a Secret Service nest for, you know, something like that—the inauguration. And they wouldn't have any part of it.

We even went to Tipper Gore. And you know, she was real sympathetic and she thought—as soon as she heard the Secret Service was involved, she just said, "Oh, we never mess with them." So there was no way we could seem to get anywhere to get up there. So I went to Washington anyway on speculation just before the inauguration. It turned out to be a beautiful few days.

The day before the inauguration I could get up there and I photographed from, um, I guess, the fourth or fifth panel throughout the panorama. I did most of the panorama over again from that panel and you could see some subtle differences. There's smoke coming up of buildings. There's the trees don't have leaves anymore. You know, there's banners and bunting and stuff on the buildings.

So it's kind of subtle but once you look at it you can see it. Like the Muybridge piece, you can see that there's a change there. Then the day of the inauguration I thought, "You know, there's no way we're going to get there." So Merry and I were wandering around town, you know, taking part in the festivities and everything.

We had nice seats. She had some tickets for some nice seats right at the turn of Pennsylvania Avenue where it turns, you know, and goes up towards the White House. And we were going to sit in the bleachers up there and do that. But we just wandered around anyway because it was more fun to wander around.

While I was wandering around, I went to the base of the clock tower because we were just passing through the building and there at the base of the tower was one of the rangers that I had gotten to know. And I knocked on the window and he came to the door and he said, "Hello," and talked. And I said, "You know, hey, you know, the parade's going by and pretty soon the president's going to go by."

I said, "What does the Secret Service care if I go up there after the president goes by?" And he said, "I don't know. I'll go up and ask them." So he went up and he's 10 or 15 minutes and we wait for him to come back down. He comes back down and says, "They don't care." And I said, "Great." I said, "Would you let me in?" And he goes, "Sure, I'll let you in. I've got to be here for a while."

So Merry and I, we raced back to her place. We get—you know, by this time the president's sort of going by. We didn't see the president. We're racing to the subway and I remember getting in the subway and it was like this mob of people were coming up the tube and we were going down and it was like swimming upstream.

I mean, there were just these fish were just, like, crawling through these people trying to get to the train. We get to the train. We get to the stop for her house. We race to her house. I get my camera equipment. We race back and we were running the whole way, running and racing to get back.

And it's getting late and it's getting towards the afternoon because this parade is waylaid. You know, so we get to the building again and now it's changed. Now, there's Secret Service on the outside of the building. And there's a bunch of guys standing out and they're in uniform and I walk up and I say, "Hey, are you guys Secret Service?"

And they go, "Yeah." I said, "Hey, I got permission to come in here, you know, from the guy that's the ranger in here." And they go, "Yeah, okay, fine, you know, go ahead," because nothing's happening right now, you know, but you've got to go through the inaugural committee.

And I go, "What?" You know, and so there's this other guy and there's like this whole committee and they're the inaugural committee. You know, who were these guys? This guy's like, "Who are you?" [Laughs.] I'm saying, "Look, I'm this guy. I'm trying to make this picture." "No way," you know. So we had to argue with this guy and I'm trying to throw the Smithsonian name around and everything.

You know, Merry is there and we're trying to do other stuff. And finally the guy relents because, you know, the guy, the ranger's around and look, here—we finally get—we go through this rigmarole. We have to go through the metal detectors. We have to go through everything and time is ticking away, you know. I'm just desperate to get up there before the sun goes down.

And it's a beautiful day and the sun was spectacular and it's just close to going down. And finally they let us through. Okay, we talk our way into this thing. We get up to the top of this thing and I look out and there's this beautiful scene. I mean, there's no time to lose.

I mean, I'm thinking I've got 10 minutes or less. And so I set up the camera and, uh, you know, the sun—the light is falling on the Capitol. It's just this gorgeous view and I get off just a couple of pictures and that's it. And coming down the Pennsylvania Avenue is the "Elvis lives" float right in the middle of the scene. It was kind of great.[Laughs.]

So then—so I got the picture and it was fantastic and I love that picture still. And then the next day I came back again and I shot the rest of the panorama over again. Now, what happened over time was I went back another time. I went back a year later or two years later. I can't remember now.

And I went back and I shot—because the Reagan Building was being finished on the right-hand side of the panorama. There was a big hole and pit that was a construction site. After the building was done, I went back and reshot that building. But the whole concept for me of the panorama was owing itself to Muybridge.

And so I had a view of the panorama at this point—the concept was that the panorama was like a circle. I mean, you could create a panorama and you could stand in the middle of it and you could sort of look around in the circle. But actually for me, the panorama model changed from a circle to a spiral because I had pictures before Clinton and I put that in on the bottom of that Pennsylvania Avenue view.

Then on the other side of the view of the Reagan Building I started to build it up with building up. And so you could see the panorama changing. There were slots that went down, slots that went up, panels that went up and down. And so the idea of the spiral was that that was the axis of time, that so you had space and time now in the physical presence of the panorama.

And it is still my idea to go back and repeat things on that panorama that would be, you know, part of—as Washington changes, that hat would be built. And somebody else in the future could go back and do it as well. It wouldn't have to be me. It could be somebody else that could add on to that panorama if Washington changes and there's other things happening. I never—the Smithsonian owns large prints of that panorama.

They commissioned a company in California that was in business at the time called Evercolor. And they made—the prints were processed with this pigment that was like an extremely stable pigment. Wilhelm—Henry Wilhelm did studies on that and said it was going to last in excess of 500 years, you know, even on continuous display and it was incredibly permanent stuff. But the company eventually went out of business.

But they have those panorama that is going to last hundreds of years. I mean, that panorama is going to be—and I really like that idea that that panorama is going to kind of be around for somebody else to interact with. And I hope that somebody does. I do need to make for the museum the other panels that I made because I think they need to own them.

But we can't do it in Evercolor. We'll have to do it in ink jet or something like that. But then you know, that book was published and Merry and I did some research on early panoramas of Washington and so some of those are also published in that. It was kind of an idea of triangulating space and so that's part of the book now.

So that was a side project and a commission too. I did other side projects. Another one was photographing Oklahoma where I used the panorama from the top of one of the buildings in Oklahoma. That was done I think in '93 I think it was or '94. One of the buildings in the panorama is the federal building that was blown up a couple years later by the bomb that destroyed the building.

But there were other pictures in there. That was a rephotographic project largely and one of the few rephotographic projects I did or another one I guess I did that was based on the concept of historic images.

And I did—I liked the idea of Oklahoma as a place—Oklahoma City—because it was this place that, you know, didn't exist before the land rush and there was this huge literal, you know, rush out there and the thing starts from tents and then it's like instant city that's kind of built. And so there was a photographic legacy that I could work with. So I used that as part of the project that was a commission piece for them.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: What was it like—I mean, the two panoramas you did were urban.

MARK KLETT: Yes.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: And you've talked not today but about—indirectly today about the power, especially in Washington, of the sites you used.

MARK KLETT: Yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: But those were urban but the panorama is a special kind of urban picture book of what it was like in Oklahoma City, photographing—urban rephotography as opposed to the rephotographic project's rural Western landscape photography.

MARK KLETT: Yes. Well, I mean, I can talk more specifically about that when we get a little more into the 1906-2006 panorama.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: San Francisco? Okay.

MARK KLETT: Maybe I can hold that off until then and just kind of bring it up. I just wanted to kind of complete the—I did some other commissions and I just wanted to say what they were.

I mean, I did one in Tallahassee, Florida, called Photographing Tallahassee [Tallahassee Amid Generations] that did not involve any historic images. I did one—just a brief one—nothing really came out of it but I photographed around Walden Pond actually for—I was a guest artist at the Andover—you know, Phillips Academy in Andover.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Is that when Jock Reynolds was there?

MARK KLETT: Jock Reynolds was there, yeah. Jock brought me in. And that was—that was kind of an unfinished project. But I've always thought I'd like to go back to that because I love the idea of doing something with Walden Pond and with the post-industrial area around there I think is still really significant.

But that sort of never happened. I also did a—I had another, you know, thing happen to me which became significant later which was I got a fellowship—a Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission fellowship and I went to Japan in 1995 for six months and photographed in Kyoto every day with a film camera everything—I mean, just anything and everything, being on the trains, being in supermarkets, being, you know, walking down the street, being in temples, you know, being at the house with the kids.

You know, it was kind of like daily life. It was absolute snapshot photography but done in a much more volume—much greater volume. And the kids were small. My kids were—Lena was—my daughter Lena was 2 years old and my daughter Natalie was—no, Lena was 3 and Natalie—my daughter Natalie was 1.

And so Emily and I, we had to go out in a—quite a difficulty in some ways with two small kids in Kyoto. We lived in Kyoto. I also photographed once a week. We were in Kyoto for about a week when the Kobe earthquake happened in 1995 and was about 50 miles from the epicenter. Our house was really shook up.

So we felt it very strongly where we lived too and one of the first big earthquakes—really the biggest earthquake I've ever been in, you know, before or after that. But I met a man name Toshi Ueshina there. Toshi was a former student of Linda Connor's in the Art Institute. And Toshi and I became good friends and later he came back to work with me as a student.

But at the time, he and I—after the earthquake he and I went down to Kobe about once a week for the next five months and I photographed the earthquake and the devastation in Kobe and made a large series of pictures about that. So that was a fellowship that I had that took place for half of the year in 1995.

The other thing that happened that year—we had to leave the country for a brief period because my wife and kids didn't have the proper visa. And we went to Saipan and Tinian to just take a break from the cold and went—because it's a place where Japanese people go to go to the beach.

And it's also the place where—in Tinian—where the bomber Enola Gay took off to bomb Hiroshima. So we went there and I photographed there, photographed the location of the bomb, the runway and everything. I don't know why. I just did it.

And then later we went to Hiroshima and I photographed the A-bomb dome and different things related to that. I started to follow the bomb a little bit and later that became important to me in the present work I'm working on now. I laid the groundwork for that there.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: And that work—some of that work became the scroll-like panorama.

MARK KLETT: Yes, yes. When I came back from Japan, I didn't do much. The work was—well, the work was published in the catalog that the ASU Art Museum did for a show called *Ideas About Time*. They published a couple pieces.

But I tried to make—I attempted to make a scroll-like shape out of the pictures, a combination of the daily photographs I was making in color and the black-and-white pictures I was making in Kobe.

And I was influenced by the idea of the Japanese emaki scrolls where in a scroll, you would unfurl the scroll and you would see a landscape moving and a character changing and it was a narrative, you know, through space and time. And I thought it was an interesting concept and I wanted to try to do something different with my photography.

I thought about doing that when I was at Andover actually, a concept about taking a lot of pictures and putting them together in a narrative form or simply a connected form and a structural connection between them where they're literally touching and creating a scroll-like form of images.

And I think part of it had to do with the fact that I wanted to move back into roll film and I wanted to kind of work back into color again and get out of 4-by-5. I mean, 4-by-5 was very slow and kind of ponderous and the whole idea if you're making a singular image. And I was thinking about making pictures that were not singular but depended upon one another.

This goes back to Nathan Lyons again, of course, and all that. So it occurred to me when I was in Japan that because I was so liberated by being there and not, you know, not in my own landscape and stuff, that I maybe ought to try something completely different.

And this emaki scroll ideas was something I really liked the concept of. So later I did do some pieces. I did exhibit that work at the Cleveland Museum of Art. I had an exhibition at the Cleveland Art Museum. There's the phone. I'm going to let Emily—[telephone.]

So I had an exhibition of that work at the Cleveland Art Museum and I forget when it was. It was probably '96 or something—'97 or something like that. That was the only time other than the gallery here in Scottsdale—the Lisa Sette Gallery is my gallery here in Scottsdale.

That's the only time that work has ever been exhibited other than—well, parts of it were exhibited in that really—in that *Ideas about Time* show. The other thing about that was that I was trying to think about doing work that was digital. At that time, we didn't have digital cameras. I mean, that was—they were just—you know, they just weren't there.

It was, like, '95. Just the Internet was becoming, you know, usable. I remember I had an early Macintosh lapbook I brought with me to do my Internet and to do email. You know, that was my tether to the Western world in Kyoto.

But I was thinking, "Maybe the Japanese are a little further along in this. I mean, after all they make the cameras and the printers and so on." But no, they weren't. They were kind of behind us actually. So but I was looking for a way to make digital photographs and when I got back and I decided to make these prints, I knew I couldn't do it.

But I'd heard of these printers—these iris printers- you know that they were starting to become viable. Of course, very expensive and nobody could own them unless you were a printing firm. But Nash Editions had started up in California and so I went to Nash Editions and I asked them if they would make the prints. And so they made the prints for me of those images.

But it was all very preliminary because, you know, at that time I didn't really have any way to scan my own pictures. You know, and I couldn't print them. But things started to change very rapidly after that. I think it was 1998 that I bought a drum scanner and I got into it big time after that. But that's kind of another story.

But anyway, that was—the work that happened in Japan was important to me largely because it tried to deal with—the first time I tried to deal with images that were large volume of pictures put together in a form that was not—that was intentionally not trying to emphasize the individual photograph but emphasize the group of photographs.

So it didn't go very far. I didn't show it very much or anything but it was—it's come back to me now. Now, it's come back to me more in the more recent work in a couple of different ways. So

what else? I'm just trying to go through the commissions and stuff that were happening.

I don't know if I've—I might have forgotten something in there. But this is all pretty much happening at the same time and I'm still really—I'm still thinking my real work is the kind of—the basis of my work is the black-and-white work and that's what's selling in the galleries and that's what's providing a significant part of my income, frankly, from sales and so forth.

So that's what I saw myself in terms of my view of my artistic production. This was the gallery part of that production.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Do you want to go back and talk about *Water in the West* for a minute?

MARK KLETT: Oh sure. Oh yeah, that's good, *Water in the West*. Yeah, so in the late '80s and then 1990 when that sort of solidified with that conference, that group really became a group—a real official group. And you know, we got together on a regular basis once or even twice a year and we met at different locations.

We met in Kansas at Terry Evans' home in Kansas. One year we met—we met in Reno and Peter Goin sponsored a meeting. We met at a place called Zzyzx [California -MK] which is outside of Las Vegas one time that Bob and Ellen put together. So we had these various meetings and we would talk about our projects.

You know, we'd talk about the various things we were doing. The idea wasn't—we weren't sure what it was going to be at first. The idea—it ended up not being a collaboration in the sense that we were all working together on one big collaboration. It became more like we were pooling our resources to form a larger group of people who were working on similar things.

So in that sense it wasn't a direct collaboration but it was more like kind of a consortium maybe and maybe a little more like Magnum or something really where we were working together on a group of images. But we did have combined exhibitions—like, one happened in Reno. And we did have some publications and that, again—a lot of that went through Peter and Ellen through University of Nevada Press.

So there was a period in there where we were pretty active. We expanded the group a little bit from the first group. It started as a smaller group. It got a little bigger. The concept of what was involved in *Water in the West* grew too. I mean, Khalsa was doing some installation-based work, you know, as opposed to strictly more documentary work, which is where it sort of started.

I viewed my work not as strictly documentary, more that it had to do more as maybe poetic response in some way too. I added some previous work that I had done too. My work that I considered *Water in the West* and I kind of just put together a large group of pictures that I thought dealt with water.

But other people like Bob and Peter, you know, they actually—let me just- other people actually did specific projects that, you know, were more related to water concepts. I should—oh boy, there's another one I should talk about. Anyway, there was, um, in the end—that project—we were together maybe three years or something. I can't remember.

And then eventually the kind of—again, the kind of momentum sort of left and people were moving on to different things. And so in the end, that work went together as a kind of archive—in an archive form. We all contributed pictures and then it went down to the Center for Creative Photography and they have a *Water in the West* archive there.

They never have shown the work. As I said, they were going to but I think it's—someday they might. One other small project that had bearing on that that I did in 1988, I think, was called *The Central Arizona Project—Central Arizona Canal Project*, or something like that—CAP project and it was a small group of people and we toured the entire length of the Central Arizona Project Canal from the Colorado River to Phoenix and later to Tucson and made pictures.

And there was a group of us that did that project. So that was what kind of laid the groundwork for me in *Water in the West* actually. That was for the Center of Creative Photography that commissioned that project.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Were any of the pictures from—that you took that were part—that you considered part of the *Water in the West* used politically?

MARK KLETT: Not that I'm aware of. No, I didn't use them myself and I don't think they have been. You know, I've never viewed my pictures as being very overtly political. And I think that's because as I was saying before, I'm not—I mean, I have made photographs of some places that I think we should be ashamed of, you know, that are really sort of negative places—tire tracks on the land.

I mean, I've got some pictures that are very reminiscent of the same kinds of things Robert Adams has photographed, for example. But I don't think that he either wants that. I mean, he doesn't view himself in that kind of adversarial role. I haven't been—my sense of advocacy is not one where I want to crusade and say, "Look what we've done. This is really awful. We need to stop this."

I also haven't wanted to say, "Oh, you know, this is beautiful. We need to preserve it." My feeling about this is that the concept of advocacy is better done from the bottom up. You know, you can say to somebody, "Look how bad this is. We need to stop this," or, "Look how beautiful this is. We need to preserve it."

And that's fine and good. I mean, some people are very good at that and I admire it. But I would rather say, "Well, here's a place and we feel or I feel and you, the viewer, can feel that they have a place here, they have an experience here that they value.

Like, oh yeah you know, I've been to a place like this. I know what that feels like. I can understand. I love being places like this. It's just that, you know—I just—I want to go back. I want to feel this kind of place. I want to be in it.

You know, I want to experience it because I like doing that. I like being there or I enjoy the experience of the place. And that to me is a more valuable feeling because what happens in the end is that connection that you build then equates to care or concern about it. And you can't really make any changes to people's behavior unless they feel like they have a stake in it, unless there's concern about it.

So my feeling is it works from the bottom up, not the top down, this concern, this overall feeling about being in a place or valuing that you have a place to feel like you belong and that you can personalize your experience and that you can identify with, you can create your identity with in some way.

It's something that is very powerful and ultimately will change the way people respond to landscapes. And that to me is a more fundamental position to exist from in terms of advocacy than the top-down approach. So my pictures—I mean, I think that there is an element of that that I want to be in the work that it's about caring. It's about concern.

It's about knowing that you have a place within it and that I as the participant, that you as the viewer are also the participant, that we're together in understanding our position, that we belong in this place. That to me is a much stronger position of advocacy.

So that's been—you know, in terms of *Water in the West*, I mean, that was one of the reasons why we couldn't really agree on any position because some of us felt—some people were like, "We need to hammer home these positions. We need to stop this or that," and some of us felt like, "Well, that's all fine and good but that's not the kind of picture that I make."

So we could never agree on the position to begin for that. But we all respected each other's position too and we understood that there were multiple ways of doing it, you know.

So yeah, that was another, you know, side project that worked with other people. Okay, so I think I should say that there were other collaborative projects that, you know, starting—I like working with writers and I like working with other people and then one of the other writers I've worked with is Bill Fox.

And he comes in the *Third View*. That's when he enters the scene but I did do a book with him on the Black Rock Desert that was sort of a journey. Maybe I should just say that a little bit. But I just mentioned that the book exists.

I wanted to say too that I've done some editorial work and just to mention that I did it because one of the experiences was significant. I've worked for maybe a dozen or more different magazines in the 1990s primarily, a little bit up to 2006 or [200]7—I mean, magazines like *Condé Nast Traveler*, *National Geographic Adventure*. I did the first cover for *National*

Geographic Adventure actually.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: What kinds of images for those?

MARK KLETT: Mostly Southwestern photographs, um, you know, and different parts of the Canyon lands or different areas that they asked me to go make a series of pictures. I've worked for *Audubon*—just any—you know, quite a number of different magazines.

They send me out on assignments and I give—the best example is the one I just wanted to mention which was for *Condé Nast Traveler* and it was the first photo assignment I ever did for a magazine that ended up being both my own work and for the magazine. And that was—I got a call.

This was 1988 and I got a call from this lady at Condé Nast and she said, "My name is," I forget what it was, and, "You know, how would you like to take a horseback trip into Southern Utah with Edward Abbey." And I just said, "Yeah that sounds great. What are you talking about?"

And she said, "Oh, I'm so-and-so. I'm doing this magazine assignment and I've asked Ed Abbey—Edward Abbey—to write an article for us and I'd like you to make some pictures." And I said, "Well, how do you know who I am?" She said, "I've seen your work published and I've seen what you do and we want you to make pictures like you do for yourself."

And I said, "Wow, that sounds interesting, you know, but how do you know that I can do it? I mean, I've never done this before." And she said, "Oh, I think you can do it. Just make pictures for yourself. I'm sure it will work out." And I said, "Well, what happens if I don't like what I get?" And she said, "Well, we'll send you back." And it was almost like I couldn't say no, you know?

And then she was offering me a bunch of money for it and how could I refuse? I really wanted to meet Abbey. I mean, this sounded great. So I said, "Sure, I'll do it." So I did this trip and I met Ed Abbey on this trip and my recollection of meeting him was we were all waiting around at the take-out place. It was this guy Ken Sleight and after that I've worked with Ken a number of times in workshops.

Ken Sleight was actually an old friend of Abbey's. He was the figure—in Abbey's book *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, Ken Sleight was the model for a figure named Seldom-Seen Smith. Ken was an interesting guy. He was an old wrangler. He was an old river runner, an old cowboy, you know.

He was our guide and we had a bunch of horses and there was another guy working with him named Grant Johnson who is an outfitter now in Utah. And Grant had been arrested for monkey wrenching bulldozers the year before which endeared him to Abbey actually. But we're waiting for Abbey to show up and we're hanging out with the horses and all of a sudden Abbey comes down in this big car.

It was like an El Dorado, you know, convertible, red. And he's got the top down and he's kind of almost sitting on the backseat holding the wheel and he's got his hat in his hand whooping and hollering as he comes down this road, this real steep road to the base. And I'm thinking, "Is this the car of an environmentalist, you know?" [Laughs.]

And he gets to the bottom and he meets everybody and he says, "Let me show you my car," and you know, the thing's got an electric everything—electric glove box, electric trunk, you know. And I said—you know, I said to him, "Is this the car of an environmentalist?"

And he goes, "Well, as soon as we use up all the gas, the sooner we'll go back to the horse and buggy." [Laughs.] He was a character, you know. But anyway we did this trip and I got to know him a little bit and it was a lot of fun. I mean, he was a really interesting guy. He'd like get his conversation—there was only—I guess there was four of us.

There was five of us on this trip. There was another woman whose name I can't remember. I think it was Carol. She was just a flight attendant from United and she was a friend of Ken's or something. She was along. It was a very small group and we were together. And they got to talking about Southern Utah politics.

Oh my God, it just—this thing would get really heated but as soon as Abbey got—stirred up the hornets' nest, he'd kind of walk away, you know, by the fire and this thing would go on. Well you know, he was—I thought he was a very interesting guy and I like spending time with him.

I made a picture that eventually got published in *Revealing Territory* of him taking notes in one of the ruins—Turkey Pen Ruins down there. And, um, I was—that was one of my favorite photographs. And I always thought that maybe I'd get to know him a little bit better. I did see him several times after that trip. I saw him in Tucson.

I saw him here in Tempe and I went to a couple of readings he did. You know, I was in contact with him. But I wasn't more than, I don't know, six months or seven months later he died. So that relationship never really got—I never got to know him as well as I would have liked to.

But I really liked him. He was an interesting guy. He was a very friendly guy, really fun to be around and easy to get to know. So that was, you know, one of the few—I did a few projects. You know, they were interesting editorial-type of assignments.

But for the most part, I stopped doing them after a while because they didn't—they weren't as much fun and they didn't pay that well. So you know, I didn't really keep that up. I still get—every once in a while I get offers now to do them.

But I almost never take them. I've done a few things for *Audubon* because I like the woman who's their picture editor and she's very good. But for the most part I don't do much any more of that. I was going to kind of move on. Is that okay with you?

ROBERT SILBERMAN: *Third View*?

MARK KLETT: *Third View*, yeah, you know, I think that the whole concept of the Revealing Territory or the desert work was starting to wind down for me. And I didn't feel like I was getting as much out of it anymore. I think interest in the work was waning too from a gallery point of view.

So I was trying to think about what I wanted to do next and it occurred to me that maybe it might be interesting to go back and revisit the sites of the Rephotographic Survey Project. And I thought this was some irony because I realized that after I did finish that project in 1980—1979, 1980—that I was not interested in going back again. I didn't think I ever wanted to do that.

But I had done some rephotographic work here and there for Oklahoma, for, you know, the Headlands. And I thought, you know—and then the project in San Francisco of the panorama and I thought—well, I mean, it is part of my history.

But you know, but there's been 20 years since this was done and, you know, maybe it might—I want to do something in the field. I like working in the field and maybe this might be interesting. So I thought about it and I thought, "You know, I'm not going to do this by myself because this is too big an undertaking."

So I was in a—I had a few graduate students with me in a conference in Denver and at lunchtime I mentioned this to them: "You know, I'm thinking about going back and doing this." Well, each one of these grad students had come to ASU because they wanted to work with me and they knew about the project. And so they just jumped on it.

And they said, "Let's do this project and let's make it work." The group was Byron Wolfe, Kyle Bajakian and Toshi Ueshina. Toshi I'd met in Japan and he was the guy I photographed Kobe with. And he decided to come back and become a student of mine.

Kyle was from the Boston area and he came because he heard me lecture one time in Boston. And Byron came because he knew both the Rephotographic Survey and he knew about Revealing Territory. He knew about my personal work. So these guys were all there to work with me.

I mentioned this and we kind of took off on this project. And so the summer of 1997 we decided to go out and begin. We weren't entirely clear about what we were going to do.

But Byron and I had worked on a project previous to that which we had done as a part of the water—I had done and in some ways it was part of Water in the West project here in Tempe. It was a project I did with a bunch of grad students which we called Water as Cultural Reflection. And it was a project that ended up in a CD-ROM. This was 1993.

We started it before I left for Japan actually—'93, '94. I had heard about a CD-ROM but I didn't know what it was. I mean, you have to understand this was '93. I mean, this was an up and

coming technology. I'd also heard that you could put a lot of information on it and you could make the information do things.

You know, you could have things that could happen—not just pictures but you could make video and different things happen on this thing. So we got a grant from one of the places at ASU. It was called the Institute for Studies in the Arts—ISA. And they gave us some money to do a CD-ROM, put this together.

So a bunch of grad students and I got together and we put together this disc about water in the Phoenix area. And this became one of my major contributions to the *Water in the West* actually. But it was an electronic product and it came with photographs. I mean, I made a lot of photographs for that project and that became part of the archive that I gave to the center, going back to that.

But we did this CD-ROM that had rephotographs and I made some rephotographs of historic images of Phoenix, of the canals being put in about 1907 to 1913, somewhere in there. I rephotographed these pictures—still photographs that we all made of a whole bunch of—maybe a dozen people, graduate students and faculty.

And then video of people that had to do with water—they'd talk about water. And so this became a multimedia thing and I thought, "This is very exciting." And Byron Wolfe helped us to put it together because he had a lot of savvy when it came to computer stuff. And don't forget this is like, you know—we put it together in '95, '96—in that period when I got back from Japan.

And we were flying by the seat of our pants. We didn't know what to do. It wasn't a lot of stuff out there really to look at. So I mean, we can't even show it anymore. I have to use an old computer that was made for Mac OS 9. So you know, I can still drag off portions of it and I've got an old computer that will do it. But it's becoming obsolete. It's become obsolete.

But we did this project and that was the beginning. We were very pumped up about the idea of doing something that was interactive, something that was electronic. So when we started *Third View* a year later, it was, like, kind of a no-brainer that we might do something electronic with it.

I had Byron who was a really good technical whiz in computers. Toshi had a lot of experience with computers and he'd done video work and Kyle didn't know much about computers but it turned out Kyle was a very good person when it came to dealing with people. He was just the kind of person that you'd meet and you'd sit down and by the time—the next thing you know you're in an hour-long conversation with him.

You know, he was just that kind of outgoing, friendly, you know, kind of guy that could, you know, really talk people up. And so, we had this group together and we went out in the field and I knew enough that we needed to have video and sound and stuff like that. So we decided to model the project after the Rephotographic Survey and that would be the reason why we were going out.

We're going to go back, go to the place again, make a third view and we used the same materials. We did the same methods. We had even the same lenses, I mean, that had 20 years earlier in some cases. So we shot 4-by-5 with Polaroid film. The methods were exactly the same. I taught Byron how to do it and he and I then worked together to do the rephotography.

But then the other guys, you know, Toshi would videotape what we were doing and get videotape of the journey really because he was just into videotaping everything. Kyle—I gave him—I had a DAT recorder. I bought a DAT recorder. That's a digital audiotape recorder. And so we could get some good sound.

And I said, "You know, get some sound. I mean, let's have these sites—let's get some ambient sound. You know, talk to people, whatever. You know, let's just get some sound." And so he'd walk around with a DAT recorder and talk to people.

So pretty soon we started to develop this combination of still photographs and rephotographs and video and sound and other multimedia material. And the first year, that project started 1997 and it went through 2000 was our last field season. And it got richer and richer.

I mean, we just had these amazing experiences where we would come to a place like Green River and we would videotape the whole experience of being there and it became very clear that the idea of going back to make the rephotographs was just the simple reason of going and the

rest of it was really about the context of the view.

And so we became very clear about what the picture—what the endeavor—the whole endeavor was about, that it wasn't just about rephotography. It was about the context for the rephotography and the view itself.

This goes back to something that I always felt we were missing from the Rephotographic Survey Project because I didn't mention this before but when we went out to make pictures for the RSP, we always made what we called site slides. We had a 35-millimeter camera and we had Kodachrome in it. We got this from the geologist by the way to take pictures of the field, you know.

We took site slides; that is, where is the camera sitting in relation to this scene. You know, what are some of the other views of the scene that, you know, that we couldn't get. And we would make our own pictures too just kind of, you know, here's the camp and, you know, clowning around a little bit, you know, here's me and Gordy cooking dinner of ramen or something, you know.

We would make our own photographs because we had plenty of film. So we'd just make these pictures. And you know, we loved the photographs and JoAnn always felt we should do something with them. But the truth was we couldn't. I mean, it was too expensive to publish them.

So we had this archive of these site slides that were really about the journey in a lot of respects. And when we did a lecture, we lectured about the Rephotographic Survey, we would always show them and they were very entertaining and people liked them and they give a lot more information.

But unfortunately, it just wasn't part of the project. I mean, in some ways the publication—the *Second View* book—well, we couldn't do it logistically. It was just too expensive. But also I think just conceptually we wanted the book to be pretty clean, pretty minimal, pretty much just the pictures.

So it just wasn't that kind of project, at least for me. I didn't want to see it—I didn't want to see it as part of the book anyway, even if we could do it. But JoAnn was always thinking, you know, "This is really a very important part of the project." And again, I couldn't disagree.

I said, "Well, I think so too but what can we do with it?" Well, by the time we get to *Third View*, we know what to do with it because there's all this stuff that now we can use. And so this became really part of the idea behind the project. We can get now all the contextual material that we couldn't get before. So we started off doing this and it was a very rich experience.

You know, then we thought about how to put it together. And this is where Byron and I really worked together. We were trying to figure out, well, how do we actually make it interactive because that was the concept. We want to give people the experience of being on the journey. And we talked about different ideas.

I mean, there was software we could use. There were ways we could program it so that, you know, maybe if you chose a certain route then the software would recognize that and lead you in one direction and if you chose another route it might lead you in another direction. There was all kind of complex possibilities there. But the real problem was time and we just didn't have the time to do it.

There was a couple of very significant things that Byron discovered. I mean, he figured out a way using one of the software—one of the kind of authoring software that we were using which was Macromedia Director—to take an image and overlay it so that you could essentially open up a time window and you could look at an image of rephotographs and you could look at one image on top of another in a little window you could move around.

We called it the time reveal. And the first time we did it, it was an amazing thing. We just said, "Look, you can, like, look through this window of time and you can see one time on top of another." We showed it to this audience at ASU and they gasped. I mean, they just couldn't believe it.

I mean, it was—we got a standing ovation from it. I mean, people couldn't believe that we could do something like this. And I still think in a lot of ways it's the heart of the project because in

many respects it's the concept of visualizing, you know, visualizing time and if what we wanted to do with the Rephotographic Survey was give—you know, one aspect of the work was to give a sense of change and time.

This was the quintessential way to do it. I mean, you could really manipulate the whole idea of layers of time, you know, using this window. So we started to realize that by using the software we could alter our vision of what was happening, you know, that that was completely a new way of looking at the whole concept of rephotography.

So we were developing that stuff as we went and even after the first season we had developed some of the primary concepts for how to put this together electronically. But we needed a lot more material.

So we kept pushing the material. But what happened is—the first year I forget how many sites we did. But we got a lot of rich material from places like Green River, Wyoming, and we had the basic pattern down about how to work up a site. We used to think that, you know, the combination—everybody was working it together.

We were a group. We didn't split up. We were there together at the place looking for different things, you know, looking for people, looking for signs of people, making our own photographs. You know, so we had this kind of sense of, like, having a huge box that you're just trying to fill with stuff—

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MARK KLETT: And photographs—we collected artifacts, you know. Like, look at what people leave beneath Teapot Rock or, you know, look what people leave at these shooting sites in Nevada, you know, near Virginia City.

So we're picking up all this stuff and we didn't know what we were going to use, what we were going to use it for, what it meant. We just knew that it was material and the more material the better. We just collected this tremendous amount of stuff at every place we went to.

And over the winter, we would deal with it and thinking, you know, "My God, we've got a lot of stuff. How are we going to whittle it down?" But at least we were getting—we knew we had—we were on to something. I mean, I had the distinct feeling that we were in to new territory, this completely new territory, that nobody had done anything like this before.

The second year, in between the first and second season, I get this email from a guy named Bill Fox. And this is where Bill Fox enters my life and he's a writer. And he says that he was talking to the people at UNM Press and he wanted to do a book about landscape photography with them. And they said, "Why don't you go and talk to Mark Klett and do a book about him?"

And so he says, "I'm thinking about doing a book about you." And I thought, "Somebody wants to do a book about me? Who the hell is this guy?" I mean, first of all, I mean, I don't know who he is but why would he want to do a book about me in particular? You know, so I'm curious about this. I'm flattered but I'm curious.

And so I contact him and I said, "Well, look, you know," he's in Nevada and we're going to go through Nevada on this trip that we're going to be on. And I get to know him a little bit enough to know that he's not some wussy kind of guy that can't go camping or something.

So I said, "If you want to go with us on this trip, we'll give it a shot, you know. So I'll pick you up in Las Vegas and you can go with us on this trip and if something comes of it, fine. We can talk about it."

So I go to Las Vegas and I pick him up and I meet him and we start off on this trip right off. And I said to him, "You know, if you're going to be on the trip, you could do something useful for us. You could take notes. You know, you could give us some notes about what you're seeing," which he wanted to do anyway. He was gung-ho on that idea.

So I get to know Bill Fox a little bit on the first day. But we spend the next week, you know, getting to know each other better. But in the meantime, he is taking notes furiously about what's happening and they're very much about the journey, very much about the trip and what we're finding.

One of the first things that we did together I think the first morning—and he writes about this and eventually this work becomes the book that he writes called *Viewfinder*. And he writes about that first morning when we go out and we're at this place that's called Rhyolite, you know, which is nothing but a little cluster of houses that they're done and one house that we tour.

And I think it's a very important site on our project and it becomes part of our DVD that we publish eventually with *Third View*. And we tour this abandoned house that we discover there. And so he writes about all this in a way that starts to make a lot of sense for us.

So within that week period, Bill becomes almost indispensable for us in a very interesting way because the first year we were working with—Toshi and Kyle and Byron and I—the videotape became the focus point. Toshi was making videotape about everything and that became a diary of the trip in a sense.

By the time Bill comes on the trip, the text becomes the diary and what makes it compelling is that there's an analysis there. Bill's linking the text of what we're doing to other ideas about landscape, other ideas about history, to writing, to geography, culture, all these rich things which is exactly what we want.

We want this kind of extension of the work into these other territories. And so—and he's doing it with the writing. So that then becomes kind of the narrative armature about which the whole project then develops after that. So at that point, Bill's part of the team. So he becomes part of the field time at that point in time.

And so the development of the project then develops around the different things that happen. You know, every year something different happens. We become quickly—we quickly begin to understand that the idea of the rephotography is actually only a small thing in what we're doing, that it brings us to the place but then what we're really after is the story of what happens in going to the place. And we do a number of sites that we didn't do for the Rephotographic Survey Project. There's a number of pictures that I really liked in the 1970s but we couldn't get to.

In some cases we didn't have copies of because at this point we're able to do better research because we're doing research online a little bit now and getting photographs from the National Archives and getting stuff that was, you know, posted online. And so we're getting different pictures.

So we do maybe a dozen or so places that we didn't do for the Rephotographic Survey. Some of them I think are really significant, like that—like Logan, that place I just mentioned. That was one of them. That was a place that Gody Bushaw tried to do but couldn't find and so we literally kind of stumble onto it.

But other places that we thought were significant like the site around the Promontory Point which really wasn't—it was a Russell photograph that wasn't a part of the survey. It was part of a railroad series. So we didn't' do it for the RSP.

But it just made so much sense conceptually for us to do it that we did it this time because it was the sort of focus point of history where you have Promontory and this totally kind of made up town that they create to recreate the history on the one hand.

And then you have Morton-Thiokol on the one side where they make the rocket boosters—the [space shuttle rocket -MK]booster—the O-ring—failed and it blew up. And you know, the rocket was destroyed. So you have this history there that everybody wants to forget that, you know, it's a terrible history. It's a disaster.

And then on the other side of Promontory you've got Robert Smithson and the *Spiral Jetty*. So it was this idea now that here you have this focus point for three histories and they all become together. And it's this point in the West where everything comes together. And because we're working electronically now, we can tell that.

We can include the text. We can include the photographs. We can include the video and sound. And everything sort of comes together and it gives us this very, very rich kind of mix of things. And so it wasn't just the rephotograph. It was the rephotograph was the reason for going to then expand the history and to create something completely new out of it.

So it was a real eye-opener. And when we were doing the work, we just knew that we were doing something really unique and really different and that nobody had done before. Nobody had

taken photographs of this kind of basic history and expanded it into this cultural, you know, portrait really that could be as expansive as it was.

It was a very, very exciting project to work on. But the only—the thing about it was—It wasn't the publication. Eventually the book was published in 2004, the *Third View, Second Sights*. It wasn't the book that was important to me. It was the DVD that we published to go along with the book. There was a lot of risk in that kind of undertaking because a project like that on a physical object like that, on a disc, has a limited shelf-life, a limited time span.

But we thought it was so important to do it that that's not really—it wasn't a deterrent. You know, the thing that is very illustrative about that whole technology is that, you know, we're working—by the time we get ready to do the *Third View* disc—and Byron and I are working very hard on this over time.

He's the designer, the programmer and we are daily going back and forth on the Internet, both from transferring files and email discussing the whole concept of what the disc is, how it's going to be designed, how it's going to be working. And we're testing things. And this is taking years.

We develop this over a period of several years—actually, literally over five years form actually—well, from 2003 by the time we're ready to publish in 2003 and [200]4—you know, from 1998 until that time. It was quite a—it was at least five years' worth of work on how to put together an interactive disc like this. And we went through a number of permutations.

We have a number of, you know, intermediary pieces that got us to that point. And we're having to do all these complicated things like edit the video. You know, there are lots of little parts. Basically what you have is this disc that contains a whole bunch of different parts, little things that you have to put together.

And the little things that are parts have to be edited out of a much larger basket of—all the basket of things that we were throwing into the box and trying to, you know, do that. So it was just a—literally we could have made, you know, several discs. We could have made hundreds—a hundred sites, you know. We could have done—we ended up with a dozen or so different sites.

But just that's all we could do physically. It was just too difficult to do any more than that. and we knew too that as soon as we did it, you know, it would become obsolete at a certain point because we've already seen that happen. We published it—the disc along with the book. The Museum of New Mexico Press did the book.

But we did the disc. And we gave them the disc to put in the book. We kept that as our own creation. It wasn't part of the book contract. It was completely a separate deal. But they were more than happy to have it because we were giving it to them. So we found a way to put the little sleeve in the back and pop it in there.

But to me, that's the real project. The disc is the project. We found that we couldn't market the disc alone. We started the whole thing off at a time when people were considering the concept of a disc and whether they could market a disc. You know, and there were things like National Geographic did like *From Alice to Ocean*, for example.

That was an interactive disc that they put out testing the waters of interactivity and the market for interactive discs. And then we realized at a certain point that that wasn't going to work, that everything was going towards the Web. But the problem for us was the Web wasn't rich enough at that time.

I mean, the Web was a great vehicle but, you know, in the early 2000s, I mean, people were still using dial-up. You know, I mean, we couldn't get the broadband, you know, for putting together video and stuff. And the software just wasn't ready for it. So we didn't think it was a viable option.

We knew we were going to have a website and we did create a website for the work but it was a much scaled down version of what we could do. So the website never had the content that we could put on the disc. So we decided to go with the disc. But we had to, you know, make it in a different way. So we decided to put it in a book.

So it's kind of a creative solution to putting together—you know, to marketing a disc, to put it in the back of a book, I guess. But as soon as we did it, it was designed for two platforms. It was designed for Windows and it was designed for Mac. And we all work on Macs. So that was our

native platform.

But ironically it's been more longevity in the Windows side because it still works on Windows. But the Mac side, we were just right between the switch between Mac OS 9 to 10 and the software we were using—the Macromedia Director—wasn't upgraded. So we had to publish it on 9. And of course, at that time they were issuing computers with two software. You could still run it. But now they don't.

So what we ended up doing was publishing a patch on the website so you could download the patch to your computer and still run the disc. But the disc had two sides to it. It had a database side which was very straightforward, searchable by keywords and location and stuff like that and had all the pictures, all the rephotographs that we did on it.

So if somebody wanted to do some research and just, like, look at all the photographs, they could do that. Then the other side was the journey side and that was the side that was more experiential. And when it came to the Mac conversion, we couldn't convert the database side. So the Mac version only works on the journey side.

The Windows version works on both sides but not the Mac side, unfortunately. But you know, I think that, um, what happened for me—the transformative part about the *Third View* project was the opening up of a methodology to include other things.

And also the integration of things that I'd really begun, working with other writers, getting other disciplines involved, the kind of sense that the work—the contextual nature of the work of what we were doing had interdisciplinary connections to it, that it had ramifications for other areas and other fields and other people to look at.

And it went beyond just the nature of that particular place and that particular occurrence that had happened between the pictures.

And it opened it up to other ideas like ideas of narrative, ideas of history and so it wasn't, you know, sort of locked in any particular point of view. But it actually invited people to look at the pictures from multiple points of view. And that to me was a very exciting concept.

So I got a lot out of doing that project. Doing that project, again, opened up my career in a way, in a way I'd never expected because I thought that rephotography was kind of a dead end for me, that I'd already experienced it and there wasn't much else to say about it. But instead, it did quite the opposite.

I went back to the well, in a way, the source of my knowledge about landscape. And what I got out of it was that it just blew open the doors for what I could do next. It was completely different and just completely opened up everything for me at that point. And I just felt liberated by my practice at that point about what I could do.

So the next things that happen, I think of that book—the *Third View* book—and two other books that come after as kind of a triptych. The triptych for me of books was *Third View*. The next one was *Yosemite in Time*. And the one after that was *After the Ruins*. So those three books form a very coherent, I think, group that—but they're different.

And the book—the project that came next out of Third View was the Yosemite in Time project. And that, um, happened largely because of Rebecca Solnit, the writer. Rebecca—I had known Rebecca for a while but I didn't know her real well. She, um, had gone out with us on Third View in 19—in 2000, she went out with us on Third View because she was working on a book on Muybridge.

She did her history of Muybridge and she gave me—she offered to—she said to me that she would come out with us on Third View and be our camp cook for a week if she could pick my brain about Muybridge. And well, you know, the guys are used to me cooking in the field so that sounded pretty good to them and to me too because it turns out that Rebecca is a really good cook.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: There is the picture of her making coq au vin, that wilderness staple.

MARK KLETT: Exactly. That's right. So she was out there near the Smithson site that I just mentioned a few minutes ago making—cooking dinner for us and that was one of the trips she came out on. So she came out and we talked about Muybridge.

And I told her—you know, I could probably tell you what I knew about Muybridge in a, you know, one-hour phone conversation. But she wanted to come out because she likes camping and she likes being out. And she was curious about what we were doing.

So she came out with us and, you know, I realized that she's, you know, got what it takes to do this kind of work. So when she—she came to me after Third View ended and she had finished her book on Muybridge and she said, "You know, what do you think about doing a project in Yosemite," you know, because she felt there was some loose ends for her in Yosemite.

She wanted to go back and look at Muybridge's views of Yosemite because she felt that they were very striking pictures. She thought that—when she looked at then she even got vertigo.

She had a very strong feeling of vertigo looking at some of his photographs. And so you know, I said, "Well, it could be interesting, but you know, I just did this rephotography project again and I'm thinking that maybe I want to get away from rephotography again."

But you know, I mean, Rebecca is a pretty strong personality and she's a real interesting person and I couldn't really—I didn't really want to say no because I thought that, well, this could really be interesting. I don't know what's going to happen.

So I said to Byron, "Maybe you want to get in on this too because if we're going to end up doing more rephotography, I want you to be with me." So I said to Rebecca, "Let's give it a try. Let's see what happens." And so we went to Yosemite and it was actually a bunch of other people that came out with us at first. Ellen Manchester came out. Bob couldn't go because he was out of the country doing something.

I forget what he was doing. Geoff Fricker who was a guy from *The Water in the West* came out with us. He was one of our *Water in the West* people. I forget—I don't know who else was with us that trip. I think there was at least somebody else. I can't recall now off the top of my head. But we went to Yosemite and I think at first it wasn't real—I didn't know if it was going to be very productive.

I think it was maybe a little too social or something at first, so—for the first few days. And we were camping out on the east side of the park. Outside of Lee Vining there's a campground there in the Forest Service. And going into Yosemite and taking a look at the pictures and trying to get a sense of, you know, what it would be like to remake these Muybridge photographs.

I mean, the concept of the rephotography didn't seem too difficult because, you know, by that time we were pretty expert at doing this stuff. And we could find the sites and, you know, we could figure out how to do it. So we made a few pictures and contemplating the concept of it. I was trying to figure out if it would just be anything different than what we had already been doing.

I didn't want to do the same thing that we had been doing. And Byron and I at that time, we had had it with the electronic stuff. I mean, we put so much effort and time into this piece, into this DVD for Third View that we both said, "Okay, we're taking a break from this. We're not doing anything electronic for a while." So that was kind of ruled out. We just didn't want to go there.

So the concept of doing sort of straight rephotography seemed a little thin to me at that time. Later in the week, Ellen and everybody had to leave. So that just left Byron and I and Rebecca. Just the dynamics of having people in a group, that really changed things a little bit.

So I remember driving into the park one day and it was just the three of us in my truck. And I thought, "You know, I need to say this. I'm very—I'm kind of an upfront kind of person anyway. And so I'm a little concerned about this. If this is going to be a collaboration, I need to say something."

So I said, "Look, you know, if we're going to collaborate together, I want to be really clear about something. You know, we need to know that we can trust one another and that nobody here needs to feel worried about having a stupid idea," basically because, you know, when you're working in a collaboration, you need to kind of push each other a little bit.

But you also have to be—you know, you also have to feel like you're—it's okay to express an idea, even if it's kind of a dumb idea. You have to be able to do it because, you know, you don't know if it's a dumb idea and you have to feel that you're not vulnerable within that because if you feel like you're going to be judged every time you make a statement or something, people

kind of freeze and they get hardened up and then the ideas don't flow very well.

And I didn't want to be part of that kind of a collaboration. So I said that. I said, "I have to say this," I mean, because I didn't know Rebecca very well at that point. And you know, Rebecca is one of the most intelligent—most brilliant people actually that I know. She's just got a great mind.

And so I was afraid that maybe, you know, that she—I didn't know if she could be loose enough to kind of do this. I just didn't know her quite well enough yet. So I wanted to say that right up front. You know, so I said that. I knew Byron well enough that—you know, he's Mr. Loose. He's fine, you know.

But I remember I looked in the back. I looked—she was sitting in the back and I looked in the rearview mirror at her. And I looked at her face and I just watched her relax as I was talking about this. And you know, that was one of the best things that really kind of happened because once I made it clear the position from which I wanted to work, it became really clear that's the way she wanted to work too.

And so you know, at that point we all started getting along really well. And I think it opened up this kind of three-person collaborative effort that then kind of took off from there. And at that point, we started exchanging ideas, you know, in the field. We were talking about things. We were—and we also were exchanging messages on email.

I think that there was a really terrific group of email exchanges that were happening. I don't know if it ever got—if anybody ever—I mean, I have them. I have all the emails from that. I think Rebecca might too.

But it's just a lot of ideas being tossed around. Then we do several trips. I mean, we come back and it's just the three of us and we started a series of trips. And this took three years. Again, these projects take about three years. We kept going back to Yosemite and every time we went, it got richer and richer. The conversation at this point starts to shift and what was happening was that we started to work on both sites.

Rebecca knew somebody that was living in a little inholding on the west side of Yosemite as you just come into the park. And I forget the name of that. It was a little community there of private houses. And she knew somebody who was running a place there and we could stay in his yard. So we used to—it's kind of in the trees.

We used to camp out there. That gave us access to that—to the valley so we didn't have to drive all that way. But a lot of times we camped on the east side. We camped at Mono Lake. We camped above Mono Lake and drive in. So we had like an hour-and-a-half commute. It was kind of like commuting to work. But in that hour-and-a-half we had some terrific discussions.

And a lot of the discussions centered around time. It wasn't about place so much. I mean, it did have to do with Yosemite of course, but—and Muybridge and everything else.

But a lot it had to just do theoretically with the concept of time and what is time. I mean, I would say to Byron in an email, you know, something like, "You know, I had this really strange feeling I have to tell you about Third View that I never told you before, and that was that when I went back to these places, I was going back, you know, a second time.

You'd only been there once and everybody had been there going, 'Oh, isn't this cool, we're looking at—we're standing where Sullivan did and we're standing where Mark or Gordy did, you know, 20 years ago. Isn't this cool and look how we can see how it changed,' and I was thinking, 'You know what, this isn't the same place.'"

And I had this very odd feeling that it wasn't the same place anymore. And I thought, "If I say that, these guys are going to think I'm nuts, you know, because how could you say it's not the same place?" Of course it's the same place.

But I had this very sneaking suspicion that fate was playing some odd game on me, that I thought I was going back to the same place but it really wasn't. And so I confessed this to Byron finally in Yosemite. And he said, "Oh, well you need to read this book by Julian Barbour. You know, he says that time doesn't exist and so he writes this book called *The End of Time*."

And so I get the book and I read the book. I had a hard time getting through it frankly. But this

idea of his which was that, you know, time doesn't exist, that time is kind of a conceptual concept that we do to kind of make our lives work because if we don't, I mean, nothing works, you know, right because we have to have this sense of time.

But he's thinking of it from a physics point of view because, you know, if you eliminate time from the equation in physics, you can unify the two different branches of physics which seem that you can't unify because that's the great Holy Grail, right? They want to have this unification theory in physics. So if you take away time, it can be done.

Well I mean, I don't know. In reality we need the sense of time and we need to know the sense of continuity. But the whole thing that appealed to me was this idea that maybe time was made up of moments, you know, that moments were defining what he calls "nows," you know, that reality is made-up a series of nows and that by—the photography is the perfect medium in which to photograph time because that's what photography does, is it captures what you might call a now.

I mean, my question is really how long is a moment? Is a moment a hundred-twenty-fifth of a second or a sixtieth of a second on your shutter speed dial or is a moment really, you know, a week, a year, you know, that something takes place in a larger sense of definition of what something is, what an experience is.

So we would have conversations like this going into Yosemite. And then we would look at these pictures and we would think about what it meant to be back at this place again in a very different way than I'd thought about it before.

And Rebecca in the meantime is giving us this stuff that she's researching and she is throwing in a quote from somebody who's—you know, I forget the woman's—Kathleen Norris, I think, in this anthology about—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: From Washington?

MARK KLETT: Yeah, yeah about time and she's quoting this Native American pastor talking about, "Oh well, oh you know, you people don't believe in time. You people don't believe in ghosts. You believe in time," which I thought was an amazing kind of quote.

So you know, we're constantly thinking about this idea of time, ghosts, you know, place, stuff like that. The first year it became pretty clear to me on that project that we were not just going to do Muybridge. I mean, you couldn't just go to Yosemite and look at Muybridge because we're standing in a spot and here's a Muybridge but pretty close to it, here's an Adams, you know, Ansel Adams.

And then yet, there's another. There's a Watkins and here's a Weston. You know, so all these different people and so how could you ignore them. So I said to Rebecca, "I know you want this to be about Muybridge but we can't do that. I mean, we can't just ignore this." So we quickly kind of absorbed some of that and we started to make the modernist people, you know, part of our work too, the 19th century, opened it up and then to the modernists as well.

And that changed the nature of the project when we did that. But the one thing that was the most important event I think that happened that first year that changed my whole thinking about everything we were doing was when we were down at the Merced River. We were looking for two Muybridge photographs and we realized that the two photographs were only about a hundred feet apart from one another.

One was looking downriver and one was looking upriver. And in the meantime, the river had actually changed course so that the one looking upriver didn't have a river in it anymore. The river had sort of gone off to another direction. But the one downriver still had the river in it. So but the interesting thing about it was we made the rephotographs and so, okay, now we've got the two pictures.

And it was like, "Okay, so what, we got them." And I started—Byron and I started looking at it and we kept thinking, "Well, you know, they're only about a hundred feet apart. Isn't there some way we could link these two together?" And I had done enough panoramas at that time.

You know, I had done—like, for example, in Revealing Territory, there's a panorama of Toroweap Point where I moved through the space and I photographed Toroweap looking to Hillers' photographs, one upstream, one downstream. And I walked around the point connecting the two

pictures. So I had done stuff like this before and I said, "Why don't we just link the two?"

And so we just moved the camera, walked a little bit, take a picture, walk a little bit. And we overlapped the photographs. It took us two days to do this because it was kind of tricky to figure out how to do it. And in there, Rebecca appears twice. She's in the picture twice and it's part of the image.

And because we get to the secondary picture and the river's not there anymore, we called it *The Ghost River Pan*. Well, that idea of linking the two pictures really just like set off a light bulb in our head. We started doing other things. Like there was a picture of Muybridge's that was covered by trees. But if we pulled the branch down, you could see the tree. So you know, I asked Byron to, you know, pull the branch down.

But I intentionally got his hands in view. So it was interacting with the scene. So we're kind of playing with the site a little bit and interacting with it. Later we found other scenes.

We found like a place where, you know, here's a view that Muybridge made of the glacier polished granites and it's only about 300 meters away from a place where Edward Weston photographed this juniper which is a real famous photograph of this juniper. And so we'd link those together by walking the two sites. The real—the most important one for me—the most important site on the project was the Lake Tenaya panorama. That was one where we linked three views—historic views—one made by Muybridge of the lake, and I think possibly—quite probably the very first photograph of the lake.

The second was a Weston photograph of the lake showing some rocks and the third was an Ansel Adams photograph taken of distant mountains—Mount Conness with the clouds—mostly the clouds—a little bit of the lake in the picture. And that was the historical order of the pictures—the Muybridge, the Weston and the Adams.

And when we got there, and this is—we had to walk across the lake. So it's not like it's by the road or anything. It's just a little more remote location. We realized that all three photographs were made within 20 feet of one another. And in fact, the Weston and the Muybridge were made within two feet of one another. It was just astounding.

So we decided to make this panorama where we could link and bend them all together in a panorama. And one of the things that led up to that was for Third View, one of the things we were doing was we were making panoramas of the scenes. So one of the things we did as a matter of course for Third View is once we took the rephotographs, we would set a 35-millimeter camera up on tripod and swing it around in a circle and make a 360-degree pan and overlap all the images.

We did it on film and then later we would scan it in and then for the DVD we actually embedded the historic image into the panorama and you could turn it on and off. So you could see where the picture was relative to the panorama. And so that's what these are, by the way.

So we did—we started it with Third View but what happened by the time we got to Yosemite was we realized we could do that even if they weren't made from the same position. So even though the Adams wasn't made from the same position, by continuing the scene from one picture to another any by using Photoshop in ways we hadn't done it before, we could make the picture fit a little bit.

Sometimes we had to warp it a little bit. We had to kind of push it in place. But we could find a way to make it fit. So and by moving our camera—so that's a panorama. We actually moved out camera in from a couple of positions to make the Adams fit, to make everything else fit. We choose different vantage points but we put them all together in a panorama. And then we had this incredible, you know, combination to me.

And you know, Rebecca writes about that. She writes about the guy that we met here at that place because there was a guy that we met who told us his story. He was there at that location because he had just spread his wife's ashes in the trees.

He had been there 40 years earlier on their honeymoon and he'd come back and she had just died of cancer. And he spread her ashes there—very, very poignant story I think and she writes about it very, very well in the book. And what I began to understand from the rephotography at that point was that we were looking at layers.

And I started to look at the pictures as time layers, that at that location, at Lake Tenaya for example, we had three different historical layers—you know, Muybridge, Weston, Adams—and we were putting them together like they were layers of rock, almost stratigraphic.

I mean, to me it really brought back memories of geology when I was looking at layers of time by looking at the rock strata and the lowest strata was the oldest and the newest was on top. And sometimes the strata would get folded or bent or misformed and shaped and you would get a reversal of that time layering.

And so what we could do is we could sort of reorganize time by taking the layers that were represented by these strata of photographs and by messing around and putting them together again in different ways. So we were kind of—as Rebecca said—like folding and bending time. And I thought, "This is exciting. You know, this is not what we were thinking about with rephotography originally." We were on to something completely different at this point.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: There is the photograph—not specifically but of the kind you're talking about now but that shows the camera next to the folds of the rock which is kind of symbolic of what whole play between geological time and chronometrical human time.

MARK KLETT: Yeah, yeah. And so, you know, anything that resembles a kind of order was really kind of amazing to me. But so we began to see—or at least I began to see what we were doing as going way beyond the concept of place at this point. I mean, obviously place was part of it but it was much more ideas about time, ideas about perception, how photographs have represented things.

So ostensibly, I was a project about Yosemite but I think for me it became much, much wider and greater about that. I mean, we then—I mean, in terms of that collaboration—I mean, it was a very interesting, a very fruitful and a very rich collaboration. I said to Byron and Rebecca early on that I didn't want to address the collaboration with a sense that we had a product in mind because I felt that that was too limiting.

So the first year we didn't really think about it as a book until we did enough work that we could really see what it looked like. But then shortly thereafter we saw it as a book because it made sense to publish a book on it. So we kind of had that in mind when we did the work in terms of how it might come across, you know, in a printed form.

But the whole thing proceeded, you know, very organically I think and I think that was the nature of the kind of collaboration that we had. It wasn't—there was no preconceived notions about—it was all based on the discovery of things that happened. And that was—it was a very liberating experience and I think that followed the lead of the method of Third View, that it was discovery-based and what would come out of it would be, you know, based on the kinds of discoveries.

We felt that we were doing something else with that project that Yosemite had been a place that I think had been kind of overlooked by a lot of contemporary photography. I used to—the term that I had was that Ansel Adams had licked the biscuit, you know, in Yosemite. You know, it's kind of like when you go to a dinner party and somebody pulls out the best biscuit and licks it. That means it's his.

So I mean, he had—you couldn't go to Yosemite without thinking about Ansel Adams. I don't know. I think a place that's been photographed like that and in such a definitive way is very discouraging for photographers to go and kind of make their own photographs.

And so in a lot of ways I don't think there have been a lot of contemporary work done in Yosemite. There had been some work but there really hadn't been a lot of serious work done there—I mean, at least extensive work. I mean, people had made one or two pictures and that was kind of about it.

So going back to it was a kind of challenge, you know, that we had to deal with that. And that's where that—Rebecca's concept of the Oedipal father kind of came in, that you know, that at one point Ansel Adams was kind of the Oedipus and everybody kind of nailed him with a *New Topographics* kind of work.

But by the time he got to Yosemite, he was kind of the kindly old grandfather at that point, you know? Like Ansel, he actually had a lot of good things to say. I mean, he did some really good stuff here and he had a really good effect on our cultural thinking about what this place is.

And so but we could look at him differently at that point. We could actually use that history. You know, we could use the history of his work and other people's work to kind of open the place back up again to new photography.

And when you understood that there was these time layers, that actually what you were doing was adding another layer to a stratigraphic layering of time on this place, that then that was essentially an invitation to add a new layer to it, that any time you went—like the whittler, you were going to have a new layer of experience.

And that each one was going to be different. And that the important thing was that you did it, that you created this other new layer.

And so to me, it was actually an invitation to open a place like that up again that had seemingly been locked up but that nobody could do anything with and now it was open again. So I felt like we were opening territory, reopening territory. So to me, that was what a lot of that project was about, kind of opening up new things to new photography.

So anyway, it was kind of a real eye-opener as a project. Then the next project in chronology for me was the project in San Francisco on 1906 and 2006, the earthquake photographs of San Francisco.

I got involved with that because a writer named Philip Fradkin contacted me. And I knew who Philip was because Philip had written a book years and years ago in the '70s that I had read and it was very influential to me. He wrote a book called *The River No More* about the Colorado River.

And I think it was a great book and really important book. And so apparently he heard a lecture that Rebecca did and showing our work on Yosemite. And he corralled her and got her to give me my email address, which was easy enough to get on the Web anyway.

But he wrote me an email and said, "I've been researching these pictures for the Bancroft on these 1906 earthquake photographs for my book. I'm just finishing a book on the earthquake and somebody needs to do something about these pictures.

Somebody needs to repeat them and you should do them. Why don't you come out here and do something with these? You know, I'll help you." And I thought, "Wow, you know, I mean, Philip Fradkin. You know, he's somebody."

So I said, "Okay, I'll come out and I'll look at them with you." So I went out to Oakland and I met up with Philip and we went over to Berkeley to the Bancroft and we looked at these pictures that he was talking about. He had cataloged for them.

And you know, I thought, "This is plausible. There could be something to this idea," although again, I was thinking, "Another rephotography project? Come on, I mean," but so, I mean, Philip, he's a real kind of go-getting kind of guy. He's like, "Well, all right, so I've got it lined up here.

We've got some meetings. We're going to talk with Karen Brewer at the Fine Arts Museum. We're going to talk to this woman at the UC Press and we're going to do something." You know, he wants to make a book and an exhibition already. I think, "Hey Philip, I haven't even made any pictures yet, you know."

But we go and talk to them and there's a lot of interest in this. I'm thinking, "Well, okay, if I do this work, there's obviously going to be a venue for it. We can—you know, the Fine Arts Museum will show it. If it's good enough, we'll do a show. If it's good enough, we'll do a book too." I mean, so highly likely we can make this work. So I started off with the concept that all right, maybe I'll see if I can do this.

So I started the work. I'm going to say it was 2003. I think it was just as the Yosemite project was ending. And Philip was kind of my point man. I mean, Philip became my guide, my chauffer, my publicist, you know, my agent. He was amazing. He just—he was just committed to the material and he did his own book which is quite a good book.

But he was very committed to seeing the pictures—something happen to the pictures. I mean, I stayed at his house. I came up to visit. He had this beautiful house overlooking Point Reyes and this little yard he had. I camped in a tent in his yard.

So I started the work. I had an assistant and he was a former student of mine—Mike Lundgren. And Mike still works with me. He's my printer and so on. He was one of my grad students here. So Mike started the project working with me as an assistant. And so we set out to rephotograph the place.

First I did research and this is the first time that I was able to do, you know, really in-depth research online for a project. So the photographs that Philip was interested in were online and there were a lot of other ones too. So I started to do researching through the various online—it was called the Online Archive of California, the OAC archive which has become something else now.

It's called the—oh, I forget the name of it right now. But anyway, there's a consortium of all these different places. There were just literally thousands of historic photographs of 1906 San Francisco after the earthquake. And part of the reason was this was a period when handheld cameras, like Kodak cameras became available. So you know, there were—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Pre cellphone cameras.

MARK KLETT: Yes, yeah. So a lot of amateur photography and there was a few professional things. There was some stuff done for insurance purposes, you know. For the Fine Arts Museum's interest, there was one photography—you know, Arnold Genthe—

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Right.

MARK KLETT: Who was only one of the few known photographs that had photographed the event. And they had his negatives actually. And Ansel Adams comes into this again because Ansel Adams had—at the 50th anniversary of the earthquake, he had printed a portfolio of Arnold Genthe's photographs for the museum.

But anyway, they had lots more negatives that nothing had been done with. The negatives were in very bad shape because they were nitrate negatives and they were literally disintegrating as time went on. So I had that at my disposal. So there was a lot of images. So I went through thousands of pictures literally.

I got to know San Francisco in 1906 very well. I mean, I knew a little bit about—I mean, I'd been to San Francisco a lot anyway. So I knew something about the modern city. But I got to know 1906 San Francisco really well because what I found I could do is I could look at pictures and triangulate it.

I could say, "Oh, that's the same building or that's the same thing." And so—and using maps from the period I could begin to put together and piece together a view of what was happening with the photography. So but before I even went I had a really good idea of what was there and where the stuff was.

But Phillip could lead me to places and say, "Oh, that's this and that's that." And he could actually take me to the places. And then shortly thereafter Rebecca Solnit got involved because, you know, that's her city and she really knows the city very well. So she was also a guide and eventually she wrote an essay for the book too. She and Phillip both wrote essays.

But you know, she would bring me to places too that she knew very well. So you know, I would go out and try to find these locations. And the difference between the photography that I had been doing—rephotography—and this was really that a matter of information because when I photograph in the West, you know, the landscape, you're looking for the little thing that's changed.

You know, it just isn't that much that's changed. But here of course everything had changed—I mean, a tremendous amount of change. So and I knew that was going to happen because from the panorama I had done earlier. I knew that was going to take place. So I was looking for the one or two things that were the same.

That was the bottom line of the project. Working with Mike was good as an assistant because he was actually kind of moved into more of a collaborative role early in the project, having some very good suggestions and being a very good photographer himself made the work go a lot more smoothly.

But you know, one of the things that came out of the conversation sand one of the things I ended

up deciding to do with the work was that traditionally rephotographs are looked at with the old photograph on the left and the new photograph on the right.

And I decided to change that. I changed the order because the new photograph—the contemporary photograph was on the left and the old photograph on the right. And that was a very purposeful thing because normally Western readers go from left to right and they then read the photograph on the left as the first one.

But of course, that's reversed. And the underlying concern was that in some ways it goes along with what's happening because the photographs go from order to chaos. And we normally think that that's the way the universe works. It goes from order to chaos. But in this case, of course, that didn't happen. I mean, the order that you see on the left has not gone to chaos yet, or once again.

And that was part of the message was that this wasn't a one-time event, that this was going to happen, you know, once again. So the other thing I did in that project was I photographed from the same vantage point as the original picture but I used a wider angle lens to get more space in. And at first I was thinking, "Should I draw a rectangle around it so people get it?"

But I figured, "Well, people are going to get it sooner or later." So I didn't do that. But sort of one thing that's connected most of these projects—or all of them actually up to this point—is that what we're trying to do is find the exact vantage points.

I was trying to find the exact vantage point of the original photograph and reoccupy that. So the position from which the photograph is made has been the common link between all the projects. This changes with the next project for the Colorado project.

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ROBERT SILBERMAN: This is Robert Silberman interviewing Mark Klett at the artist's studio in Tempe, Arizona, on December 11th, 2010, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number five. We were just leaving San Francisco.

MARK KLETT: Yeah. I'm going to talk about what's become known as the *Charting the Canyon Project* on the Grand Canyon and the Colorado. Byron and I hadn't worked together since Yosemite and this had been a few years.

So we were thinking we wanted to do something together again and I suggested he come out and we go to the Grand Canyon because it was close and we could talk about the ideas of doing a project.

But if we wanted to do something based on historic materials, that the Grand Canyon might be a great place to do that because it was close by. I think that at this point I'd accepted the fact that I was working on rephotographic images again pretty strongly. And in fact that was the purpose of it.

We had talked about the methods change between the Rephotographic Survey to Third View to Yosemite in Time and the idea of multiple images from one place was still very strong in my mind. That was a concept I was still interested in that we hadn't fully mined.

So it made sense for us to go back to the Grand Canyon or to go to the Grand Canyon because it had a very rich image history—also because it's a place where there are multiple images made from one location. So there's something that's a place that I call a place of high image density.

So one of the ideas we had before we left Yosemite was trying to put together—we never did this—but try to put together a map based on the locations of historic images that show where they were taken from because people think they understand Yosemite from the photographs but actually only a small number of places account for most of the photographs.

And we felt the same was happening in the Grand Canyon as well. It was another national park. It was another place that, you know, people had made lots and lots of pictures. So we were bound to find this kind of image density that we were looking for in a place like that.

So we had a bunch of pictures and we came up to the canyon not knowing exactly what we were going to do but very shortly as soon as we started to look at the place and we started to look at the pictures that were related to one another, we realized it was the right spot for us to work in

because it wasn't that we were interested in the Grand Canyon per se.

We were only interested in it as a place that had lots of history, lots of image layers. This idea of the stratigraphic layering I was talking about before made even more sense because, I mean, even literally the canyon was composed of the strata. And so the metaphor was kind of even better, you know, for here.

So the other thing that occurred in the meantime—and this was very significant procedurally—was that I had just purchased a high-resolution digital back for my camera. Yosemite—all the other projects I'd done—Yosemite, San Francisco and everything to this point had been done with film.

And even though Yosemite involved us making digital prints, at that point what we were doing was scanning film, 4-by-5 negatives. I had a drum scanner. I have a drum scanner—making high-resolution scans and then printing out the results. And so we would make panoramas, say, from Yosemite that might be, you know, 2 feet tall by 10 feet wide. This was a pretty typical panorama for us from that series.

But by this time, the digital backs had gotten better and they were at a price that they were still expensive but I could envision myself getting one. And in fact we were selling some prints from Yosemite and we were making some money on those prints. And I saw it as an opportunity to invest the money into a digital upgrade.

And I bought this little camera back. It was a 28-megapixel back, a leaf back—Leaf Aptus 65 that fit on either a medium format camera like a Hasselblad or you could put it on a small view camera. And I purchased this small view camera that was made by an Italian company called Silvestri.

And I got some digital lenses that—because I quickly realized that these digital lenses were far superior to anything that I owned. So I had this little piece of equipment that was like a miniature view camera with a digital back with the lenses that I could do everything that I could do with a normal 4-by-5. I could do it with this and that the resolution of the image was just pretty fantastic.

You know, I could get this incredible—and what that did for us is that we could then change the field routine that we had been working under. So at this point, we're getting more and more sophisticated with our equipment and the equipment's getting better.

So I mean, like with Yosemite, we actually brought equipment out with us into the field. We had a—we brought a CPU, I mean, this big piece of equipment with a monitor and the whole thing. We did that with Third View too. Bill Fox writes about it. We had tons—a whole car full of equipment trying to upload stuff in Nevada.

Well, at this point, you know, we had a scanner in Yosemite. We used to scan Polaroid prints and figure out how to put them together. But now we don't need that. I mean, now we've got a digital camera actually—a high-resolution digital camera with a laptop that's very powerful.

And the other thing I brought out with us was a portable printer. We had a printer that's a battery-operated printer. So we've got this—now we've got this, you know, this little group of equipment, you know, our kit that comes out with us.

And so typically what I would do is, you know, we would find a site and we would set the camera up. I would take a picture, take the chip out—the card, CF card in the back of the camera—bring it to Byron. He would download it on the laptop and we would merge that together with the historic image. And we would start to build an image, start to build a panorama, start to build a composite of this scene.

And we started where we left off in Yosemite. We realized we could embed historic images into larger scenes. So we might take a larger view of this scene and then we would take the historic photograph and embed it into the scene so you could see the relationship, the context of it.

So that was a starting point. At least we could get our feet wet doing that. And the other great thing about it was since we had the laptop, if we go to something like the south rim and we go into the lodge, like the El Tovar Lodge, they have an Internet connection there that's a free wireless connection.

So we would sit down in the lodge and get on the Internet and we'd start to cruise through the Internet. We'd look at the National Archives or something. I mean, I did a lot of research before we'd go out into the field. I'd bring with us a lot of pictures.

But if we're out there long enough, we might say, "Well, you know, I didn't know about this one location before. Let's see what we can find," and we'd go online and we'd find something. So I mean, an example would have been we found this one Ansel Adams photograph of Hopi Point that I thought was really interesting. And we took it out to Hopi Point—[telephone interruption]—oh that's—

So we took this out to Hopi Point with us and we printed it out on a printer and we took it out there. And you know, we set it up. I set up the camera and what we could do was we could say, "Well, what do we want to do with Ansel Adams," because at this point it was no longer about making the rephotograph.

At this point it was kind of responding to the Ansel Adams. So if we decide to embed Ansel Adams into a scene, we might actually decide to not just embed it but to make a picture to the left or right of it so we're kind of making him an unwilling collaborator in creating a diptych or something like that.

Well, in this case, we take it out there and we go, "Well you know, Ansel, he photographed this one view. It's really beautiful. But he didn't photograph the rest of it which is this pretty incredibly panorama." So we decided to make a panorama of the scene.

And we do it in multiple parts. This is very similar to going back to Muybridge again, making a panorama in multiple parts. And Ansel Adams was the end of the panorama. So we make the panorama, we print it out while we were there and we think, "Well, it's okay. I mean, it's looking pretty good.

But you know, it's not that interesting, you know." So then we take the Muybridge clue again and we say, "Well, what if we change the time between panels?" I mean, once we've got the template of the panorama and we know what the space is, we can always go back and replace panels on the panorama.

So we do that over a two-day period. We go back and we replace the panels to get different time periods at different times of day. And so at the end—and you know, in the meantime Byron's putting this together while we're onsite. So we're seeing what we're getting.

This is kind of the advanced version of the Polaroid film, you know. We're getting response to the picture and we're making decisions while we're out there. So it's very integrated into the working flow now where we have the ability to make the pictures and respond to it and make changes while we're still there and make decisions about it.

But the other thing was, well, now we're not just making a rephotograph. We're actually making response to the image. So it's a completely different method of thinking about it. Well, one of the things that we decided about this project was we consciously wanted to change the methods of repeat photography, rephotography.

So if we take pictures that are made of a certain view, let's say the view around the Yavapai Point, one of the things that's unique about the Grand Canyon is that most of the subject matter is pretty far out there. I mean, you're looking at the scene that is five miles away, 10 miles away.

That means if you move the camera a little bit, you don't see much of a difference. So we can do certain things with this now. I started to pay attention to the photographs I was researching online and I'm looking at a photograph. I have to say, when you first research the Grand Canyon, it looks like every photograph of the Grand Canyon looks the same.

It's really hard to tell the difference, you know, because even a photograph of the same place looks different because you don't know it's the same place and therefore it looks generic because the lighting changes and, you know, you can't tell it's the same place unless it's from the same time of day or something.

But I'm researching online and I'm realizing, oh here's the same feature in Ansel Adams' photograph that I'm seeing in the Detroit Publishing Company image from 1903. And then there's the same feature in a postcard and then, oh, Alvin Langdon Coburn made a picture of this too.

And so pretty soon I've got, you know, five or six different pictures made at different times of the same place. Well, using the concept of stratigraphic layering, we were able to put them together and even sometimes making our own photographs into what we then thought of as the mash-up.

And I had this realization one day when I was looking at Ansel Adams' photographs that he made at Yavapai Point and these are on the National Archives website. And they're public domain, by the way, which is kind of an interesting group of Ansel Adams photographs.

But I looked at the pictures and I realized that this is the same place. I mean, he—looking at the photographs and looking at the lighting, it's clear that he spent an entire day at this one place photographing this place from the same vantage point—relatively the same vantage point within a few, you know, meters or something—over the course of one entire day.

And so you know, by taking the pictures, even without you going to the site, I could put them together into this composite. And you know, I'm looking at how he, you know, used different lenses. So you get this big broad panorama that he did with a wide-angle lens.

Then there's sort of a normal lens which is a little more cropped in. Then you see this little more detail that he made with a longer lens. So I mean, three different lenses to shoot the scene and I just put them on top of one another to create this composite. And you know, that's not anything he ever meant to be done with his pictures.

But the point is that—in a lot of ways, that the reason why this was important was that it's a record of his vision of that place and how he did it over time. And there was—you know, I showed this to Byron and we talked about the concept of what we were doing, of putting together these panoramas, continuing the space.

The space would continue from one picture to another and the pictures would be taken at different times, whether it was the same thing like Adams or maybe, you know, an Adams from the '40s to a postcard in the teens to a—you know, to a Frederick Sommer in the '30s.

You had all these different images but he said, "You know, there's a term for this and it's called a mash-up, you know, and it's something that they use it music, you know, and they use it in music." You look up the definition and it's something like, you know, a new derivative made from digital parts, you know, something like that—a derivate whole made from different parts.

And it's essentially what we were doing. And I thought, "This is exactly what we're working with is this concept of mashing up time and place." So once we thought about that as the concept and the time was the thing that made it that way, it was liberating from the point of view that we didn't have to be at the same vantage point, that we could take—we could take—yeah, that's yours. Do you want to—Okay. [Telephone interruption.]

Ready? Okay, yeah, so interrupted there a little bit in terms of thought. I think that the Grand Canyon project at this point kind of completes a cycle for me. You know, one thing is that I feel that the work has become a lot less about space and more about time.

And the other is that I think there is, um, the idea of the photographs being something you can assemble and disassemble I think is some really kind of very important concept for me. So I feel that the work that I'm doing with Byron at this point—first, it's a very experimental work.

And I think it has two things about it. I mean, one is that it's experimental in form but the other thing is that I think it's kind of subversive in a way. You know, one would think that working with historic photographs might be a kind of retro idea, that actually the idea of working with an historic image is some reference back to the past, that one somehow wants to relive it or bring it back or somehow, you know, honor the past in some way.

I think actually it's quite the opposite. I think working with historic photographs actually is a kind of very progressive idea and even radical idea. It's a way of taking history and reclaiming it and actually changing it.

I mean, I think by looking at the photographs, working with them and absorbing them into the contemporary dialogue in a certain way, it's like you're changing the past. It actually has a way of changing the way people see what they thought was the past and actually creating something new out of it.

And in that sense, it's a very subversive act. You can change the way people think about the

past. If you can do that, you can change the way they think about the present and the way they change about the future. So if you go back to the concept of what becomes a kind of work that advocates something or political or whatever in its base form. I don't think you can get any more than this in a way.

If you can change the way people think about the world or some aspect of the world, I think that ultimately has a great effect on what they do. So I mean, I think the way we do the work—it's kind of about a place, like the Grand Canyon or Yosemite.

But I don't think it's really about that. I think it's really about the way that you're kind of forced to look at or the way that you can look at historic materials or even your sense of place or even your assumption about what a place is and about how they can be changed and about how the sense about how anything is then viewed or even represented through a medium like photography can be changed.

And you know, the whole idea of representation for me is on the table. You know, how something gets quantified or something gets codified or even becomes an icon through the idea of the—through the idea of interpreting a photograph is to me open territory at this point.

I mean, that's kind of where I've come and I think it's been a total shift in the methodology of one looking at a photograph and what can be learned with the initial pilot project now to something in which Byron and I are intentionally changing the methods almost every time we work and watch the rephotograph that we make with the idea that what we're doing in a sense—I view myself as a kind of researcher.

I mean, I think of that I'm doing with the photography as kind of a form of visual research, that it's a research about time, it's a research about place, it's a research about how one interprets photographs, the assumptions one has about photographs and how they represent things.

So this to me is a complete, you know, difference in where we began, the way to completion of it in a way where we began. I see Emily coming out here. I think she's going to talk to me about, one, I need to go pick up my daughter. [Laughs.]

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Perhaps on that note since you're back where you began and yet not back where you began, we should stop. Thank you very much, Mark.

EMILY KLETT: Hey, how's it going?

MARK KLETT: I know it's getting time.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: We're winding up.

EMILY KLETT: Yeah, do you—can you still pick her up or do you need—

MARK KLETT: I can go get her, yeah.

EMILY KLETT: Are you sure?

MARK KLETT: Yeah. I'll go get here.

EMILY KLETT: All right. Then I'm going to go to that meeting for Natalie's thing.

MARK KLETT: Okay.

EMILY KLETT: So, Okay.

MARK KLETT: Yeah.

EMILY KLETT: She's going to call you in about 20 minutes, you know?

MARK KLETT: Don't you think I should wait until she calls?

EMILY KLETT: She'll call you in about 20 minutes.

MARK KLETT: So I don't need to leave until then.

EMILY KLETT: In about 20 minutes, yeah.

MARK KLETT: Yeah, Okay. That'll be great. I'll get her.

EMILY KLETT: Unless she gets in early.

MARK KLETT: Oh that's fine. I'll get her.

EMILY KLETT: Okay, all right.

MARK KLETT: If you don't need to get to the airport, then that gives us a little more time.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: No, I'll just walk back—I'll probably walk and say hello to Kurt and I'll just walk back.

MARK KLETT: Yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: So there's no problem there.

MARK KLETT: Okay.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Do you want to add a few more things about—

MARK KLETT: Yeah, just a few things.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Okay, well then, false stop. Let me just remind you literally what the questions are, if you want to take—because—[cross talk].

MARK KLETT: You can do it as we go.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: And the one thing we should do before you resume is do the paperwork.

MARK KLETT: Yes, yes, yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: That'll just take a minute, but just so—

MARK KLETT: Yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: I was thinking I don't know if you want to touch on this but one sort of interesting thing is, you know, you're now at the far edges of digital—[telephone interruption]—oh, that could be—

MARK KLETT: Oh, that's not her. I'm not going to take that one. I'll bring it right here though.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: I mean, we've been talking about the far edges of digital and, I don't know, an hour ago you were talking about after the last break, well, we're making ambrotype prints of my school pictures.

MARK KLETT: Yeah, right.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: So I mean, you still—in terms of history, you're still working historical and contemporary too.

MARK KLETT: Yeah.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: The questions as they pose them are, and I can read them to you if you want, on the tape I guess—there was a question about involvement with photo organizations. But I think you've mentioned SPE and that's fine.

MARK KLETT: Yeah. Well, I was on the board of Friends of Photography.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Yeah, I don't know if that matters, you know, to talk about how—could you discuss your views on the importance of photography—I mean, I'd just ask, I guess, have your views changed now from given where you are now—have they changed about how the character of photography as a means of expression and what its strengths and limitations are.

MARK KLETT: There's a couple things that I didn't talk about—[cross talk].

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Should I just give you that question and you can go?

MARK KLETT: There's a couple things I want to just mention.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Oh, okay, should I—

MARK KLETT: No, go ahead. We'll do it on tape because I think—oh it's on? So are we on?

ROBERT SILBERMAN: Yes, could you maybe discuss your views now, given this long history from film to the cutting edge of digital, on the character of photography and the importance of photography as a means of expression?

MARK KLETT: I think things are changing very rapidly and I want to give one example of that. I teach a class at ASU called "Every Day with a Digital Camera," and this is an homage to Byron actually. Byron Wolfe did a book of his own work called *Every Day* in which Byron actually got me to photography every day with a digital camera and I've been doing this for about eight years now.

The class is about giving students a small digital point-and-shoot and letting them photograph everyday things that they would not ordinarily photograph. And in a microcosm, it's kind of a larger idea. People photograph now with digital cameras in a way that they don't photograph with film.

And so you know, Ansel Adams once said, "Twelve images a year is a good crop for any photographer." Well, you know, when you give people a digital camera, they might make hundreds of photographs a day. Now, that doesn't mean that they're good. But that's kind of what the point is.

The point is what do we determine about what's good in photography and what isn't good in photography. I mean, and if you're using a view cam and looking for one kind of picture, then that idea of 12 significant images that Ansel is talking about is one conception.

But if you're thinking about the actual practice of making photographs that makes lots and lots of pictures, then I think we have a different consideration. What happens with the class that the students I work with very quickly realize that within a month they're working with thousands of photographs. They have to edit.

So one of the big changes I think in photography now is the photographers have often become good at what I call the front end of the process, which is the making of the picture. They often haven't thought about the back end of the process, which is what to do with the pictures that they make, how to put them together to create meaning.

So this goes back to Nathan Lyons in a way, how to make numbers of pictures come together in some coherent form that the meaning is generated not by the single image but many images. And I think one of the big changes in photography really comes about now with the advent of digital photography, when we're looking at thousands of pictures and how to create meaning—not significant meaning out of small numbers or single images which can always be done.

I mean, I love a single image like anybody else. It's a beautiful thing. But the other way to conceive of photography now that's become more important is to think of it in terms of the practice and the volume of pictures that come out of it. So I have been making every day—photographs every day now for over eight years. And within that is the possibility of creating any number of potential edits, either chronological.

So I could make an edit kind of like Revealing Territory in a way that's a chronologic edit or I could make it the thematic edit, you know, like all the photographs I've made when I've gone out in the desert and so to a certain place or a certain idea. Like maybe there's a certain kind of feeling in the film of a certain anxiety in the photographs or something. We could create a thematic edit about that.

And it's all about creating meaning for multiple images instead of, you know, small numbers. And this goes back to Japan where I'm thinking about, you know, creating combinations of pictures.

I mean, think of the photograph in some ways as a film that we can think of the difference between creating photographs, still images of events or moments in time of singular moments or multiple moments, in some ways as less- the difference between that and, say, film or video is not as great anymore. I mean, there's a difference.

Even the cameras now, right, they're made so that they do still images and video together. And so the concept of somehow responding to a moment in time—that concept of what constitutes a moment now, whether it can be one instant of a larger period of time, becomes blurred.

And so the photographer as practitioner, using the same instrument, now can do both. And even the act of making single images, single frames, not just video, can become really now kind of extended documents, extension in time as well as that single image. So I think it's really changing and the practice of photography will I think be affected by this.

And you know, it's a different thing to say the practice and the market and all that kind of stuff. But I see it now in the photographers, the young photographers that I work with. I've also got another series of photographs that I may be publishing in the next few years. One is—it's called Time Studies and they're—I've gone back to film.

I've made long exposures. So the exposures vary anywhere between an hour and two days onto one sheet of film. And you know, so sometimes you'll see an activity like eating dinner or it could be like taking a nap or it could be watching a television program and getting it all on the screen in an hour or it could be the moon and the sun rising over two days both together in the scene.

And so but the question for me in doing the series was, you know, what constitutes a moment in time? It's that Jillian Barber idea of the now or the moment. So I made a series of pictures in response to that. Those pictures I started on the year that I got a Guggenheim Fellowship and I began thinking about that.

So I'm thinking more and more about the relationship of photography and time these days than I am about space. And so I think for me that the idea for photography is a very perfect medium for asking questions about time. And maybe it's because I'm getting older and I'm thinking about my own sense of time and my own mortality and my own life that I'm thinking more about these things.

But I think I've pushed what I do into the concept of time a little bit more. And we're kind of getting over the last things here in this interview and I just wanted to mention one other project I'm working on. I think I will publish this next year. And it's a project on Wendover, Nevada.

And I did this in collaboration with Bill Fox, the writer. And we went back to Wendover, Nevada, where in the 1940s the largest air base in the world was built. And it was a secret air base and they trained bomber pilots and bomber crews how to drop bombs. But one of the most significant things was that they trained—they had what they called the Atomic Group there.

And they trained the bomber crew for the Enola Gay and they outfitted the Enola Gay bomber that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that that happened at Wendover. The place now is a ruin. The hangar that held the Enola Gay is still there and the barracks and all the different parts of the place.

But it's kind of like it's inhabited by ghosts. I mean, they're just remnants of the past. And I felt that the hangar was a very similar structure in its falling down, dilapidated state to the remaining A-bomb dome which is in Hiroshima, the dome above which the bomb actually exploded, which they keep as a monument to the bomb.

And in one part of the world, in Japan, it's kept as a monument to an event that they never want to forget. But in Wendover, it's a place that's falling apart, to a history that we don't want to remember. And I felt that that was a really important kind of thing. It forms a kind of political statement that it's a very small group of pictures and a small book, relatively speaking.

But it's about—we call it *The Half-Life of History,* about not remembering the fact, not wanting to remember what it took to create such an awesome weapon, such a terrifying weapon. And I'm not trying to get into the debate about whether or not it should have been used. I think that's not the issue for me.

The issue for me is that it was used and we haven't accepted the fact that we used it or the history that came out of it. Part of the text that Bill writes about and part of my pictures even show the Smithsonian exhibition where the Enola Gay was shown but it was a political controversy. The fact that we can't talk about it in this country I think is a real problem, that we would be doomed to repeat that kind of history without really accepting what it means to have done something like that.

So that is an example of maybe a more overt political statement that I want to make with that set of pictures. But that's a book that I started in the early—I started with Bill around 2001 actually and the idea that we did it around the time of 9/11 was really significant, you know, because what we, quote, unquote, "classify" as our enemy is another part of that.

The other book that I'll mention because you brought it up too is the *Saguaros* book. What's kind of important to me about that kind of a book is I started making saguaros pictures in the 1980s and the book didn't come out until 2007. And I spent about 20 years photographing saguaros and I just—every time I'd get one that I liked, I would put it in a drawer in my little cabinet where I keep the negatives.

And over time, I just had a lot of them. So it was kind of a project based over time. And I'm seeing myself as a photographer now working in different ways. In some ways I work with short-term projects and by short-term, they might be like the book that you mentioned, the *Black Rock Desert* book. I mean, that was based on a trip that Bill Fox and I did over a period of a week or less.

So it's a short-term project. I might see myself doing a project that takes several years, like the Colorado River project, you know, the Grand Canyon project which is about in its final stages. I might see myself then in this case doing a project that takes 20 years.

And I have yet another project that will be ongoing. My daughter Lena, who is coming in today, she was born on the same day I was. So we share a birthday—September 9th—and she was born on my 39th birthday. So every year, I make a new photograph of us together. So I have a series of photographs of us and, you know, it's sort of a family thing. It goes back to my father.

But it's really about time. I mean, it's about—and changes. And you know, so this is a long-term project and I'll do it as long as I'm alive, to photograph the two of us. So I see my practice now over different time scales and different—bridging different spans because I think the subject matter changes different—different spans.

We did Third View. Now, in a few more years it'll be 20 years since that was done. In seven more years it'll be 20 years, I should say. It'll be time for a fourth view maybe. So that's maybe a project that I'll do or maybe Byron will do it or somebody else will do it. I hope somebody will do it, the fifth and sixth view. I mean, I hope that just continues.

ROBERT SILBERMAN: On that forward-looking note, we'll stop. Thank you very much, Mark.

MARK KLETT: Okay, thanks, Rob.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]