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Oral history interview with Preston Singletary, 2011 March 23-24

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Preston Singletary on March 23 and 24, 2011. The interview took place in Seattle, and was conducted by Mary Savig for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Preston Singletary has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written prose.

Interview

MARY SAVIG: This is Mary Savig interviewing Preston Singletary at Preston's studio in Seattle. It is March 23, 2011, and this interview is for the Archives of American Art, the Smithsonian Institution. And we are on disc number one.

So we're going to start out nice and easy with some basic questions. When and where were you born?

PRESTON SINGLETARY: I was born in San Francisco August 9, 1963.

MS. SAVIG: And then you moved to Seattle soon after?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, actually, the story goes my parents were both from the Seattle area, but they moved down to San Francisco, trying it out for size. And my birth certificate says that my father was a — worked for Maytag. And so anyways, after I was born, I think before I was a month old, they moved back to Seattle. So, you know, for all intents and purposes, I moved—I'm from Seattle, yeah.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah. Did you have a lot of family in Seattle? Is that why they moved back?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, all of my family is in Seattle or—well, yeah, most of my immediate family is in Seattle.

MS. SAVIG: Can you talk about your parents a little bit, just what they did.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, my father was born in Ryderwood, Washington, and he and my mother got together—let's see. I think my father was 23 when I was born. My mother was 19. And they got married, and let's see. My mother is half Tlinglit and half Filipino. My mother—my grandmother was full blooded Tlinglit, but because of the association with my great grandmother having remarried a Filipino man—there's a lot of Filipinos in our, you know, community with friends and family. And so my grandmother married a Filipino man who was in the Navy, and his name was John Abada, A-b-a-d-a. And so my mother has two sisters. And so my grandfather, I do remember him, but he was on—you know, in the Service, so he was gone for extended periods of time. And they eventually separated, and my grandfather moved back to the Philippines. And then my grandmother died when she was about 71.

And so my mother, she—and my father were married till I was about 15, and at that time—I have a younger sister named Rachel, and she was about nine years younger than me. And so when I was 15, that would put her, you know, about—what is it, six? Yeah, six years old or so.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MR. SINGLETARY: And so she was—and my mother—well, I lived with my mother after my parents were divorced. And let's see, yeah.

MS. SAVIG: So you never have been to the Philippines or explored that part of your heritage?

MR. SINGLETARY: Not specifically, no. Other than eating Filipino food which is one thing that we did a lot, chicken adobo and lumpia and those type of things, we—it was the Tlingit side really that was more —I guess it spoke to me the loudest and in regards to what I do today with my art.

MS. SAVIG: Did your mom or dad do anything artistic around the house or encourage you to do a lot of art?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, as a child, I was—I remember drawing a lot but not really—you know, dabbling in it. My mother and father were both very creative people. My mother was always doing handicrafts and, you know, doing macramé in the '70s was a big thing. And she used to sew a lot, and she would crochet and knit. She was very creative and just kind of dabbling in things that you might find in homemaking magazines and that type of

thing.

MS. SAVIG: Did you watch her?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, she used to get me involved a little bit in different projects, and, you know, around the holidays we'd be making things.

And my father, though, was also quite creative. He would dabble in lots of different things such as oil painting and, you know, soapstone carving. And, you know, I remember him always very—dabbling in he used to try to make rings and make different things. He might just try his hand at any given thing. And so, you know, he used to write poetry a lot. My father is very well read. I'd say he's very intelligent because he reads so much, and he was also a great outdoorsman. You know, one of his things is fishing, which I never really caught the fishing bug because I never—I just never—I didn't like it. I mean, my father is very serious about fishing, and we went out. You know, we got up really early in the morning, got out, and it was cold. And, you know, I guess he never possessed the ability to impart that upon me or make me feel comfortable enough. You know, you think he might have a thermos of hot chocolate or something, but I never really did get into doing that. But I used to go hiking a lot with him and even snow climbing. At the time, he was really into rock climbing, and pretty much anything that you could, he tried to do.

MS. SAVIG: So he kind of imbued in you a sense of the outdoors and nature?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, he did, although I think I was much more comfortable with music. I started playing music when I was about 11. I took piano lessons at first. I remember being very attracted to—I remember sitting in front of a piano one time at a friend of my parents' house and just, you know, tinkering on the piano and figuring out that I could create these little melodies. And I sat there trying to hammer out the melody for "I'd Like to Teach the World to Sing." [1971]

MS. SAVIG: You figured it out on your own?

MR. SINGLETARY: And just by touching the notes and something that was very simple and easy to try. And then so my parents got me going with piano lessons, and I took off on that for quite a while. And I did learn how to read music and play a few sort of complicated compositions. And Scott Joplin was one of the things that—I really at that time, I wanted to be like a ragtime piano player. That's what attracted me to music. And a little later, I guess I shifted to guitar in high school. So talk about in relationship to what my father's interests were, I was more comfortable sitting in the basement playing my guitar, playing music.

MS. SAVIG: Right, you were a typical Seattle teenager.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: Did you continue to do piano for—

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, I continued in piano through high school, but I never really got extremely proficient with it. I was more of a trained—I had a really good ear. I could hear. And then when I'd look at the notes on the paper, I could sort of see, okay, well, that's where the chords are and that's where my fingers go. And then through memory, I could sort of mimic the riff and the piano style. And when I figured out a few things, I never really got completely comfortable with reading music. So as a trained musician, I had to say I was much more picking it up by ear, yeah.

MS. SAVIG: That's fascinating. I took piano for five years, and I never got it. It was always a battle. I just have the rhythm, and I certainly couldn't hear anything and play it back.

Do you think glass is parallel to music, where you can imagine it in your head and then—

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, with the glass blowing for me, I would say was, you know—the fact be told, I guess I had dropped out of high school or I didn't have enough credits to graduate. And, you know, in high school, honestly, I took high school for what it was. I was playing guitar, and I was playing piano. And I had a piano class, and then I dropped my math. And I'd take two piano classes because the piano teacher loved me. I would be able to play these kind of flashy compositions, and that was great for the piano recital, made him look probably pretty good, Mr. Doyle, who was my piano teacher in high school, Patrick Doyle.

MS. SAVIG: He was really supportive of you?

MR. SINGLETARY: He was very supportive of me. He really kind of let me do whatever I wanted. You know, I'd get the key to the practice room where I could go sit and play piano for the entire period by myself. And then there was also a jazz band and a stage band, which I played guitar in both. So, I mean, I had all these elective classes, and I didn't have enough credits to graduate. So in the end, I kind of took high school for that. I took advantage

of the music programs, and that was what I was really into doing.

So the glassblowing, when I eventually came around to glassblowing, I think I realized that it was something I could do with my hands and it was kind of a rarified activity. It was something that, you know, not everybody was doing, and especially at that time, there weren't very many glassblowers in Seattle. And, you know, so it gave me something to sort of focus on. I was fascinated with the whole process so that's why I sort of took—I guess I persevered in the glass and stuck to it.

MS. SAVIG: When I was watching you yesterday at the Benjamin Moore studio, your actions looked very musical with the flourishes of your arms. It was very musical. The whole thing seemed—

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: The whole thing seemed like a symphony was unfolding, the way you were all moving in sync between different things.

MR. SINGLETARY: Right, there's a lot of—yeah, there is a lot of choreography going on there, so to speak, and it is—you know, everybody knows their role. Everybody knows what is needed at the moment. So in some cases, there's very little dialogue that needs to occur because everybody understands. You know, the team that I work with is very experienced with helping me.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, that definitely showed yesterday. So before we get into glassblowing—while you were still young and in high school, what was your understanding of Tlingit culture at that time?

MR. SINGLETARY: It was mostly what I was exposed to through my great grandmother, Susie Johnson Gubatayo. Gubatayo was her second husband's name, a Filipino man, when she remarried. And, you know, there's a lot of spending time to go visit my great grandmother, and I have a lot of cousins. And we'd all get together and spend time around her, and so that was how I understood it. She was a very proud woman, and she always talked about, you know, where she came from. She was quite active in the Native community. At the time—today, the Northwest is the second largest area for Tlingit people to reside outside of Alaska. So she was responsible for—and I think she based it—my family says that she was witnessing the Filipino community and how they really came together to support each other at that time in the '50s and '60s. And she decided to organize the Alaskan community down here.

She basically—and that's what I understand, too, is that she was also instrumental up in Sitka, Alaska where she comes from in— you know, she was very involved with the church, the Presbyterian Church. And she was a student at the Sheldon Jackson School [Sheldon Jackson College, Sitka, Alaska], and she was asked to sort of recruit a lot of the village people, the traditional people, that, you know, it was okay to be—to come around and be involved with the church and that they would teach different skills such as, you know, baking and sewing and, you know, that sort of homemaking kind of skills that probably the missionaries were advocating. And so she would—you know, she was sort of like a liaison between the traditional people, and that's what I understand of her role at that time.

Now, when she was in the Seattle area, she was also kind of bringing people together, but, you know, I guess you would have to say that it wasn't really respected, you know, to leave the community at that time, especially to marry a foreigner like she did. In fact, once she was widowed— her first husband died in a sawmill accident in 1919—she was widowed with five children. And one of those children was my grandmother, Lillian Abada. So she would go and visit with her friends in the community in the Seattle area, and, you know, check in on them. If a family was having a baby, they would all get together, and they'd go and visit and make sure they had food and that kind of thing. And that was how they operated. And she tried to get the Alaskan community to recognize this. You know, at some point at the turn of the century, there was the Alaskan Native Brotherhood and the Alaskan Native Sisterhood was an organization that was, you know, trying to assemble and create community centers for the community. And so she was doing that down here in Seattle, and she was in communication with them up in Alaska, the Sisterhood. And they didn't want to recognize her efforts, per se, at that time. But, you know, as the numbers grew in the Northwest area, eventually, they did recognize it as one of the camps of the Sisterhood.

MS. SAVIG: So for a while, they were only recognizing Alaskan communities?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, they were only—you know, I think at the turn of the century at that time of change, there was a lot of—you know, that the clan houses and the—it was they were trying to repress a lot of the the cultural activities that were going on such as the potlatching and all this kind of thing. So they, you know, would try to—different communities would build these community houses and, you know, meeting places, to get together. And, you know, they were going to church, but then they had their other places where they'd get together and have, you know, social functions and things like that.

MS. SAVIG: Who was repressing it, the Presbyterian Church or the government?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, the governments were—had essentially outlawed the potlatch system because it was regarded as conspicuous consumption. That was also—that was one of the terms, but it was also that there was — from what I understand through studying it in books, primarily it was that the fur trade had created a huge imbalance, you know, between the economies and that the system of potlatching was actually a way to maintain a balance between the different clans. And what would happen was that if a neighboring clan might have extended a favor such as hunting or fishing in their region or whatever, you know, it was reciprocated by hosting of a potlatch. And the potlatches were where a lot of the tribal politics were ironed out and a lot of the names were given and, you know, storytelling. And totem poles might have been erected for in the honor of deceased chiefs or leaders. And those totem poles illustrate stories of family lineages. And I think the missionaries didn't quite understand what was going on. It was thought that they were worshipping these totems, and this was something that they didn't understand, didn't want to.

But the most obvious thing was that these potlatches were getting out of control because of the imbalance of the fur trade. Some chiefs were getting immensely wealthy from supplying fur to the Russians and the Americans as well. And so these chiefs would get—you know, they would host the most lavish potlatches, and they would last for eight days. And then the other clan would be sort of—it would be outdone, so to speak, and so they would go to extreme measures to sort of accrue enough money to outdo the other chiefs. So it was this kind of little one-upsmanship going on. So that kind of—and then the government stepped in, and they outlawed potlatching altogether. And they—you know, of course, everybody knows that the languages were forbidden to be utilized, and so therefore, the culture was sort of slowly being dismantled.

MS. SAVIG: So did your mother and other people in Seattle—well, she was in Sitka at this time, though, around the turn of the century?

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, my great grandmother, yeah.

MS. SAVIG: Okay. Great grandma. Did they continue to speak Tlingit at home or that was kind of culturally out, too?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, I had a—my great uncle who was one of the children from the second marriage from the Filipino man from Susie Johnson. She married Dionesio Gubatayo who was a man who had traveled around the worked and ended up in Alaska for the fishing and the cannery work, and he married Susie Johnson, and then they moved away. Then they had three more children, and so one of those children was my great uncle, my uncle Max. And I have one living elder who is my aunt Rosetta who also married a Filipino man. So Rosetta is still alive. My great uncle Max took to writing down a lot, you know, recorded a lot of the information from his mother, from Susie. And so that's how we know the story of where we came from and he—you know, I sat with him on a couple of occasions and recorded what he knew through the stories of his mother. He had never spent any time in Alaska, he grew up in Seattle and lived in Montana, but my uncle Max was — I'm told is one of the first Native American pharmacists that was educated in —I mean, I don't know if that's—that's what I'm told by my family [laughs].

MS. SAVIG: Say it until someone else tells you it's not true

MR. SINGLETARY: In Seattle.

MS. SAVIG: So Max traced the family roots quite a bit.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, so he recorded a lot of the information and took down a lot of the names that were given to us by my great grandmother to all my cousins and all, you know, his—all of my great grandmother's descendants, you know, my aunts. And so I have no blood uncles from that side because I have only aunts.

MS. SAVIG: When was he doing this research?

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, he started — he wrote a lot of the information down in, I believe the '60s and '70s. He tried to submit them to the local papers so they might publish them, but they never did. You know, he—you know, had a lot of the information by the time I got to him and tried to do the same thing we're doing here, his stories were really varied. And so we were always trying to fact check them against, you know, history and what we know. And I do have an aunt, one of my mother's sisters, Andrina Abada. She's really one of the strong cultural people, and she holds most of the actual knowledge. And so I get together with her and sort of try to get the stories straight as well.

MS. SAVIG: So when you were talking to your great grandmother and then the other relatives about this, what piqued your interest the most, when they were talking about family traditions or when they were talking about aesthetics or religion?

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, you know, a lot of the — you know, growing up, it was I felt—I guess honestly I kind of felt a little, you know, mixed up, you know, culturally because my father being non-Native and my mother being Filipino and Tlingit. I always felt a little bit out of place, and so I was quite a shy kid, you know. And I didn't really know what to make of it all. You know, to go and visit my—my family was a big family, and it was always a lot of fun to see the cousins. And we would get together, but really honestly, we grew up quite urban. I mean, we were in amongst this, you know, loving family because we had a lot of—we were such a big family and so we—there are things that I thought about at the time was, you know, I wanted to go play music. I wanted to go, you know, ride my skateboard. I didn't—I grew up rather extremely urban, and I didn't really connect with it specifically.

So, it took a while for it to come around. It wasn't until I was doing glassblowing. I think at some point you grow in. You become much more confident, and then you're sort of where you can say — you can be proud. You can say yes, I am, you know, all these — you know, I had other kids that I grew up with who were also Native, and I thought that Blackfeet sounded like a cooler name than Tlingit. You know, so I — you know, when I reflect back on it now, it's obviously that I have much more appreciation, and I'm much more aware of the culture and what it is, where we came from.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, I think that's understandable.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah. Oh, I just wanted to be—I wanted to be an average kid. I had a weird name, you know, Preston Singletary. I was named after my father. You know, my father has the same name, but he has no middle name. And apparently, that was always going to be my name. My mother was quite convinced that I was going to be a boy. She really wanted to have a boy, and so I was—you know, sort of grew up probably spoiled by my mother, you know.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, she wanted a boy, and she got one.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah. And so, you know, I—aside from going over, we didn't practice a whole lot of the customs and so forth. I mean, my great grandmother was by the end of her days was focused on going to church, and that was what—you know, what I understand about her is that she also was very proud of where she came from. She had a very strong sense of her clan, her community—but she saw that. And that's—and it's pretty true with a lot of the other Native from around the country, that they learn how to integrate, you know, religious instruction with their own culture. They learn how to marry them together so that they still have a strong sense of spirituality, but it's an amalgamation of Native teachings as well as religious instruction.

MS. SAVIG: That's a great way of describing it. So do you know why your dad had the name Preston?

MR. SINGLETARY: You know, he was—I can't recall how he got the name. My grandfather, his father, was named Clifton. So he got the name Preston. I don't know if it was a family name. It could very well have been, but since I have a middle name, it makes me, like, not a junior.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah. What's your middle name?

MR. SINGLETARY: My middle name is Lawrence.

MS. SAVIG: And you have a Tlingit name, too?

MR. SINGLETARY: I have a Tlingit name which is—was given to me by my great grandmother. It was Cochane. And I am told and I don't know that it's the sound of a rattling chain, and that was what the description or the meaning of the name. That's what was given to me.

MS. SAVIG: When did she give that to you, when you were born?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, she gave those to us when we were quite little. I don't remember any traditional ceremony, but she gave all of her grandchildren—you know, children and grandchildren Tlingit names. And so actually shared that name with one of my cousins, one of my birth cousins. And then, well, later on in the summer of 2000, I met a man named Joe David who has become like a mentor to me, and he gave me another name, which on the Northwest Coast when you receive names—or you can receive names throughout your lifetime and they often denote different, you know, change within your life or growth or some kind of evolution. And if you're going to be—say if you were going to become like a clan leader or a house leader, you might assume the name which also comes with it the responsibility of all the history and the clan regalia, all of the objects that they have, whatever is remaining. All of the stuff is in museums and so forth, but whatever is remaining. There are objects that are referred to ut-oo [phonetic spelling] which means like a precious owned thing which is like a—but it also reflects the lineage of the house group, the families.

But so anyway, that was when Joe David, he gave me another name from his tribe, from his community which was the Nuu-chah-nulth from the west coast of Vancouver Island, and he gave me the name Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth

was a name that was his name that was given to him when it was basically prophesied that he was going to be one of the artists in the family. So he was put in the place with the elders to learn how to carve. And so when we got together in the summer of 2000 and worked together up at the Pilchuck Glass School, he kind of saw my—well, he got to know me, and he thought that he would share his name with me because—which for me an affirmation and it was kind of showing me that I was doing the right thing , going in the right direction and it kind of gave me a sense of —well, the way he would put it, it sort of powers me up. You know, it's because that affirmation and that support from an elder was—

MS. SAVIG: When he gives you the name, does it feel like it's something that you have to live up then?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, there are responsibilities that could, you know, arise in relation to carrying the name. And I haven't—he hasn't—other than being a good friend to him and helping him out, you know, we —I haven't had any calls to any kind of specific tribal protocol or anything, but that could be. It could be, you know, if the time comes to help out in some way.

MS. SAVIG: What was the name that he gave you? I don't think I have it.

MR. SINGLETARY: It's Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth. It's K-A-K-A-W-I-N-C-H-E-A-L-T-H. It's Ka-Ka-Win-Chealth.

MS. SAVIG: Okay. When did he give that to you, right after you were working together?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, at the end of the session when we were working together, he gave me the name, but it was after a series of—you know, he's also involved with the Lakota sweat lodge ceremonies, and so he had kind of introduced me to that process which, for me, was because I wasn't raised with any religious instruction myself, I was primed for it. And so he introduced me to the sweat ceremony, and that for me was kind of an eye opener, you know, in a lot of different ways. And, you know, he taught me some of the songs that we utilize for the ceremony. And so it was a thing that kind of opened my eyes to the nature of Native spirituality and that that's really just—I suppose you'd relate it to sort of personal growth and expanding your perspective on things like that.

MS. SAVIG: I like how you put that. So before you—you were at Pilchuck as a glass artist before you had any interest in pursuing a more Tlingit aesthetic in your work. Let's back up a little bit. How did you get involved in making glass in Seattle?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, I was living in Wallingford, a the neighborhood in Seattle, and this was in high school. And I met a fellow name Dante Marioni whose father Paul Marioni was one of the early pioneers in the glass movement, and he was also involved with Pilchuck. And Dante moved from California. His father was living, you know, in my neighborhood about three blocks from my house where I grew up, and so Paul had lived—he was living in this old abandoned telephone building. Well, it wasn't abandoned. It was owned by these people, and it was being salvaged of old metal. And so there was one of the room was cleared out, and Paul lived there and had his art studio there. And Dante moved from California. He was one of the first—I'm one of the first guys, I think, that he met. I was one of the first kids, and we just hit it off. I'd seen him, you know, riding past my house on a bicycle, you know, his BMX bike, and going down to the park down the road and riding on the hills.

So Paul Marioni was the first glass artist that I ever met, and when I saw his work—

MS. SAVIG: That's a great first glass artist to meet.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, you know, he was—and it was quite fascinating, the whole —and so Dante and I formed this friendship. I would go up and hang up in this building, and it was kind of like New York living in Seattle.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, and it was, you know, a three-story building, and they have a rooftop with a view over the water. And it was just like this oasis that we could go and hang out, and I talked him into letting me conduct band rehearsals in one of the empty rooms in the building. Well, you know, he started to take glassblowing lessons in this factory called the Glass Eye Studios, which grew very quickly after the eruption of Mount St. Helens, and they would take the ash from the volcano, and they would melt it because the basis of glass is silica. And so they figured out a way of melting this ash and making Christmas balls and paperweights and things out of it.

And so it was about a year after high school and after I had lived in Alaska. I had moved up to Juneau for a summer and after that summer. I worked in restaurants and things like that. And I came back to Seattle in the fall, and I worked in restaurants in Seattle and learned how to, you know, use a knife and prep food and all of that stuff. I was working in, you know, cooking and making appetizers and things like that.

And at one point, I was out of a job and Dante called me up and asked me if I'd want to get a job at the Glass Eye. And at that time, the position that was available was a night watchman. And I took the job and worked from 11:00 to 7:00 in the morning, and I was, you know, basically filling the furnaces in the middle of the night and sweeping up, cleaning up and that type of thing. So I did that for about four months. On my down time, I brought my amplifier down and I'd be playing guitar at the 3:00 in the morning until I had to go and fill the furnace again. And so I had met a lot of these folks from the Glass Eye that were the owners of the factory through different times at Paul Marioni's building. You know, he had the room in the building, but they have these parties. After Pilchuck would let out in the summer or after a session was done, a lot of people would flood through and then there'd be a party. And so I'd met some of these folks who were at the Glass Eye factory through this connection with Dante and his father. And so they knew me as a kid, and they were liked coming and hearing my band play. And we sometimes—we'd have a Pilchuck after party, and they'd say, yeah, bring your guitar play. So we'd play and entertain them. We'd have fun.

Dante actually got a few other friends glassblowing jobs as well, Paul Cunningham and Joe De Camp. And, you know, those guys are both still involved with glassmaking. They still work.

And so let's see. So, yeah, after about four months, I worked the night watchman, and then I got shifted to the daytime. While I was mixing chemicals for the glass and doing odd jobs, you know, trying to weld. I was never a good welder. I think they wanted to get me onto the team, onto the production floor and making work and doing the production work. And so I ended up, you know, making these Christmas balls and paperweights and things for—and just kind of getting comfortable with the process of handling the glass and making, you know, consistent objects. So it was a great training ground, and eventually Dante and I got on the same team. So we—first I had another guy. I was working with this other guy, and then Dante and I really wanted to work together. If you ask Dante, the way he put it, he was trying to, you know, stack the deck so we could work together because we were such great friends. And so we did.

And the things that we liked to do were primarily the blowing process. We didn't like making paperweights and eggs and things like that, Christmas balls. But it was a great job. They had an incentive program, and we could actually make a pretty handsome living for our age. I mean, we could make $200 a day if we really worked hard, and it was just a great thing. So I always say it—because I still wanted to be a musician—it was the coolest day job a musician could have.

MS. SAVIG: Right, that is a really cool job. So you still wanted to be a musician. You weren't actually thinking maybe you were training for a career?

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, I think at the time I was kind of still trying to play music and I was always involved with original bands and I was always, you know, collaborating with other musicians to create the bands. So I wouldn't say I would be the brains behind the operation, but I'm a great collaborator. And just like on the glassblowing team, you know, you're sort of collaborating as well. Essentially, you are helping out people. You take turns. I used to assist lots of different people, and in turn, they would come and assist me.

So, we gained a lot of skill rather quickly. And Dante was like on a trajectory to—I mean, he had a very unusual ability to excel in the process. And so I was about 19—I want to say it was about 1984 when I first met Lino Tagliapietra, and he came and did a demonstration at the Glass Eye factory after a session at Pilchuck where he was teaching. I think it was his first year to come to the States and teach, and so he did a whole week of glassblowing at the Glass Eye factory. And a lot of the team, a lot of the factory people came in and watched and just, you know, were amazed by what we saw and his ability. And so we studied him. Dante and I watched Lino and gleaned as much as we could off how do we do things, how do we move with the glass. Dante, as I said, you know, he really was tuned in to that. So we'd work out the techniques after Lino in a way, and then when he'd come back, you know, we'd pick up a few more things. And so those opportunities were really, really pretty special for us, and so we made the most of him.

MS. SAVIG: We did an oral history with him in 2008.

MR. SINGLETARY: With Lino?

MS. SAVIG: Yes

MR. SINGLETARY: Oh, okay.

MS. SAVIG: Right before he had his show at the Renwick, Jane Milosch interviewed him, and he talked about his first year coming out to Washington. And it was his first flight because he was afraid of flying. Washington really stuck on him, so it's interesting to hear that you were young and so influenced by him.

He also talked about his mentoring strategy. It seems like he was pretty quiet and he wanted to show by example and also to teach by trial and error. Would you say that's kind of his style?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, yeah. I mean, absolutely. I mean, he didn't have a great ability with the language, but Benjamin Moore, the guy that I had worked with for many years —you know, Benjamin had spent time in Venice at the Venini factory, and he knew Lino quite well and could speak the Venetian dialect. And since Benjamin had studied there, he was also — because I was with Benjamin, I mean, I was also benefitting because of his aesthetic and his experience with the material of glass. Benjamin was like the interpreter for us at first. So he was always around when Lino was working, especially in the very beginning.

And later on in the late, mid to late '80s when [Dale] Chihuly started to bring Lino over and doing these, you know, crazy collaborations. It just so happened since I was working with Benjamin that Chihuly wanted to conjoin the two teams, primarily because Benny was one of Chihuly's right-hand men and was a student of his, but he was the artistic director at Pilchuck for 13 years and was driving that whole angle. And so I had the good fortune of working on the Chihuly team, usually only when Lino would come to town. And so I'd also studied with him at Pilchuck, and so he came to know me pretty well. And I think for a while he kind of relied on me as like an integral part of the team. I was the guy that could bring the lip wraps and the foot wraps and do all these things, and so I helped make handles and doing different aspects. And so I really did sort of enjoy sort of a privileged attention with him, especially on the Chihuly teams. Then he might come over to Benjamin's studio and make some of his own work, and then I'd work with him there as well. And so then we got to know each other that way.

MS. SAVIG: And you got to know Benjamin Moore through Glass Eye?

MR. SINGLETARY: Oh, yeah, he did work at the Glass Eye for a few years when they were trying to do like a high line, more of a very specialized kind of design style of glass. And it was, you know, hands above the production items that were being made. But apparently, they never figured out how to market that stuff. So Benjamin's studio ended up being sort of a working studio, studio that was utilized by a short list of different artists. And we would always—they would come in, and we would assist them in making and in finishing their work, either assisting or making it for them or whatever. So I gained a lot of experience by just working with other people.

And, you know, talking about Lino's teaching style, yes, he really did sort of have—he would kind of show us the techniques, either through a demonstration or whatever. He did kind of expect us to kind of like figure it out.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, if you made a mistake, it was a good learning moment?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, it was. And he would sort of nudge different people in different ways, like, oh, you should try to make this or you should work on that. Over time, he became a lot more vocal, and he was able to communicate more directly to us what we needed to do. So we gained a lot of insight on just the subtleties of making these very elaborate kinds of things with the leaves and these coils of the Chihuly pieces and working on a large scale.

I mean, that was a really dynamic time, and it was really a lot of fun to hang around Chihuly because he's like a Hollywood director. He would just—he would be, "All right, who wants some sushi? All right. We need sushi for 30 people!" And then he'd have these big parties at the end of the blowing session, and, you know, he'd maybe take us out on a cruise or have a little cruise boat around Puget Sound, you know, just a little party to say thanks for all the work that we did for him. And so I always thought of Chihuly as just an amazingly generous person who just, you know, has provided so many opportunities for so many glass artists.

MS. SAVIG: So many artists, right. When you were talking before about how you'd play music for them, was it Chihuly and these guys that were coming down that you were playing music for?

MR. SINGLETARY: I think they might have popped once in a while. I had no clue at the time who all these artists were. There was a guy named Mark Dalton who was a resident of Lopez Island and he was also involved with Pilchuck early on. And Charlie Parriott was the guy that gave me my first glassblowing lesson when I was a night watchman. So a lot of these guys were great musicians as well. So they'd bring their horns down so that's how I got to know those guys. So I'm sure there was a lot of folks there that I don't even know who might have been there. It was hard to know at the time, but from there I was, you know, focused on playing my guitar and my eyes rolling up in my head or something [laughs].

MS. SAVIG: And then later when you started studying with Benjamin Moore, you sort of got an idea of who these people were and how they were pioneering the field?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah. You know, working at—or going to Pilchuck, the first time I went there was 1984, and so that was a couple of years after I started. And so that was an amazing opportunity. I got to go and work with Dan Dailey who's another artist whose work—I really love Dan as a person, and I love his work. And so, you know, when you go to Pilchuck, then you're exposed to kind of an international faculty. You know, you're taking one workshop, but you're also witness to all the other ones. And the student body, too, it's like the students that are there taking the workshops come from all over the world, and so you're—just by the nature of people sharing

their artwork with each other, it just flourished.

So then I started to, you know, figure out the names of all the different notable artists that were working and getting a lot of recognition. And, yeah, so I went to Pilchuck probably different successive years, either as a student, teaching assistant. In the late '80s, I was working with Dante as a gaffer. That role was actually working with the artists in residence—the artists who were invited—and typically, they were like fine artists. I mean, one of the things that the school has is this artist residence program where they try to bring people in who are not glass artists. And so by doing that, we gain a different perspective on their approach. And sometimes we're asked to do really crazy, impossible things, but we try. And then we learn from it, just the experience and the cross-fertilization.

MS. SAVIG: So another entry into collaboration for you?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: Do you remember any of the artists that were especially interesting to work with?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, one that really stands out that was really fun for me was Stanislav Libensky. He was up there as an instructor, and we were the gaffers. And so we also, alongside with the artists, were also the instructors. We would have a session with them. And I was making these, you know, sort of Venetian inspired pieces. I was in the process of making an alligator. And Libensky came up to me, and he loved these alligators. And, you know, he called them crocodiles, but they look like crocodiles or alligators. And he was like, "da, da, da, crocodile!" [laughs]. I didn't understand his Czech language. He didn't speak any English.

[Telephone rings.]

MS. SAVIG: Do you want me to pause it?

MR. SINGLETARY: I'll have to catch up with them later.

And so, you know, then there are people like Bertil Vallien. And, gosh, there was Jerry Pethick, a really great Canadian artist, was very—gosh, he was so like the Charles Bukowski of glass, you know, or sculpture. He was just like my, God, during the day he was okay, but then he started drinking. You're like "wow, watch out!" He was quite a character. But, you know, it was quite a varied experience that you have through Pilchuck.

MS. SAVIG: A really international audience. When you go to Pilchuck—I want to get this process right—you take one workshop at a time. Are they successive workshops or do you just come every few months or every year?

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, you know, it's basically a workshop that you pay for. So when you go up there, if you're a teaching assistant or you're working for the school. So it's five sessions, and there's five classes within each session teaching five different approaches to glassblowing or casting or mold making or whatever, what have you. And so, you know, you're attached to one class, and it's about three weeks long. And so it's really—the way I got up there in the early days was get a scholarship. You know, I couldn't really afford to go up there or if you got there was as a teaching assistant, you'd go up there basically and work for free, but you'd get to go up there and have the experience of being up there. Working for the school as a gaffer was also a great thing. Some people would go up there for staff, and they'd just work and empty the trash, you know, and be up there almost like the whole summer. At some point, they started breaking it up because they wanted to give the experience to more people. So really, it goes like that. It's more like you're juried in as a teaching assistant or you're juried in as a student or you pay to go as a student.

MS. SAVIG: What did your art look like at this time? Was it pretty experimental depending on the teacher?

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, I was pretty into the vessel making, you know, especially if you think of what Dante and I were doing. And working with Benjamin Moore, I mean, these guys were pretty high design, vessel oriented, classical forms, modernist kinds of forms. And so I developed my own way, my own process, but it probably looked a lot like, you know, what those guys were doing. I would make classical vessels and classical, you know, vases and bowls and things like that. I always had my eye towards what I thought was the sort of modernist movement of the decorative arts, and that's what I felt that my work was reflective of. And those were the—I mean, because I was looking at Italian glass from the '30s and '40s and really attracted to that. So I kind of tried to make them in my own way, develop my own designs, and I called those the *Prestonuzzi* series.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, I've seen those.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, inspired by Napoleone Martinuzzi who was the designer for Venini. Mostly the types of things I was doing was skill-intensive kinds of things that were creating bands of color in a more Italian approach. Those were the kinds of things I was doing at the time.

MS. SAVIG: So most students at Pilchuck were really influenced by Italian approaches in general, you think, because of all of the attention—

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, definitely, because the Venetians really held the secret to all of this, virtuosity and technique and working with canes and just doing bubbles and making very delicate things. And so they're the most versatile, hands down. When I think of the—I read somewhere, which I think really makes sense, is that glass historically was sort of the marriage of art and industry, you know. Where if you look at the Swedish approach, they figured out how to make things quickly and simply and reflected sort of the Scandinavian sensibility, and maybe they would engrave on it or do something, but it was also very functional..

I mean, what we do today in the glass world in the States is quite—I mean, it's like off the charts because it's sort of—it doesn't— some people work with it in very avant-garde ways and progressive ways, and some people still make the vessels and things, which I respect both sides. I respect the process because that's where I came from, but also I realized at some point that, you know, I wasn't going to make a name for myself making vases and bowls. And most everybody looked at my work, and they thought it looked like Dante's anyway. So I just couldn't win!

MS. SAVIG: Yeah. So when did you kind of start to branch out? Was it at Pilchuck or was it—

MR. SINGLETARY: It was at Pilchuck. I started—I went up there in 1988, and I met a man up there named David Svenson. And that was the first time I was a teaching assistant up there. I was assisting Therman Statom, and I had the first inklings to put Northwest Coast designs on glass. And so, of course, when you're up at Pilchuck, there's any number of people that might be able to help you figure out how to do a technique that you're interested in. So Keke Cribs was the first woman that, you know, I said, "Well, I want to sandblast." I said, "Well, I think I could sandblast these designs into the glass."

So I pulled out my book [*Northwest Coast Indian Art: An Analysis of Form.* Bill Holm. University of Washington Press:1965] and I was trying to figure out how to transfer the design onto the stencil and do all this stuff. And David Svenson was up there, and he asked me about my interest in Northwest Coast art. And it turned out that he had lived up in Haines, Alaska for many different summers over a period of 10 years and had learned how to carve the Tlingit style. And he was a non-Native, but he was very embraced by the community up in Haines and was adopted into the tribe and was given a name and, you know, also had amazing ability, skill in carving. And so we met up there, and he was my first mentor. He was my first guy that kind of nudged me on my path. And when I talked about my background, my family background, he was really enthralled and just said, "You know, you should do this because it could open so many doors for you."

And for me, too, it was a way of kind of breaking out, developing something that was more personal, and so that's why I endeavored to do that. But it wasn't until, you know, a few years later when it was about 1995 when I said, okay, I need to do this and place myself on this path and see what I can come up with.

MS. SAVIG: Where did you get that book and why did you—what was making you think, well, maybe I should try this out?

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, you know, I wanted to reflect on my culture. I was walking around Seattle, you know, you see totem poles out in public and all these things would—when I'd look at them, I would just have this affinity to them, and so I was going to take pictures of them and visit them. And so I thought, well, maybe this is something that I could do, you know, maybe.

But doing the illustrative design work was something that was, boy, I had to catch up really fast, you know. Not knowing what I was doing, you know, I would trace a design out of a book. It was a book by Bill Holm. He was one of the scholars of Northwest Coast art. His books are just—he's very much of an authority on the art form and history and so forth. And so I took that book, and I tried to figure out how to transfer some of those elements onto a piece of glass. You know, at that time, I tried a few other experimental things, but again, I was playing music. I was still—that was what I really wanted to do. And so I had the idea of trying a couple of other things—I didn't realize how much work it was really going to be to get into it, so I had to—like I say, it wasn't until many years later that I actually sat down and figured how to create the original designs and do what I do today.

MS. SAVIG: So when you started doing the sanding of the design, you were working with Keke Cribs?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, she gave me sort of like a little crash test and, you know, okay, here's the stencil material. You know, you clean the glass, and you apply the stencil. And then you draw your design and cut it out. It was really straightforward, but I didn't—I had no idea how to go about doing it, and so that was how I picked it up.

MS. SAVIG: So you were kind of teaching yourself about Native art? Were you taking any other classes or looking at any other resources? You were talking to people?

MR. SINGLETARY: You know, it was much later in the mid-'90s when I decided to create a body of work, and so I had a few objects. And I put a show together and showed at Vetri International Glass, which was actually an annex to the Traver Gallery here in Seattle, which was a big glass gallery. And so I had this show, and it was about 11 or 12 pieces. And, you know, lo and behold, I sold a good number of the pieces. And I think at that time people recognized that there was something a little more personal going on there and something different, unique.

I had seen a couple of artists at that time, there was Marvin Oliver who was also working with glass, and he's a scholar at the University of Washington. And he was starting to get into the glass work. And actually, Dante had blown into this mold that he had created. But it was still—I didn't meet him then. It was a few years later when we actually got together. I'd seen

Susan Point who had also done some sandblasting on glass. And, you know, I realized, oh, there you go. There's someone who's really taken it to heart and has developed it quite nicely.

So, you know, I started to reach out to other Native American artists and people like Marvin Oliver and Steve Brown and Israel Shotridge. And then I started going out to Lopez Island, and there's a fellow out there named Greg Blomberg, who was a tool maker, a Northwest Coast tool maker, again a non-Native fellow, but he made these great carving knives. And so he would host these weekends, you know, a little weekend workshop. One of the workshops was a design workshop taught by Steve Brown. There was also James Bender and Duane Pasco are two other artists that I'd taken design workshops from. And there are people that had, you know, insight into how the designs were constructed.

And so I was able to get a lot of information out of those workshops, and then just sort of, you know, doing the practicing, working artist that I was becoming, developing my own work and then shifting away from being an assistant glass blower. I kind of pushed forward and slowly weaned myself off the paycheck of working with other people, and it just kind of really incrementally grew.

MS. SAVIG: Who were you working with at the time? I've got a list of people you've assisted, and I'm just curious where you were at this time when you started weaning yourself off.

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, at that time, I was still working part-time at Benjamin Moore's studio, but I'd, you know, worked with Dante. I'd worked with Richard Royal and Dan Dailey, a lot of those people who had come through the studio, any number of people. I think it's probably by '96, '97, I was pretty much almost completely working on my own work and having shows and supporting myself on my artwork. I think that's the chronology there.

MS. SAVIG: When did you meet Tony—I don't want to—

MR. SINGLETARY: Tony Jojola?

MS. SAVIG: Okay. I thought the Js might be silent.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, yeah. Actually, Tony Jojola was another important figure who I met in 1984. It was the very first summer that I was up at Pilchuck. And actually, at that time, I met Larry Ahvakana who was another Alaskan. He's an Inupiaq from the far north, the frozen tundra area. He was at Pilchuck at that time and they were both there. And I didn't get to know Tony very well. I mean, he was there. We kind of socialized a bit, and I think—he must have been our teaching assistant, so I didn't see him making a whole lot of his own artwork at that time. And Larry, I believe—I can't remember what he was doing at the time, either. But they had both had some extensive experience working with glass through the Institute of American Indian Arts down in Santa Fe. So they had both studied down there and, you know, played around with glass a bit.

Yeah, Tony, he was always kind of nudging me along. Tony would come up actually and make his Southwest-inspired pot forms, and we would help him make his work. And yet at the time, I wasn't totally committed to doing—you know, delving into the Native designs, but that was another guy who when I saw him and I realized that, you know, you could do it if you just put your mind to it. So he was another real big inspiration for me as far as a glass worker and a Native artist.

MS. SAVIG: Did you see any art at museums or was it mostly out of books that you were looking at?

MR. SINGLETARY: The Seattle Art Museum and the Burke Museum have great resources of objects. And early on, you know, I would make a bowl, and I'd sandblast the design. And I would make a cylinder, and I'd make like a small totem pole form or the hat forms which is more of a—if you turn it upside down, it's like a bowl. So to me, that sort of was a natural glassblowing object, and I thought, well, that could be a really cool thing. And so those were the kinds of shapes that I was working with.

But, you know, if you look at Northwest Coast art, it's quite sculptural and it's quite figurative. And so that's why I

think I was so—it was such a daunting task to sort of figure out how to represent it in the glass material. And it wasn't really until I took a workshop with Pino Signoretto at Pilchuck. Even thought at the time that, you know, I would learn his process of just poking and manipulating a solid piece of glass and creating a sculpture. But what I got on to was more of a working with the bubble, a blown glass bubble, a really thick-walled section and then creating a sculpture out of that.

[Telephone rings.]

MS. SAVIG: Do you need to pause it for the phone?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah.

[Audio Break.]

MS. SAVIG: Okay. We're back on disc two.

And we were just talking about when you started working with Pino, he was teaching a workshop that was encouraging you to explore more figurative shapes of glass? So you were getting away from the vessel shapes?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, Pino Signoretto was an amazing glass sculptor. I wanted to try to work with him to figure out and do alternate approaches to blowing glass. And so he showed me that you could work with the bubble quite thick, and you could create more of a sculptural form that was still blown. So to me, that was a little easier than sort of getting in there and just poking on a solid piece of glass because I don't know how he does it. I try and I try, but I guess I resist it. So making the larger sculptural bubbles has been what has worked out for me. I can create more of a sort of a dramatic sculptural piece and I can ornament it with Northwest Coast art.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, which is what you did yesterday when it started out as a big lump and before I knew it, it was a seal.

He taught you that process?

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, he gave me some insight into the process, and I basically developed my own style, I suppose, when he showed me some of the things that I could do.

MS. SAVIG: You took off from there. When you took all of these workshops at Pilchuck, were you doing anything else with Penland [School of Crafts, Bakersville, NC] or Haystack [Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, ME]?

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, I once went to Haystack, but that was as an assistant with Benjamin Moore. And that was—gosh, when was that—the late '90s, I guess. You know, he had invited me to come teach or help teach with him, and so I figured that was my opportunity to get out there. I've since, you know, had requests to teach at all these places, but my hands are kind of tied. I don't have the ability—I don't have the time to take two or three weeks out of my schedule, away from my family and teach or go learn another process. So those schools didn't really factor in for me and kind of missed the opportunity to be the traveling—I know a lot of glass artists, they spend a lot of time going to all the different schools and workshops in the summertime, and it is quite a nice experience, I'm sure. I just missed out on it.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah. Well, I mean, if everybody is going to Pilchuck anyway, you probably didn't miss that much considering Pilchuck was a great center.

I think we've covered your education. Are there any anecdotes or just general remembrances of Pilchuck that you think are important to your life history?

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, I guess being at Pilchuck was really one of the most sort of developmental things that hit me because that's how I learned how other artists work with glass. It created kind of connections throughout the world, Japan and Sweden. Those friendships and connections have always been really very—they're real natural at Pilchuck. You know, if you follow up with people, you can have these lifelong friendships with lots of different people from all over the world. But, yeah, it is just an amazing kind of a scattershot of, you know—every session will be different. It'll never be twice the same. So it's really quite a special place, a real magical place in that regard.

MS. SAVIG: I was curious because you work so well with your team. Is that how all glass artists learn to work together? Is that what you did when you were a studio assistant?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, I think that—I like to say that, you know, Lino kind of showed us how to work as a team, and the Italians did really. That's how they worked, and so we kind of adopted that and Americanized it to some degree. What was the question again?

MS. SAVIG: How everybody learned to collaborate in such a fantastic way.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, I take it for granted so I sometimes forget even how—but really, it is about teamwork. I feel like glass has all that collective energy, you know, stored in it because all of the energy from the different people. And you can see—I mean, when the energy's not right, things go badly. And so we all really have—over time now, we've gained enough experience that we—it's kind of universally known what's needed at that moment. You know, everybody knows to get on the torch and build a little extra heat up in this area so that it doesn't fall off the pipe and so those kinds of things or just how to turn the pipe for another person so that you can back them up. And that's really the way that we learned to develop and evolve the glassmaking process for ourselves.

MS. SAVIG: That must be pretty exclusive to glass because I'm trying to think of other media that require such collaboration.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, I think it's definitely a very unique material in that regard because it does require a lot of cooperation, and I've noticed it very specifically when we got together with ceramic artists. You know, we invited this group of very established ceramic artists to Pilchuck, and they were talking about how, oh, it's nice to get out. And one guy was saying, "It's really nice to get out and hang out."

And I'm thinking, well, glassblowers are such a social bunch, you know, and even if you're a painter, I mean, you know, you don't necessarily have to get along with anybody, just you and the paintbrush.

MS. SAVIG: That's true. Do you remember the ceramic artists that came out?

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, there's Okio Takamura, is that his name? He's a local guy who's at the University of Washington who knows Charles Taft. Is that his name?

MS. SAVIG: Okay. That sounds—

MR. SINGLETARY: No, Charles Krafft.

MS. SAVIG: Charles Krafft, I'll have to look him up. I've never—

MR. SINGLETARY: Boy, oh, boy, I can't remember all their names.

MS. SAVIG: You've had so many people come through.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah. There was about 10 years ago, we did that. But it was—

MS. SAVIG: So this time when you were still just in the experimental phases of looking at Tlingit art—I can't pronounce the K like you.

MR. SINGLETARY: Tlingit, Tlingit.

MS. SAVIG: Tlingit, okay.

MR. SINGLETARY: It's almost with a K. It's commonly how people say it, Tlingit.

MS. SAVIG: Was that what were you gravitating towards? Did you just kind of look at things and like the form?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, there is—you know, the hat form was the first shape that I thought, to me, looked like almost a lampshade or something. And, yeah, there was a blown glass vessel. I guess I'll have to tell the story yet again for the records. You know, my aunt Theresa was kind of excited about the fact that I was doing the Northwest Coast art and came by to see what I was doing. At Benjamin's studio we had a Halloween open house. Benjamin in his studio where he shows has got lots of beautiful pedestals with nice gallery lights and so forth. We the assistants might have a card table over in the corner but we—so my aunt said, "Well, can we take the hat and we'll put it on the nice gallery pedestal with the nice light?"

And so it was a really deep cobalt blue piece that had the sandblasting on it, and so about 10 people had walked over to see what was going to happen as we took Benjamin's piece down, put the hat up above it. And all of a sudden, these shadows came through, and everybody was like, "Ah."

MS. SAVIG: That was the first time you noticed the shadows?

MR. SINGLETARY: And that was the first time and—

MS. SAVIG: Wow, you owe your aunt! That's great. [Laughs.]

MR. SINGLETARY: And so I sort of played it off like, well, yeah, that's what I knew would happen all along, of course. [Laughs.] So that was kind of the eureka moment. And so the things that I did in the beginning were more about trying to replicate traditional objects that—like today if you look at the spoons and you look at the headdresses and the kinds of things that I try to do, I like to go that direction, but then I also like to be more abstracted with it in sort of a non-traditional way.

And so that's — I have a lot of thoughts about how glass and Northwest Coast art or Native American art or taking it even broader and say indigenous art, contemporary indigenous art,,how it relates to the modern art world. You know, there's a much bigger world out there, and I'm involved with the Indian Market show down in Santa Fe each summer. And yet that's like one of the biggest Native American art markets in the world, and I think that there is the good and the bad and the ugly there. You've got quite a variety of very progressive kinds of things, and yet I think a lot of artists can enjoy a certain amount of success without even trying, that there's a sense of entitlement to it, that they're making their—you know, and there's a place for everything, obviously, but if people are doing very simple silver jewelry with turquoise bracelets and that type of thing or you have like people who are very forward thinking. I'm always thinking because I came from the glass and sculpture perspective, like, how does this fit into the bigger art world.

And so I started to—since I didn't go to school for art, I started to read books that interested me. I just picked up a book on surrealists, like, what was this all about. And they talked about their high regard for Northwest Coast art, indigenous art, from around the world. And so I thought, wow, that's pretty fascinating, and that was one of the first ideas that I had about doing anything with Native art influenced with glass and so which led me to the primitivism movement which also, you know, kind of—it was modern artists referencing primitive art, so-called primitive art, and making, you know—it's well known Picasso's love of African masks and painting and deconstructing—

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, right—

MR. SINGLETARY: —you know, sort of the schooled Western art mentality and to sort of unlearn the process. For me and I was—and I'm not the only one who's done that. There's other Native artists who have gone before me and have played with theme. And so for me, with my medium, I like to kind of go in that direction as well and create these spare organic forms that have Northwest Coast designs on them.

MS. SAVIG: I'm curious about this because, you know, when I think of Picasso or other artists that were looking towards so-called primitivism, I think of it kind of as an appropriation of form. And I'm wondering if you're trying to reclaim any of that or if you have a political agenda?

MR. SINGLETARY: I like to say that I do, I mean, just to kind of stir the pot a little bit. In some cases, I like working with—I love the simplicity of [Isamu] Noguchi and sort of [Alexander] Calder and sort of modernist kind of amorphous forms that just have a very beautiful sense of flow to them. And then in some cases, I've tried to do like my own version of that. So it is kind of a—I don't know what to call it, reverse primitivism. What would be an appropriate terminology for something like that? I mean, as people say, there's nothing new under the sun. And I also feel like what I do is also—I mean, there are people who did it before me, and I like to think of my work as sort of an evolutionary material, that this can—maybe it will provide some inspiration for the next generation to do something in their own way and sort of present the culture, play with the symbolism and the iconography and maybe do something new with it in their own way.

And, yeah, so I try to honor the past, the culture that I am connected to and also make something new of it. I think it works. I think it's kind of—Joe David told me at one point when we had an exhibition called "Fusing Traditions" and it was a survey of Native American glass artists. Some of them were actual makers. Some of them were just designers, but we collected everybody that we could. There were about, I don't know, 16 or 17 artists. And Joe at that time said, "Well, the materials that we use for our traditional art and craft is becoming increasing rare."

Especially on the Northwest Coast, you know, for instance, the cedar trees are becoming really hard to come by. So you will see artists that are starting to work with new materials. It could be concrete. It could be steel. It could be glass. It could be anything, but to keep the stories and the symbolism alive and moving into the future. So I think that we as Native people can be—I sort of hope that my work can be appreciated in other ways, you know, not associated with ethnic art, but at the same time, it's what gives it its power because it has that connection. And there's a great Maori proverb that says, you know, "The work I do is not my own but those of many."

It's just talking about the ancestral relationship and the people that—the ancients that came before us that handed down the knowledge of the culture.

MS. SAVIG: So would you consider your art part of an international tradition rather than just American or just Native?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, I think so. I—it's only because I've interacted with other indigenous cultures. We get together and have these indigenous artist gatherings both in New Zealand and Hawaii. And when I get together with them, then you see it. You see how other people interpret their culture, you know, for today's world. And so it's kind of an exciting thing because there are a lot of commonalities and there are a lot of similar stories that you could cite, the experience of Native people from around the world.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, I think that's a really interesting way of looking at it. So I think this pretty leads us up to—I want to talk more about your major exhibitions that started in 1990s, but maybe we should wait so I'll pause it for now.

MR. SINGLETARY: Okay.

[Audio Break.]

MS. SAVIG: So we're back after a short break. We're going to get into more of the '90s after we've talked extensively about Pilchuck and development in the '80s. In the '90s, it seems you really started having solo exhibitions. Can you describe or do you remember which one seemed to be a turning point for you where you were really making it on your own?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah. Up until that point, I'd been having a lot of group shows and things like that. I think there was one exhibition that was called "Head, Heart and Hands," and it originated in Louisville, Kentucky. I want to say it might have been one of the first—well, not first but a pretty big contemporary Native American art show. And I got a couple of pieces into that exhibition which was really—you know, it got a lot of press and did really well. It was quite a small venue to start off, but it ended up getting a lot of press and was written up in *The Wall Street Journal* and things like that. So it was a good one, and it traveled around a little bit. I think it went to the Museum of Art and Design or—I'm getting them all mixed up. I'd probably have to reference a bio.

MS. SAVIG: Well, the book [*Preston Singletary: Echoes, Fire, and Shadows.* Melissa G. Post. University of Washington Press: 2009] that just came out has a pretty good chronology.

MR. SINGLETARY: But so I think that was one of the first, you know, kind of big ones. We got some press, and I got mentioned. And that was quite good.

MS. SAVIG: That opened a door for more exhibitions?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, I mean, I was always having gallery shows around the country and those kinds of shows, more commercial venues. Those went over pretty well and pretty consistently, but then, let's see, there was another. I'm trying to think of any other ones that were really of note because, gosh, it's all sort of running together.

MS. SAVIG: "Head, Heart and Hands" was in '98.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, '98, so there was a couple of the big—that was one of the bigger ones that—it seemed like some sort of humble beginnings, but it got all the notoriety which was really nice. You know, there was the "Millennium Glass" here. It was a nice publication that ended up being another one that was really a broad variety of different artists, international kind of focus and I just had a couple of pieces in that. You know, if we go down the list here, "Traditions in Glass" was a little exhibition that I put together with my friend David Svenson who at that time, we decided that—well, I actually went up to Haines, I think, in '99 for the very first time. And he was working on a project up there with his carving friends, and we ended up—he was working on a medium-sized totem pole. And I went up to visit, and we talked about, well, we should put a little show together showing some of my work and some of his work as well as we decided to work on a few of the local Native artists who made castings of some of their carvings. And that was kind of the—it was a little show, an excuse for me to go up there and interact with them, which was really, really nice. The Shelton Museum is quite small. Haines is a really small, little region. It's a very small town, but I got to know a lot of the carvers up there.

And at that time, we—sort of a little segue way because chronologically, on the return from that exhibition in the spring of 2000, David and I cooked the idea—David actually suggested the idea that we make a totem pole for the Pilchuck Glass School, and that was when we first had the idea to do that. I got really excited about it because David had incorporated a little glass casting with some neon behind it for a previous project, and I got really excited about it. One night, I remember not being able to sleep so I just though why fight it, and I got up. And I sat down at the computer, and I started drafting up this idea of the totem pole, that we should honor the founders of the Pilchuck School with a totem pole. I mean, and for various reasons because Dale Chihuly was big into Northwest Coast art or Native American art in general, John Hauberg was a passionate Northwest Coast Native art collection, Annie Hauberg was the third founder, listed as the third founder. And John, of course, was also the heir to Weyerhaeuser, had donated the land which Pilchuck is situated.

And so I kind of spelled it all out and made a proposal to the board which the school was in transition at that very moment because the director was actually—who had been there for about 10 years was leaving, and they were in the midst of looking for a new executive director. And we were at this big community meeting. Everybody was talking about, well, the trouble with Pilchuck and we were rehashing old stories of people being very frustrated with the institution. And finally I said—you know, my little idea was like at the very end of the agenda. So after all this sort of harping on the whole situation, they said, "Well, what about Preston's idea here?"

And I said, "Well, I talked about it with my friend Dave and we should make a totem pole for the school." And I listed out the various reasons, and everybody was—it's just like a breath of fresh air came through the room, and everybody was like, wow, that would be really terrific, what a great idea. And I was—

MS. SAVIG: You should have brought that up at the beginning of the meeting. [Laughs.]

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, we should have started off with that, you know, almost like a healing pole. It would have been sort of heal the—bring the community together around a project. And so it was really a cool thing, and the board wanted to recognize John Hauberg within his lifetime. He was getting older and so they—anyway, they quickly approved the project. We moved forward with it. There's more to this story, but I'll get back to the exhibitions here we talked about.

MS. SAVIG: No, if you want to finish telling it, you can. You're in that moment.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, so, I mean, so there's a lot of—

MS. SAVIG: When was this? Sorry. This was about 2000?

MR. SINGLETARY: So this is 2000, in the spring of 2000. So by late 2000 and towards the winter, we got the approval to make the project and got the funding and everything. And we ended up—so they worked on the totem pole, the form, up in Haines, Alaska at Alaskan Indian Arts over the winter and into the spring, actually, all the way up to the summer. And when they drove it down from Haines and—so we cooked up the idea of teaching a class that would be aiding the completion of the totem pole. So the idea is that we'd invite the totem pole carvers from Alaska. They would be the artists in residence, and so they would take up that component. And at the same time, they'd be — so we would give them the opportunity to play around with glass and play with their ideas while in their off hours, they'd be working on the totem pole. And the class was going to be taught by me and David Svenson, and we would teach them about casting. What we were going to do is cast these on so it would be inlaid into the pole, and we had six Native American students out of 10. Two of them had never even touched hot glass before. A few of the other Native Americans had sort of come up through the university systems and were starting to connect the material with their culture. And so it was exciting to have that.

John Hauberg had repatriated the ceremonial dagger to a clan up in Alaska and was adopted and given a name so that was another reason that we saw it very clear that this would be something that would be almost sanctioned by the elders. And so we went back to the family that had adopted him and we asked permission to carve a replica or a version of that killer whale dagger. And so we enlisted the help of other artists and scholars who had been connected to John Hauberg's life and asked them to carve patterns that would be utilized for the totem pole that we would inlay the glass castings into. And so it was really—I mean, it was such a broad, far-reaching project, and when we brought it to the campus everybody just gravitated towards it. And it was really just an amazing, amazing dynamic experience. And for me, it was really—you would say it was a rite of passage for me because it was something —the year before in 2000 was when Joe David adopted me and shared his name with me. And then the next year, we're doing this totem pole project at the campus, and it was just, like, amazing.

MS. SAVIG: A full circle?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, yeah, just a one, two punch. Then we invited some of the elders from the neighboring village up in Haines from Klukwan to come down and also help with the installation ceremony. And I remember very distinctly one time when they had come down for a couple of days prior to the installation day, Charles Jimmy and Verna Erickson [phonetic spellings], these two elders, who really connected and elders within the culture, they were singing some songs in the courtyard, just kind of sharing some of their traditional songs. And after dinner and it was a beautiful summer evening, late August, and it just—boom, it just hit me like this feeling of déjà vu. It was just—you know, I haven't—you know when that hits you, it's undeniable. It was a long time since I'd had that feeling before, and I haven't had it since. So really, it was kind of like that vision, that thing that just came to me, and I realized that I'd been here before. So I like to think of it as a genetic memory. It was just opening up like that.

And so, yeah, the whole process was really—in the end when we did the installation, we invited people from Seattle and had a sort of a little mini potlatch and we gave gifts away, and so it was really, really amazing. And also, I want to remind you, too, that was just days before September 11th It was late August and then we went

back home and we're on this unbelievable high. And everybody was just—it's like all the planets were aligned, everything was just amazing. And, you know, they created a documentary program about it. So there was a lot of focus on it.

MS. SAVIG: What's the documentary called?

MR. SINGLETARY: It's called "The Pilchuck Founders Totem." It's produced by—well, the school produced it. It took us nearly 10 years to get it finished. You know, we didn't have the funding, especially at the time, a lot of the funding resources kind of dried up. So we couldn't get it done until we picked it up a few years later.

MS. SAVIG: What was it like having all of these elders come down from Alaska to look at forms that were very familiar to them but in glass? How did you sense their reaction was?

MR. SINGLETARY: Oh, they were really—I mean, they were just blown away. They were really—they knew David from his time he was spending up there, and they knew what the possibilities were. And I think that they really embraced it and kind of sanctioned it. In fact, prior to even going and doing the project, you know, David went and talked to the elders about the idea, and he basically got their blessing. I mean, he felt that was an important step before endeavoring to do it because we tried to follow the protocols of asking permission to make the copy of the dagger. And we invited the local tribal community, the Snohomish people whose ancestral lands Pilchuck is on, to come up and welcome the pole when we drove it up. When we drove it up, we wanted them to be sort of like a welcoming committee. You know, we asked them to be a big part of the ceremony, and it was really, really nice. And a lot of that stuff was captured in the video, too, so it was pretty cool.

MS. SAVIG: That's great. I'm going to have to watch that.

So at this point, you're pretty much a peer of David. Did you still consider him a mentor or are you seeing him as a collaborator?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, he's always sort of a mentor, and I like to think of him as an elder, you know, or an uncle in the Native sense because what he's given to me is sort of immeasurable in terms of his support and encouragement and also, his insight into the culture. He comes from a non-Native perspective, and he has a little bit of that trepidation about, you know, being non-Native interacting with Native art. And yet through me, I feel like he can kind of continue to work with it. In fact, some newer projects I've utilized him as well, and I think that he enjoys that because at least it gives him a little bit of continued interaction with it because he definitely has the ability and the knowledge. And his way of sculpting and everything is phenomenal so, yeah.

MS. SAVIG: Let's go back into the '90s a little bit, was this when you established your own studio?

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, yeah.

MS. SAVIG: Did you continue work at Benjamin Moore?

MR. SINGLETARY: I did. Always you have the current—the studio I'm currently in is—I've been here for two years, and then I had another location up in the old Wallingford building where my—you know, Dante and Paul Marioni still have studios there. So I was in that building as well which was kind of nice to be around them for a while, but it was a small studio. I worked out of my home for a lot of the time from about '90 . The first house we—my wife and I bought was probably '98 or '97. And we lived there for two years before we got pregnant. My son was born in 2000. So it was probably late '90s, I'm definitely a lot more independent and supporting myself from my work, of course, being supported by my wife who had a real job, so.

MS. SAVIG: And you met her while traveling?

MR. SINGLETARY: I did, yeah. We met in Scandinavia, in Sweden in '93.

MS. SAVIG: Okay. And she was also an artist?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, when I met her, she was working for a designer in a glass factory in Sweden, and we were there to do a workshop. And we were assisting Lino. Actually, Dante and I were both there to assist Lino, and we were actually invited to Finland, and they sort of piggy-backed the first stop in Sweden. And we went into the factory. We were there and the Swedes were pretty convinced we wouldn't be able to blow the lead crystal that they have, you know, the Swedish crystal because it was really too soft. And then, of course, Lino being an experienced maestro was fully able to blow the Swedish crystal. So we were there for a very short time. We were there for three days or four days, and then when I met Åsa, my wife, you know, so that was quite an involved story, too. I don't know whether you want to handle that part of it but—

MS. SAVIG: You can tell it. Is this a good time for you?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, I could—kind of jumping around a bit. So, you know, we were invited by Ann Walstrom and Larry Jasse. Ann Walstrom was a designer at the Kosta Boda factory, and she had also been to Pilchuck in the early years and was a student of Dale Chihuly's. And Larry Jasse, too, was an American who they had met at Pilchuck, and they got the call to go back to Sweden and work in the factory and be designer—Ann did. And so she ended up going back there, and Larry is American, from New York. He ends up back there, too. And so they're always advocating. They knew Lino quite well, and they wanted to — they heard we were coming through, and so they arranged for us to stop through.

And so, yeah, it was like June 10th, 1993 about 5:00 in the afternoon. I walked down the stairs, you know, after a long trip, and we're having a big formal dinner. And I met Åsa as we—you know, I'm shaking her hand as we walk by, and she's like, "Hello, I am Åsa."

You know, and she puts her hand out, firm handshake, and I'm like, wow, she's kind of cute. So we're having a traditional Scandinavian welcome dinner, and they're singing songs. And we're pouring all these really—aquavit, you know, schnapps and all this stuff. We were just like wow. Okay. So they sing a song, and we're like "Skol!" And we pop this shot, and we're like, "oh, gosh!" They're really strong, and by the end of the night, we're kind of a little tipsy. And we've got the Scandinavian experience.

MS. SAVIG: Right. [Laughs.]

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah. So I was sort of chatting her up and just sort of boldfaced, you know, just asked her if she was invited to the dinner the next day. You know, I thought, well, maybe she's going to follow us around. And she says, "No, I'm not invited. I won't be at Jan Erik Ritzman's studio for his dinner party tomorrow."

I said, "Well, do you want to go?"

"Well, no, I'm not invited."

So, you know, I'm saying to myself, well, I want to get to know her. And so I talked to Ann and Larry the next day, and I said, "You know, is Åsa invited to the dinner?" I said, "I kind of invited her."

And she said, "Oh, well, we'll make it work. We can work that out, no problem."

Not realizing that it was not a very Swedish thing to do, I mean, that's very—you know, it's like who's this guy coming around and, you know, inviting somebody additionally to dinner. So it was kind of funny because we were deciding we would stop by Bertil and Ulrika Vallien's house and, you know, have a little drink before we went off to dinner at Jan Erik Ritzman's house. So I was really nervous because I thought, oh, we're going to be leaving early. I'm going to miss my dinner date, so I went and I found her as she was driving off to go swimming. And I said, "Oh, by the way, we're going to Jan Erik's house—or to Bertil and Ulrika's house before we go to Jan Erik's. So if you want to go, you should go, you have to go now."

And so she thought about it for about, you know, five seconds. She said, "Okay. Give me five minutes and I'll go with you."

And so that's when we started to get to know each other, and that was kind of the—that's what we had, you know, sort of got to know each other over about three days. And then when we were leaving for two weeks to go to Finland and teach workshops in a couple of different locations in Finland. So we left and we parted ways and, you know, we thought we'd keep in touch. And so I ended up getting—we got an opportunity to go back to Stockholm, and this was midsummer weekend, so this was a really big celebration weekend, big party weekend. We didn't know anything about it, but we said, well, sure, we'll stay for midsummer, and we'll do a glassblowing demonstration at the art college in Stockholm. And my motivation was to get back and visit with Åsa, so I changed my ticket and Dante's ticket to return a little bit later, and I booked myself an extra week in Stockholm. And then—

MS. SAVIG: Did Dante know what you were doing? Was he on to you?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, you know, Dante realized that, you know, I was sort of attracted to her, and so he agreed to—he was like all right, okay, I'll tag along with you because he was really the — he was the big draw. It wasn't me. They wanted to see him blow glass because he was such an accomplished glassblower, and it was like come on, make me look good here. So we ended up going back and celebrating midsummer which was just amazing and a lot of fun and, you know, experiencing that custom that they have. And then we did our glassblowing demo for a day, and Dante went home. And I stayed for an extra week, and this is the funny part of the story because Åsa told me, "Don't" —you know, I'd made this money when I was working with Lino. And so she said, "Don't carry your money with you" because the pickpockets in Stockholm.

I was like, oh, well, whatever. So I took my money, and I put it in a vase inside her apartment. And then by the

end of the week, you know, I'd forgotten about it, and so we were at the airport and we were sort of, you know, saying our goodbyes. And I'm thinking, oh, my God, I left all my money in your apartment, and I was thinking— and she said, "Well, don't worry. I'll send it to you."

I was thinking okay, that sounds good. Send it to me. And so when I came back home, it turns out I had some checks in the mail and I wasn't really in need of the cash as much as I thought I did. A couple days later, the money shows up in FedEx. And so I called her up, and I said, "Oh, yeah, I'm sorry. You know, I wasn't in need as I thought I was, and it's too bad I didn't leave it for you to buy a ticket and come visit me."

And she said, "Oh, yes, well, too bad."

And I said, "Well, would you come visit me?"

And she goes, "Well, I can't afford it."

I said, "Oh, I'll buy you a ticket. Come on, you know."

And like, you know, a big spender that I am, you know, [laughs] and so she thought about it for a second and said, "Okay. I'll come."

And so she—so this is in June, July, and then so she ended up coming in August and at a time when my studio was shutting down at Benjamin Moore's. When Benny shuts down, we're unemployed for about a month. And so she came during that month, and she stayed with me for a month. And then that's when we really got to know each other in the summer of 1993. And so at that point we just had fallen in love, and we were just—I was at the time, I was kind of a collector of collectibles and things and records and books, you know, just things that— it was all completely meaningless to me and worth nothing. It was just stuff, you know, and so I decided I'm going to sell that all and save up some money and maybe try to live in Sweden for some time. So I went and sold all of this stuff, you know, at flea markets, and I accrued all this money.

And I called her up and said I was going to come visit her in October or so..From June to October, that I'm flying there to research the possibility of living there. And then she—so that's October, and by December, I had packed everything up and moved to Sweden. And I lived there for six months. And while I was there I had watched her kind of finish up her last year of design school, and she was into advertising and graphic design and everything. And we worked on projects together. I helped her with some of her graduate show, basically, made these plates. And she did some sandblasting designs on them from all the different typefaces. So it was a really neat sort of a project, you know, that she was a big type freak, as she calls it, all the fonts and so forth. You know, put in graphic patterns, you know, and then sandblasted into the plates, and so that was basically what I did.

I also worked at the Konstfack, the art university and helped the graduate students make their work. They teach a lot about design, and it's not necessarily about the making of the things. So for a guy like me, it was a great opportunity. The woman, Paula Bartron, who was the instructor at the Konstfack, and she was really excited that I was going to be living in Sweden for six months because I could blow and do demonstrations and all of that. So it was perfect for me, you know. I got to do a little bit of work, but basically after 11, 12 years of just working full-time, this was sort of like a sabbatical for me. I was able to—and also in a way, it was kind of an insight to design, and it was an insight to the college that I never attended and watching all the students kind of prepare their projects and the hoops they had to jump through to get it done. It was really—it was kind of a learning experience for me, and also picking up the language and I was going to language courses and things like that.

MS. SAVIG: Oh, really? You tried to learn Swedish?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, yeah. So I did. I went to a couple of different courses and befriended some other foreigners who were living there. We couldn't speak each other's respective languages, so we'd go out for beers after the language class, and we'd try to, you know, carry on a conversation in Swedish. It was really fun.

So then on our year anniversary of having met, I proposed to her, and then we decided to get married. And at that time, she decided that well—and I think I would have happily tried to live in Sweden if I could, but being a glassblower in Sweden is a whole other experience. You know, I probably couldn't have really excelled or succeeded in the way that I could here with all my contacts and all my connections and friends and everything. So Åsa just basically boldfaced it and said, "Look, I'm just starting my career. I can work in the States or whatever."

And so she did. So she moved here by the 17th of March, and it was like — make that '95 and then we got married on April 9th, 1995.

MS. SAVIG: How do you think living in Sweden for that long informed your work at all with the Scandinavian modern look?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, you know, there was a lot of kind of things that occurred to me while I was there. I mean, just the whole—you know, just training in your thought process and making it a selection of—since I didn't go to art school I was never challenged in that way. So watching Åsa's class and her making all of these objects or concepts that they were putting together kind of gave me a little bit of an insight into that, and also, I did try to design a series of pieces which I feel are inspired by Scandinavian design. And they're the *Genies*, the series that I made which kind of reflect kind of a Scandinavian sensibility. And it's like, oh, kind of sort of inspired by maybe old ceramics, you know, '50s and '60s ceramic bottles. And they're kind of a suite of pieces with different—but they're also very Italian in their execution, so there were things that I developed or thought about while I was there. So it did inform my aesthetic style in those ways.

You know, and then I was also dabbling, still dabbling in the Native designs which I produced my first original design which is in the "Echoes, Fire and Shadows" show. I made it for my aunt, you know, who was trying to support me. And yet when I look at it, it's quite awkward. It was before I really had taken the steps to kind of inform myself how to do the design work in a traditional way.

MS. SAVIG: Right. So then you went to Scandinavia. You also traveled a little bit to Italy and elsewhere?

MR. SINGLETARY: Not at that time. You know, I was in Scandinavia pretty much in Sweden, Stockholm specifically. After three months, I took a little trip to Spain, visited a friend, but that was pretty much like a vacation from my vacation.

MS. SAVIG: So when you came home, that's when you really immersed yourself with Native scholars and the art?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: And you mentioned that in one of our prior sessions earlier this morning about working with Marvin Oliver and Steven Clay Brown and some of the workshops you took with Greg Blomberg, Duane Pasco. When you were taking these workshops, you were learning to do that from wood? You were just watching them carve wood.

MR. SINGLETARY: No. It was actually more of a just 2-D designing on paper.

MS. SAVIG: Oh, okay.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, because, you know, generally, if you design in 2-D, it kind of informs how you approach the 3-D as well. So it was basically worked on paper, designing, you know, box designs and figuring out all of the kinds of ways of design. Bill Holm likes to refer to it as sort of a figurative configurative design which looks like an animal and a distributive design which kind of abstracts it and spreads it across the entire design area. So, a box, for instance, that's the perfect example of a distributive design. It fills up the entire rectangle and the design work fits in there just kind of methodically and sort of like the golden ratio. I was learning basically how the lines are—you know, the thickness of the lines and how there are these simple rules that kind of govern the architecture of the design.

And so those are the kinds of things that I was learning, you know, gaining insight to the proportions, like how far does the jaw line go back, above and into, in relation the to the eye and those kinds of things, you know, figuring out the right kinds of proportions which actually make it Northwest Coast art. You know, once you understand that process of designing, you can make infinite varieties of designs. You can make—it's unlimited, really. But there are some conventional rules that make it look like Northwest Coast art. So you can definitely see when your eye is trained to it, you know a good design versus a mediocre design. So those were the kinds of things I was learning about.

MS. SAVIG: Were you exhibiting the new work that you were working on pretty frequently?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, all throughout the—I can't remember. It was probably—you know, the very first Vetri shows in '89. Oh, no, that's not it. Well, anyways, what I remember was that it was late. It was about '98, I believe, that I started to receive recognition through the various magazines and things. It all happened really quickly. You know, in fact, I would venture to say prematurely. Compared to my skill level as a designer and the glass I could handle, but as far as applying the designs, it was a whole other—

MS. SAVIG: Trial and error?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah. I mean, I was, like, really reinventing myself. And I had, you know, kind of a handle on how to do a pretty decent design, but it wasn't until I got the instruction that I could—I really started it let it flourish. And then up till about 2000, Joe David, of course, was a real heavy influence on me in his sense of form and technique and style. It's almost like you could look pre-2000 and see the work post-2000 and really, it just evolved really, really fast.

MS. SAVIG: It seemed like after 2000, you went from being pretty well known all of a sudden, you had some major commissions from the American Indian Museum and the Seattle Art Museum. Could you talk about those and ones that were especially—you got the phone call and were excited?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, there was the exhibition called the "Visions in Glass." No, I'm thinking of the "Fusing Traditions." "Fusing Traditions" was an exhibition that I kind of helped co-curate to some degree with Caroline Kastner and Roslyn Tunis. I mean, I had been sort of running around and meeting different museum people and kind of touting like, oh, well, you know, this would be a really cool perspective. You know, you got Tony Jojola, you got these Native Americans that are now working with glass. It would be really kind of a unique perspective. What do you think? But I was just an artist and without the administrative skills.

And so I met Ros Tunis. She kind of tracked me down, and I proposed the idea, like maybe she could work on the exhibition and carry it and then she'd be like an accredited curator and maybe that would be just the ticket. Well, so she teamed up with Carolyn Kastner, and they put this nice show together. And that also was quite—I think it toured to like seven different museums, and they're rather small ones. But they ended up going to Alaska as well as a number of different venues, all of which I can't remember at the moment.

So again, that was the exposure thing, and so a lot of magazines are sort of picking up on my work and, you know, *Southwest Art* and *Native Peoples* magazines. And so everybody's wanting to write articles about it because it's such a new thing, and so I was the good benefit of all of that, being discovered over the process of four or five years or something. And so, yeah, that was definitely one touchstone.

There was that "Fusing Traditions," but then I was also asked by Barbara Brotherton at the Seattle Art Museum to have a small show there. And they wanted to also honor John Hauberg with a piece, you know, in his name, and that was called"Keet Shagoon" which is the killer whale. So I made a killer whale screen which is on display at the Seattle Art Museum, and it was to accompany a show. I think I had about, you know, 12 pieces or 14 pieces or something like that, including the big wall piece which was made up of multi-panels of fused glass with a layer of black color which I sanded. Id istributed the mural across all the panels and then, you know, sandblasted the designs into them, sort of butting them next to each other. And then, you know, it reads like one big screen.

So that was, my first major solo art exhibit in a museum. And so that was quite a great thing, too, to work with that because I think at that time, I was a little cavalier about it. I said, "Oh, yeah, sure, I'll have a show. You know, it'll be fine. I'll put some pieces together." [Laughs.] And then realizing, okay, here's the cutoff date for curating the show, like which pieces are going to be included. And then I got more and more progressively nervous about the whole thing. But Barbara really believed in what I was doing, and it was also kind of in support of a local glass arts society conference that was happening in Seattle.

So it was kind of a good shoe-in there for the—something for the partnership with the Seattle Art Museum and the Glass Arts Society, so it was two-sided. And that exhibition was called "Threshold." That was a term that one of my uncles, my uncle Larry, who my middle name is actually his namesake. So they didn't have children at the time, and when I was born, my mother gave me the middle name Lawrence after my uncle. And he used to like to comment on my work, and he wasn't from the Native perspective. He was part Jewish. Anyway, he grew up in New York, and so he liked to comment on my work. And I was very close to him and my aunt Theresa, both of them, Larry Sherman and Theresa Sherman. And so he used to like to look at my work and was really excited about it, asking me, prompting me with different ideas. He also said that he felt as though I was within this threshold between the ancients and the modern society. And so that's where I got that title. I kind of honored him with that. It was his taking an interest in my work and what I was doing.

There was the "Changing Hands" exhibition, too, was another big show organized by the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City, and that was a really great overview of contemporary Native art going by region. So this was sort of like the Northwest Coast and West Coast, Hawaii and the Northwest Alaskan. And so that was quite a good exhibition, too, that got a lot of exposure.

Of course, there's the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. And I was approached by Emil Her Many Horses to make a piece for the opening, you know, inauguration opening of the museum. And he said, "Well, we're getting pretty far along, you know, and we've got—we're kind of designing your piece into this exhibition and the announcement and the invitation card and everything." He said, "We thought we'd better ask you if you'd be willing to make the piece for us."

I said, "Well, you know, it would be my honor to be included, obviously."

He says, "Well, we've got this Raven piece that you do, and it kind of fits in with the "Our Universes" section where we're going to examine different tribal creation stories by region or by tribe and it will change over time. But your piece is going to be like right at the beginning." And he said, "We'd like to have you do it, but we want to have it 3 feet long."

And I was like oh, that's next to impossible. And I said, "I don't know if I can make it that big. I'll try."

So proportion-wise, when you get that much glass on the end of the blowpipe, I mean, 24 plus is a good length, but it's really hard to make things much bigger than that of any size. And so I got together with Richard Royal and asked him to—because I knew that Richard was —I mean, I'd worked with him for so many years and he was a good friend. And I asked him for his help to make this big piece. And we tried it in the way that I normally do, like making this big cut down two sides and then pulling it out and making this thing. And it was just impossible. So I figured out a way of doing it with Richie. We figured out a way to make it more solid, and then I would sandblast away the entire jawline and create the beak to create the design.

And so we did it, and I thought okay, well, I've got one out for the day. It was all I was able to get. So I sandblasted it. We made it work out, and I think that's probably the only time I ever did a commission where it was one for one. It was the piece that we made, the only piece we made ended up being the one that went into the exhibition. And so that was really very cool because they specifically wanted to light the ball with fiber optics so when they came to me with that idea, and so I ended up creating it so that they could put a fiber optic line the bottom edge of the jaw and into the web ball. And that would illuminate the ball very brightly, and so it's got quite a dramatic presentation.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, it's a beautiful piece. How do you see your works when they're in different settings? Because the museums you show at can be very different: one is just about glass or one is the Museum of the American Indian. Does it change how you see them when they're in different contexts?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, I think they definitely look—I mean, glass relies very heavily on light. You know, so the lighting—I don't think that the museum or that the pieces have looked as good as they do right now at the Heye Foundation in New York City because in New York, they've got great access to very talented people who are very —

MS. SAVIG: An entire exhibit design team.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, very specialized in the way that they. There are a few things that were omitted which unfortunately, we couldn't do all the things that we wanted to do. There's a few pieces which were more contemporary which they just couldn't figure out how to place them. I was disappointed, and I said, "Well, if we can't make them the way I want them to be seen, then just don't even show them at all," thinking that they would try to figure out another way, but they didn't.

But the way that the pieces are lit in that particular venue, I think they look very good and almost better than at the Museum of Glass because Museum of Glass actually had a really, really spectacular installation. It was quite —it had lots of extra kinds of things to surprise and delight with the big hole in the wall where you could view pieces through these little openings and big giant mural of a welcome figure that I painted in the entrance of the exhibition. And also, the place in the back where I have the clan house exhibition with the wall screen, the newly made wall screen. I made a wall screen, did that at the Seattle Art Museum, had a hole in the wall and a video I had produced was viewable through that hole, so it was kind of a neat—

MS. SAVIG: Oh, cool.

MR. SINGLETARY: —it was a really neat kind of installation which we haven't been able to reproduce in any of the other venues. Of course, the same show at the Heard Museum, well, the Heard Museum is just a very classic Southwest kind of place. And, you know, there's the brick floors and the adobe walls, and the lack of lighting. It didn't—it was nice to have it there because it's a very respected, well-known museum. I mean, it's prestigious to have been there and to have a show there, but, yeah, I think that art museums—

[Telephone rings.]

MR. SINGLETARY: I bet you anything that's my wife. Do you want to pause for one second?

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, sure, I'll pause it.

[Audio Break.]

MS. SAVIG: Okay. This is Mary and Preston, and we are on disc three.

We were just talking about Preston's current exhibition at the National Museum of the American Indian and talking about how the setting changes how the glass looks. Did the labels change? I mean, if you're at a glass museum, do the curators talk more about the glass and maybe less about what the American Indian museum would talk about?

MR. SINGLETARY: I think the way that the exhibition is laid out, it kind of encompasses a lot of things. Like, the

Museum of Glass was really adamant about—I mean, they could sense my adhering to protocol and wanting to—they thought it would be really neat to actually title everything in Tlingit, and so they actually took the initiative there. And they wanted to have as much cultural programming as they could and especially for children programs and little workshops, some of the local Native artists could come in and talk about the culture and so forth. And so they tried the best that they could.

You know, one of the things that for the opening weekend was actually kind of hard, it's just that the world we live in now, they made some announcement that they were going to open the museum and make it free to Native Americans. And somebody called up and said, "You can't do that. That's racism. You're discriminating against non-Indian people."

And so I think really what they were trying to make it available to people who maybe come from a lower income bracket who couldn't really maybe afford, wouldn't normally go to the Museum of Glass anyways. So it was a classic collateral damage style, they made the weekend free for everybody. So they didn't want to offend anybody. And so it was one of those things.

That's how it goes especially—and so to talk a little bit about what I feel this show is about for me is it's kind of like telling my—it's always been how did you get here, how did you become a glassblower? Why glass? Well, you know, so when I tell the story, I think I feel that this is a document that really kind of just lays it all out: I met Dante, I got a job in a factory. I always have a tendency when I make a presentation, I tend to lay it out that way, too. The thing is what I've realized now is that I think that the next phase of my career is going to be what do I do with all of that. How can I expand on what I've already done and not have to explain where did I come from. It's one of those things that every magazine article wants to know, how did you get started. And I tell the same story over and over and over.

I'm also getting coached by my elders, and they'll say, well, okay, I'll grant you an interview, but as long as we can talk about the things that I'm concerned with. I want to talk about what I want to talk about instead of the whole—I see this is as something different, but for a magazine article, I mean, that story has already been told.

MS. SAVIG: They can start footnoting this interview in the future. [Laughs.]

MR. SINGLETARY: Right, exactly, exactly. All the information is laid out, and that can be great reference material.

So, yeah, I think if I can sort of direct the way in which I talk about my work, and that will also kind of free me up to kind of think about other things and move in different ways and try different techniques or processes of working. So, I mean, in particular what that is at this moment, the way I'm thinking about it is the whole connection with the storytelling, and this elder that I'm partnering with to some degree is Walter Porter who likes to read into the mythologies and compare them to the Bible, to different mythologies. I mean, the Bible is a mythology. The oral tradition is also a mythology. And they have an immaculate conception concept with Raven. You know, the chief's daughter becomes pregnant with Raven. Well, she's not married. You know, that's immaculate conception. So there's all these commonalities if you will give it credence and you take it into consideration.

Joseph Campbell was the one who said that we've lost our mythologies and we're losing our way. We're losing our spiritual guidance, you know. So those are the kinds of things that I want to focus on, get deeper into the symbolism and how can I iterate that with my material, my medium and then do more storytelling because there's plenty of—any action within a story is a possibility of an art piece. You can iterate a specific action within a story, and that's what I'm thinking now. I don't want to make Ravens and *Raven Steals the Sun* over and over and over.. I've actually stopped making those because people want them, but it's too tempting to sort of like, oh, okay, I'll make a hundred of them. But that's not what it's about for me. If you spend your time doing that, you won't develop anything else.

MS. SAVIG: Do you think working on this mid-career retrospective has—because you've been looking back so much—has maybe helped push you to see—

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, yeah, definitely. It has given me—at first I wasn't very good at speaking about my work at all. And my wife who is a good salesperson, she can sell marketing. She can market anything to anybody. I mean, that's what she's designed to do. She's a fast thinker and she's always—and so I've gleaned a lot of that sort of a partnership. She's my partner. We come to understand certain things. I mean, I am kind of a little more laid back in general. She's a little bit more amped up in general. So we kind of meet somewhere in the middle. I calm her down, and she sort of, you know, amps me up. It is opposites. You know, opposites attract, and it's one of those things that I find really interesting in a partner. If it was somebody who is exactly the same as me probably wouldn't be as interesting, right?

MS. SAVIG: I agree.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: Well, we're at about 10 minutes. This seems like a good stopping point.

MR. SINGLETARY: Okay.

[Audio Break.]

MS. SAVIG: It is March 24th, and I am in Preston Singletary's studio.

And I just wanted to start out this session talking about your studio. When did you move into this space, pretty recently?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, I moved into this space a little over two years ago in 2009? Yeah, spring of 2009. And I took this building over from Sonja Blomdahl.

MS. SAVIG: She's one of your teachers?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, she was one of the people that I worked with in the mid-'80s and have sort of been friends with her ever since. Actually, we've been at Pilchuck together, and we actually lived in her and Dick Weiss' house. We were on the main floor of their house they'd split into a duplex. And when Åsa and I first got married, we kind of shared that space with them, and so we were good friends. And when she was getting ready to I guess essentially—well, retire from glassblowing, so to speak, because, you know, she felt like she had done glassblowing enough and called me up and knew that I was probably a little hungry for a bigger space. And so she told me about the space, and I spoke to Fred Hutchinson who I rent from. And they were excited about getting another artist to use the space because this has been—and prior to that, Sonja was in here for, I don't know, maybe 25 years. But before that, it was a foundry, another Northwest artist's—Morrison, I can't remember this first name. But he was a metal sculptor and did a lot of public art in the Seattle area, a lot of fountains and things like that.

MS. SAVIG: Okay. And here you have about how many people working for you?

MR. SINGLETARY: I have three employees that help me with sort of the fabrication, the prep work and the sandblasting, carving into the glass, and then I have one business admin.

MS. SAVIG: And you are sort of a mentor and employer to them. Most of them have art backgrounds as well and they're also artists. Are you trying to put yourself in the shoes of your prior mentors that you were working with?

MR. SINGLETARY: You know, Maurice Caldwell has been sort of our main assistant for many years. He used to help me when I was still working in the attic of my first house and I asked Maurice to help me because he was a visual artist but also a musician that I played with in bands in the late '80s and '90s. He's a visual artist. He's a painter and graphic designer, and I just felt as though we could work together. I helped him, training him on the prep work and how to wrap the pieces in the rubber tape that I use for the stencil. And he's actually being very instrumental in helping me with different kinds of—developing different kinds of processes. So he doesn't come from a glass background, but he's very meticulous and can do lots of different things.

Brittaney Shanta was going to school for glassblowing. When I met her she had just moved to town and she mentioned to me right off the bat that she loved sandblasting and cutting stencil. And I thought, well, you know, a match made in heaven there because she has come to be one of my main people for cutting the stencil. And she's been with me for about, I don't know, three years now.

And then Terri Rowe is another local girl here. She had been interested in jewelry making and doing lamp working glass, and so through an introduction, another glass artist friend, Robbie Miller suggested that I try Terri out and that she was really a nice gal, very good and hardworking. And so I've trained her on the sandblasting detail quite a bit, and she's become a real excellent sandblaster at this point.

MS. SAVIG: It seems to me that the Seattle glass community is pretty small. How is this community been supportive to your development as an artist?

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, I think one thing about the Seattle glass community is that it's actually—it used to be small, and now it's become quite large. I think in retrospect, considering when I first started, there was very few people actually working with glass. And then over time, a lot of people migrated here just because of Pilchuck and because of the community here. And also, the other thing that we always point out is that it's a great climate for glassblowing. It never gets really too hot. So you can work year-round if you want. Summers aren't excruciatingly hot, so it's a comfortable work environment.

But the community itself has always been supportive because, we're all sort of learning at the same rate, and so

we're all feeling like a part of it, you know, the development that's happening the glass art world. We have people who work with equipment primarily, we have people that specialize in different kinds of glassmaking. Because glass is such a team-oriented activity, it's been—it's never been really like a sort of a private or jealous, you know, keep away kind of mentality. It's always been very open because we're all sharing information. That's really just the nature of the community as it functions.

MS. SAVIG: Who have you been collaborating with recently?

MR. SINGLETARY: Some of the more recent collaborations, I was working with Joe Feddersen who is a Native American, a Colville native from eastern Washington. He approached me a long time ago about making some glass baskets. I think the first group of baskets that he wanted to make. He's a basket maker by trade, that's one of his mediums. He's also a great print maker, and he was an educator down in Evergreen. Anyway, he approached me about making these glass baskets because based on his artwork, and then I think the first group went to actually the NMAI [National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution] when the Heye Foundation had just opened, so the prelude to the opening of the bigger museum in D.C. And so those pieces went there. That's one collaboration.

Another one that is pretty notable, I think, is with Tammy Garcia, the Santa Clara Pueblo potter. And for me, it's always sort of advocating the material of glass to indigenous communities, and that's something that I feel like brings another dimension to the artwork, you know, with the transparency of the material and the way it glows and holds the light. And so Tammy was a very established artist, and her work was in these classical vessel forms which, for me, it spoke to me right away because I could appreciate the forms and I related to them immediately. But then, of course, they had this deeply incised designs, and for a long time I told her that we should collaborate and I could make these vessels for her and they could be really stunning, you know, using the sandblasting technique.

And so eventually when we got around to doing it, I had sort of an ulterior motive there because I was also trying to force the Native American art collector to consider the material of glass because I had been shown in the Southwest, in Santa Fe, the Indian art market down there, but primarily through galleries, not doing the booth shows.

MS. SAVIG: The Blue Rain?

MR. SINGLETARY: The Blue Rain Gallery, and her husband is also the owner of the gallery and is a great promoter of Native art. And so we kind of strategized to do this show, and we published a nice catalogue. You know, but prior to that, I had sort of a medium amount of success with the collectors. So I thought that by working with Tammy, it would help cross over the material because a lot of the collectors would think, oh, well, it's not traditional, maybe it doesn't have the same value of a traditional object. When we made that group of pieces based on the popularity of Tammy's work, we sold the show out immediately. We did manage, I think, to help pioneer the material of glass into that collector base. So that was really kind of a crucial development, I think, you know, and then subsequently I started to make more sales with my own artwork. And native art collectors warmed up to the idea of glass as an art material.

I guess there's maybe two more that I could cite as good collaborations because they're pretty important. One was the collaboration with Marcus Amerman who's a good friend of mine I met through these art markets down in Santa Fe. He's a bead worker by trade. And I call him sort of like the original Indian glass artist, you know, through working with trade beads because another point that I always make is that Native culture has a sort of defining historical connection with the material of glass which came through trade beads.

I liked to point that out when I was in Manhattan last week because we all know what happened, the island of Manhattan was traded for trade beads. And the thing is, too, that the Native people were attracted to this particular—I mean, I've read this in documents where they say there was such fascination with the material and the color that it was thought of something very rare and something really special and colors that they didn't have access to. So it was quickly adopted and utilized in the ornamenting of clothes—

MS. SAVIG: Right, beautiful clothing with beads.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, yeah. Oddly enough, an article I read said, well, they weren't attracted to the color gold. You know, if they would have been—if they had realized the value on a world scale of what gold was, it would be quite a different story than we have today. But so in any case, I think of glass as kind of an extension of that connection to the material and now the making glass or producing now that the technology is accessible to us.

But so Marcus and I taught up at Pilchuck Glass School a couple of years ago. And we had a great time because his work is all about iconography and also kind of a pop sensibility, and I really admire that sort of incongruous way of thinking about things and tying elements together. I think it comes from beading and he just has a vivid imagination. Another thing that he told me that he was into mysticism and things. He met with—he was in

contact with some ancient deity that he could speak to this woman who's channeling it. And so he called this woman up and speak to Zero who's the name of this deity. And so apparently by what he's heard is that we were brothers in some past life, in some previous life in the Mediterranean. And that was something that I like to run with that and say, yeah, we're brothers from a previous life.

And we do enjoy a really nice way of working together. I like his approach, and so we did some objects that were pertaining to his culture, his Choctaw culture and these head pots that not much is known about them, but they've done a lot of research and uncovered a lot of these things from the mound builder culture. And, I mean, they're assumed to be maybe burial urns or something for warriors, and that's the way we think about them. You know, a lot of the markings on the bases are falcons, and that's one of the sort of the warrior symbols that is from that culture. So we're assuming that they were perhaps deceased warriors, and so we were sort of bringing them into the modern world and kind of immortalizing them with another material. And so that was sort of like a —it felt like it was a kind of a job for us to do, that we could do that and kind of bring an awareness to it. So that was a really great sort of way of working with Marcus, and we've continued to want to try to develop ideas together.

And then another really great collaboration that I did was with a Maori jade carver, Lewis Gardiner. Of course, some of my trips down to New Zealand and interacting with these international indigenous communities that were bringing people together to share our work. We conjoined the material of the jade and the glass. And he came up, and we worked on some forms that he was thinking about. And I made a few things, and we kind of conjoined our imagery onto the glass pieces and tied the mythologies together, the commonalities. And it was really a great project. You know, the Maori art form is really intriguing, and the design style is really very fluid and just beautiful. So the combination of Northwest Coast and Maori was really pretty spectacular in my opinion.

MS. SAVIG: How were you introduced to him?

MR. SINGLETARY: I was introduced to Lewis Gardiner through the Spirit Wrestler Gallery in Vancouver, B.C. who had been slowly building a market for Maori art in North America. So they brought this group of artists together, and that was sort of the introduction. And actually, it was Spirit Wrestler that suggested that we do a collaboration. They didn't know that we would go to such great lengths and create—

MS. SAVIG: It'd be such a good fit, yeah.

MR. SINGLETARY: —almost 18, I think we produced about 18 pieces. And they thought, well, we would do maybe a couple of pieces, and then we'd have a show about our respective art styles. He would show his jade carvings, and I would show my glass work, but we put this large body of work together. And it was a lot of fun.

MS. SAVIG: Do you have any collaborations in the pipeline right now?

MR. SINGLETARY: You know, boy, I was working on a totem pole, seven-foot totem pole that is only cast in glass and that was a collaboration with David Svenson who's my carver friend. And so I came up with the idea of a totem pole more in the round as opposed to the clan house post that—or in the "Echoes, Fire and Shadows" exhibition which are flat. And they're a little bit more easy to imagine how they're produced because they are just a big flat slab. And these pieces are more sculptural and they're more pronounced in the carving style and sculptural style. And so anyways, a totem pole to represent my great grandmother who had a pet grizzly bear as a child, and I guess the story goes that some of the family was out hunting, and they ended up encountering a grizzly bear. And they shot the bear, and they realized it was the mother bear. There was some young cubs that were running around, and they figured, well, they'll surely die if we just leave them here. So they grabbed them and brought them back to the village, and my great grandmother raised one as a pet. And she was — and at that time, there was a lot of Russians in the village of Sitka and the bear had developed a taste for this Russian taffy, the women that made this taffy. And so my great grandmother Susie would go out and pick berries and bring them back to the village and sell them so she could get money to buy taffy for her little bear.

MS. SAVIG: That is a spoiled bear. That's cute.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, and so apparently, you know, she kept it, the little bear, till it was too big to keep around the house, and so they had to get rid of it. I don't know how they got rid of it, but the story was that she was heartbroken to lose her little pet.

MS. SAVIG: Wow, that's really impressive that she was going to take on a grizzly bear as a pet. I've seen one in the wild, and they're huge.

So this is in line with your future direction of telling more narratives?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: So are you going to be focused more on these personal family stories or are you also going to branch and talk about more—

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, there's a few stories and I have to figure out ways of iterating those kinds of connections, and sometimes, you can affix different symbols to a particular thing. Like, for instance, I mean, since we're eagles by tribal law, you would marry over to the raven side. That's one that's very obvious, but then you could—I'm trying it figure out ways—I haven't really thought of personal family stories, per se, that I would be able to iterate, but some of the mythologies that exist that I would try to interpret aspects of those mythologies because, you know, any action within a story could be a great visual representation in an artwork. So you could take one little action and represent it through to like—

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, I think that's a great direction. For the totem pole, do you and David know how you are going to cast it or are you still figuring that out, your process?

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, we're still figuring it out.

MS. SAVIG: Because it sounds complicated.

MR. SINGLETARY: I'm working in collaboration with a guy out of Portland in Ray Ahlgren who was one of the founders of the Bullseye Factory, Bullseye Glass Factory, and he helped develop some of the formulas for the glass early in the day—early in the development but then he kind of shifted off and broke away from the factory and started to develop other kiln forming techniques of making architectural glass. And he also works collaboratively with other artists, and sometimes he's brought in as a technician for Bullseye for their artist-in-residence program. And so he has a lot of knowledge and ability in different materials. So we're basically assuming that we're going to be able to take plaster molds off this totem pole and then construct it in such a way that we'll be able to cast into the plaster, the casting molds.

But due to the nature of the weight and everything, it's going still be quite a technical challenge to execute. But we're thinking of doing it in three sections, and there's three natural sections within the totem pole. Each each one would be cast separately, and then we'd have to cold work the edges and then we would somehow either, you know, fuse it together like cold fuse it which also known as gluing or some sort of armature that would support each section from behind. So those are the two options, but the first and biggest step is to figure out how to cast each section, what kind of mold material and how to support the weight. You know, there's a possibility it may go into a lost wax process. You know, at the top section with the more sculptural grizzly bear form on the very top of the totem was going to be a lost wax because of the sort of a lot more—it's a lot rounder on the top so there's no way of pulling the mold directly off it because of the undercuts.

MS. SAVIG: Right, right. Have you worked with glass wax casting before?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, I've done a little bit. You know, I don't carve wood very much, but I made that wooden canoe dish here. And those pieces are in these pieces were made as a wax and then cast in glass, and then they're actually in the "Echoes, Fires and Shadows" exhibition as well. So that whole process, I generally just job out. I don't work with the mold making myself. It's a very time consuming process, and so I work collaboratively with other people that can help me execute those things.

MS. SAVIG: Another process that you—I think invented might be the right word—is with Joe Feddersen and the baskets, you guys worked together for a long time to come up with that texture of the basket on glass.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: How long did that take? What was that process like?

MR. SINGLETARY: You know, I wanted to create some pieces again that would be more referencing of traditional object, and so I worked on the basket designs. The hats are also typically traditionally made out of basketry, and they're woven and then they're painted. So I wanted to figure out how to get the texture of woven texture just blasted into the thickness, and so I came up with the idea of this—so letraset used to make this vinyl tape that was used for graphic design, and so I contacted a company that could take this vinyl tape and slit it into very thin—

MS. SAVIG: Very thin, maybe like an eighth of an inch or a sixteenth of an inch?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, a sixteenth of an inch. And so I figured by putting the sub-pattern or actually, it'd be sort of the geometric pattern that typically wraps around the baskets was made with the vinyl tape, a very thin, thin vinyl tape that is drawn and cut. And then applied the thin strips of vinyl tape, you know, line by line very tight so it looks like a basket, and then sort of a spiral wrap down the length of the basket. And then blasting at different stages creates sort of a texture which looks like basketry, you know, because when you blast one stage

and then you peel off a layer. The first stage continues to reduce because of the carving process of the sandblasting. And so therefore, it creates different layers, secondary layers and tertiary layers, so they were able to mimic the looks of baskets.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, it's an interesting combination.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, you know, and it's kind of a tedious process, but Marcus Amerman likes to refer to it as the power of tedium. You know, it's just a very—a lot of work for a very subtle effect, and it kind of reads as though it's a really—people are always baffled by it, so it's kind of fun to show them.

MS. SAVIG: Did Joe—did you watch him make a basket or did you just talk with him about it and?

MR. SINGLETARY: You know, I guess truth be told, I had been developing the process of basket and he told me that he wanted. And Joe's geometric patterns within his baskets are always referencing sort of modern society. You know, he'll take the very abstract form, like, say for instance, a brick pattern. You know, the mortar in between the bricks and that technique, and so he would sandblast it. And I said, "Well, you could take it further, and you can put the sub-patterns of the basket texture."

So I basically showed him how to do it, and he kind of ran with the technique. But also, some of his other images—and that's why I felt like, well, by giving him this technique, it's— he's doing something his own with it. So his pieces and my pieces look very distinct, and so it's not like a competition or anything. But some of the other patterns that he creates are sort of like a parking lot, like the lines in a parking lot, and so these are all modern patterns and symbols that he sees in the modern world. And so he brings them into the basket, and sometimes it'll be like a tire track. So it looks like a traditional design, but if you look at it closely, you realize that it's actually—like there's the basket up there of the parking lot [gestures to basket.]

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, I like that one.

MR. SINGLETARY: So anyway, so that's how that came to be.

MS. SAVIG: And any other communities besides the glass community and the other Native artists that you're working with that have been influential?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, I mean, I always talk about having not gone to art school and then discovering—and then trying to understand a little bit of the art that is out there and then the modernist artwork and the whole movement into primitivism. Those are the kinds of things that really kind of inspired me because of that notion of well, it's always a big issue about appropriation, right? What was their motivation, what were the modernists' motivation? And there was another Native scholar whose book I read, Rennard Strickland, and he wrote a book called *Tonto's Revenge* [University of New Mexico Press, 1997]. And early on in the book, he talked about how it was—I think the quote is something like it's ironic that the moderns forced us to appreciate—or to look at the primitive and appreciate different levels of reality. And, you know, subsequent studies that I've read about other Native artists and they talk about how the Native artists were excluded from that modernist movement. You know, their work wasn't deemed modern. It wasn't deemed art.

So those were the kinds of things that I think influence, you know, inform my work because I like to—there's a great catalogue [Primitivism and Twentieth-century Art: A Documentary History, edited by Jack Flam with Miriam Deutch, 1984] that was produced about primitivism which analyzes from a lot of different people's perspectives about what—Gauguin, for instance, was living in Tahiti and he was painting. And he had this strong conviction that the modern world was going in the wrong direction, and he felt that these people had a simpler, more honest and true approach to life. Yet he was going back to Paris and making his sales back there to these rich Parisians. So it's like—so there's always like this dichotomy of Picasso painting an African mask or making a sculpture that if you look at it, you can definitely see. He was doing it in his own way, but it was deemed fine art because he was a classically trained artist. But yet, they always talk about sort of unlearning of the whole confines of the educated mind.

That kind of stuff was—I think coupled with psychology if you want to go all the way back, in high school, I read the Carlos Castaneda books, which really everybody was reading them in high school, and I was really fascinated with that whole idea of being able to manipulate your dreams and travel around in your dreams. I guess one of the things he says is that when you're dreaming and you realize you're dreaming, you look and see if you can find your hand. And if you find your hand, then you realize that you're looking at your hand within your dream, then you can start to move around within your dream. And that might tie into sort of like a shaman sort of spirit journey that would happen.

And so fast forward, at that point, then I start to become curious about dream analysis, and I started to read [Carl] Jung because he did a lot of studies about dream analysis and Freud, of course. But Jung, to me, was more connected to the spiritual in that way. So I read a lot of philosophy books. I read Alan Watts, and I read, you

know, not a lot but a little. I read a couple of books about sort of Jung's psychology broken down in sort of layman's terms. They cut through the really tough books that Jung wrote.

MS. SAVIG: Which I have never—

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, I mean, they're just opaque, you know. You're reading them and just a few pages later, you're like, wow, it's really hard to comprehend. But then there's a lot of the Jung psychologists today, they've created books that make it a little bit easier to understand. And so those kinds of things have given me like ways of thinking about symbolism, ways of thinking about, you know, approaches to, well, just understanding, how your mind works and how society has developed.

MS. SAVIG: That's really interesting. Who are your main collectors right now? I know you wanted to try to encourage more Native collectors to buy glass. Do you know a lot of your collectors? Do you work with a lot of them? Do they come visit you?

MR. SINGLETARY: I do run into my collectors all the time, especially in Santa Fe. It's like one of the most passionate groups of collectors you can find because they have this annual Indian Market which happens every year, same weekend, third weekend of August. And people flock to that place to see what's going on, and so I see the collectors year after year after year. And they're informed with—they come to see all the new work, and then, of course, there's some local collectors. That's from the Native perspective. But, of course, I started in the glass galleries in Seattle. Coming from that craft/art direction, the collectors there were primarily glass collectors. So it's very broad, the collector base that I have. And so I think that I've actually benefitted from that because it's more than just one audience that's looking at the work, yeah, so.

MS. SAVIG: How has the market changed for the past few years? Have you noticed any changes?

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, it's always up and down. You know, I mean, I've been pretty blessed, I guess, with a lot of attention for what I'm doing. With the museum shows and sort of this era of this economic downturn, it's been nice to have a little extra attention. And so therefore, the collectors, it hasn't—it's been a very gradual, steady increase for me.

In the mid-'90s, early to mid-'90s, a lot of glass artists were going to Japan. Of course, that's changed quite a bit, too, since about mid- to late '90s. There was a huge—because Japan respects the tradition of craft, and, of course, they have a lot of glass artists coming out of the universities and making—well, I don't know how many glass graduates they turn out every year, a couple hundred or more probably because there's a lot of universities down there teaching glass. But that was sort of like a new medium which doesn't come with the constraints of it being a tradition, you know. It's not like a sushi chef who has to cook rice for a year and then learn how to sharpen knives for a year and then—or whatever it is, you know, and then eventually, you kind of make your in. Then there's women's work and there's men's work, and so you find men and women that are equally working with the material over in Japan.

But in any case, you know, it's just like ebb and flow. And I think the market is always changing season to season.

MS. SAVIG: Can you describe a little bit of your relationships with museum curators or critics or people who write about your work? You seem to be really open to talking to people. Are there are any relationships that have influenced how you created works for a certain project or maybe an exhibit?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, well, you know, I mentioned Roslyn Tunis and Carolyn Kastner who were really important advocates for me and really put a really nice essay and exhibition together. They expressed interest, Carolyn did, expressed interest in sort of the Native American glass movement, you know, if you want to call it that. It's a small one, but it's still young enough that we can almost reach back and kind of put it in perspective chronologically. And Roslyn, of course, has been a really big advocate for me and my work every chance she gets.

So Barbara Brotherton from the Seattle Art Museum gave me my first museum show at the Seattle Art Museum there, and she was great to work with. She was very enthusiastic and excited to be able to give me that show. I still work with her. I'm on the Seattle Art Museum board, so I kind of get to work with her still and see her.

The Spirit Wrestler Gallery, too, they've been really good at sort of presenting my work through different books, collaborations and group shows and things and putting it in context with all of the other contemporary indigenous art that they show up there. They do a really good job, and they tend to put out nice publications. And those kind of things have been really, really good.

You know, and then there's a handful of, you know, all the different magazines that have done things, and that hasn't hurt, either, you know. But, yeah, that was it.

Of course, Melissa Post with the "Echoes, Fire and Shadows," was really great to work with, and she probably did me the biggest service in putting such a nice catalog, collection and publication together, yeah.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, I think that'll be a great biography for you for a long time.

Any other influences that you still take into consideration as far as your career goes? Probably music is still really influential?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, I had forsaken my first love as an artistic endeavor, but I still try to maintain a band and play out whenever I can. I mean, for me music has always been the—I mean, I collect music. I listen to music constantly when I'm working. So I like to say that some of my biggest influences would be the music of Jimi Hendrix or Miles Davis just as much as any visual artist, you know, and I love world music. I love hybrids of different kinds of music blending together and all the trends and fashions, rap and hip hop and stuff. I listen to everything, you know, pretty much, and then the band that I ended up putting together is called "Little Big Band." And I call it a Native funk band. Well, when I did the Seattle Art Museum exhibition, they wanted to produce a small documentary, and I said, "Well, that's great, but, you know, what are you going to do about the music because I have strong opinions about the music."

And they said, "Well, we usually use Wayne Horvitz" who's a very well-known jazz musician, piano player, keyboard player, composer, very avant-garde, but he also—and so I said, "Well, boy, that would be perfect."

We had some mutual friends, and I thought, well, maybe I could work with him and talk to him about the contents of the music or the style or whatever. So we ended up doing a collaboration in creating a soundtrack for the documentary for the Seattle Art Museum. And I wanted to give it a little bit of an avant-garde Native feel, and so we basically went in and just kind of generated lots of improvisational ideas. And then we kind of came back with it, and one of my friends, Gene Tagaban, did some Native singing and chanting and things and played flute and, you know, his hand drum and did spoken word poetry.

And so I thought, well, that would be a great concept for a band. After that, I had this idea of forming a band that would be bringing all these various people together, Gene Tagaban who's a great storyteller and a dancer and a poet and comedian. I mean, he does everything. And then I knew the vocalist that I wanted was Star Nayea. She was a really dynamite singer out of Santa Fe. Well, she was living in Santa Fe. She had won a Grammy for a collaboration she did on a track on a compilation album. And so I heard her sing, and I was like, wow, she's the one. So I asked her to come sing with the band, and she did. So that was kind of a long distance thing. It was a national thing. She had to fly up from Santa Fe, and we put together a couple of shows. And we recorded some—music, but I still wanted to have—I knew that this guy, James Luna, was a performance artist out of San Diego, and I knew that he was quite a character. I thought it'd be cool—and he was wanting to get into music. He wanted to get into performance art and music, and I thought, that sounds great, you know, because that would be a great level of contrast to this.

And so I got together with some of my old friends that were old Seattle musicians that I played with in various bands, and Maurice Caldwell, my assistant. And so we've started to write some music and put together these compositions, and then the performances that we did, we took it up to Alaska. We played in Santa Fe, you know, and we're still plugging along, trying to record some new material.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, you should play in D.C. sometime.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, and, too, the Little Big Band, it's no play on words because we're about 10 people. But for me, I envision this sort of Native American funk band, this sort of à la George Clinton, Parliament Funkadelic, you know, and that's the music that I absolutely love is that sort of funk style because it really does embody the aspects of, you know, jazz, rock, soul, pop, gospel, what have you, and dance music. And for me, if you take it all the way back to the beginnings, it's the music that I was attracted was Scott Joplin. It's very syncopated. You know, it's very complex rhythmically. And so today, I'm a bass player, so I like to play that percussive style, slap style of bass which is kind of like a drum and a guitar at the same time and you can create these rhythms and stuff.

So that's kind of my project as it stands, and, of course, we get James Luna up on stage, and it's almost like—you know, he likes to—his artwork is all about challenging the notion of what Native culture is all about, both from the Native perspective and the non-Native perspective. And so by just having him on stage, you know, is quite a treat to have him involved with the project.

MS. SAVIG: Do you see—I mean, I am starting to—but do you see this as a direct reflection of your work because of the collaboration seems to be—

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, definitely.

MS. SAVIG: —a thread that runs through your entire life, not just your art.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, it is. It is definitely a collaboration because I see myself musically especially as a collaborator because it's—I don't really have the wherewithal as the big picture —I'm sort of the musical director some, but I can't do it by myself. And so I rely on other people to sort of fill in the blanks. Everybody, I think, regards me as the leader, but it's also that, you know, I couldn't do it without everybody else.

MS. SAVIG: And your ability to take for your art, you know, a modernist style as well as even Scandinavian and Native and still make it your own thing and that's what you're doing with music, so I can see that.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: It's just a natural way for you to go through your life?

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

MS. SAVIG: Where do you continue to get ideas for your work and how do you know when it's a right fit? So you just recently started incorporating human hair or was it horse hair into your work?

MR. SINGLETARY: It is human hair.

MS. SAVIG: Oh, it is? I wrote down horse.

MR. SINGLETARY: Sometimes horse hair but mostly human hair, hair extensions, you know, it's already pre-woven into a little fabric. You just, you know, cut it and bundle it up and glue it in. And it does—it has a great natural feel to it. Sometimes I feel like there's a lot of potential that I'm not even tapping into, you know, especially with mixed media or —you know, and sometimes I like to think I have a little bit more of a conceptual approach, you know. I don't know if everybody would say that. You know, I think that there's—

MS. SAVIG: Why do you say it then?

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, you know, because I was—well, the two pieces that are not in the exhibition because they couldn't figure out how to install them were at this particular venue, were these video masks. So I took the mask form and left it very blank, but I created like a projection, projector behind it. And, you know, I created a fire mask and a rain mask. And it was actually pieces that I had revived from an earlier exhibition that I put up in a gallery, and I felt it doesn't really quite work as a saleable piece. I guess it sort of belongs in a museum somewhere. So I brought those pieces back.

I really wanted to include them in the show, that with the soundscape that I created for the exhibition and the visuals, the video that I produced with, you know, sort of fleeting shadows coming across the screen and with a backdrop of scenery from Alaska. And so I was trying to allude to the element of surprise, I guess. In the original exhibition, I had these parabolic reflector speakers that were placed throughout the interior of the gallery, and if you were standing at the right spot, there were sporadic poems, you know, spoken word things that would just click on for a moment. And you may or may not hear them if you weren't standing in the right spot. And they looped so you would hear a different one each time. So I wanted to create sort of an element of surprise, you know, sort of as both from the aural experience that you would hear music—actually, you would hear first music and then nature sounds, running water, you know, a wolf out in the distance, a raven or an eagle screeching. And then it went into sort of musical compositions and then back into nature sounds and then—so I felt like somebody who was walking through the exhibition might experience something completely different, you know, depending on when within the context of the soundscape they would experience it.

So, I don't know. There was a writer, Matthew Kangas, who's a local writer who didn't quite—I don't think he quite gets my work, you know. He doesn't understand. He's been sort of almost like snidely supportive, but he realizes that I have a momentum with my work and he wants to kind of try to take it down a little bit.

MS. SAVIG: Has he ever talked to you?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, he actually curated a show, and he loved my designed style of vases of Italian and Scandinavian things. And he felt like, well, that's the direction you should go, and I told him, "Well, you know" —and this was early '99 for the exhibition "Four in Glass." I said, "Well, I don't know, Matthew. I'm on to this Native American style that's part of my heritage."

And he didn't really know anything about that, and so I said, "Well" —and he goes, "Oh, I've seen your hats and I've seen your—not in pink, not with a shadow." And he just said, "What you need to do is you need to stick with your Scandinavian stuff and you're really good at that."

MS. SAVIG: That's a bold critic.

MR. SINGLETARY: And then he did an article that included Northwest Coast glass artists and Native American glass artists and, you know, said that, you know, this is a movement that was happening, blah, blah, blah, but perhaps Singletary just has a bigger room to stand in because, you know, he's more connected to the material. It was sort of like a very strange way of putting it, like why is he getting all the attention. Well, you know, because he's a glassblower and he's working with glass. And then even more recently, you know, he said, "The exhibition is good but he's no Brian Jungen, you know, who does all these blah, blah, blah." Went on to explain Brian's work and how in contrast to mine it should be, you know, that I could be doing much bigger and better —more conceptual, I don't think so.

MS. SAVIG: Right. There are so few Native artists that are on an international level, I would think, you, Brian Jungen, James Luna, for sure. Is it tough to just always be compared to a few other Native artists or would you prefer to maybe be compared to the glass artists?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I think one of the things that I think he just doesn't understand anything about the tradition or the culture or the fact that I've tried to adhere myself to the community and I'm actually—you know, the accolades from the community are much more important to me than the opinion of an art critic.

MS. SAVIG: Exactly.

MR. SINGLETARY: And so—you know, the other thing is that—yeah, I feel like when I have a concept about what I'm doing, I try to just work with the material itself, there's—you know, it may not be—I mean, you're not—it's not going to be all brilliant. It's not all going to be like masterpieces, but you try to—you do the best you can, and it evolves. And I'm not really sure, it's always when a writer doesn't bother to ask you anything about your opinion and just wants to take it from their own perspective. They don't make—they don't try to gain any insight to what you're thinking currently and then I don't think it's really—it's a funny one. But, you know, you put yourself out there, and you have to take it on the chin once in a while.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, it just seems to odd to me. It's almost like people comparing Banksy to Damien Hirst because they're both British. It doesn't make any sense.

MR. SINGLETARY: Right. Well, you know, I know that— I know that he's expressing as much. He's not, you know, completely into my work, but he likes getting paid to write articles about me, though.

MS. SAVIG: Right, yeah.

MR. SINGLETARY: You know, because he knows he can sell them, whatever.

MS. SAVIG: That's interesting. That's really interesting.

What other local or national organizations have you been working with? Do you work at all with the American Craft Council or the Glass Arts Society or—

MR. SINGLETARY: Well, no. I mean, I was part of *Craft in America* feature when they were talking about community and they filmed us up at the Pilchuck Glass School a couple of summers ago. I spoke on video about the community and also kind of a little bit in relation to my own work and everything. But beyond that, I mean, it's pretty centered in the Northwest. I mean, I am on a few boards, you know the Pilchuck Glass School, of course, I'm on the board there, the Seattle Art Museum.

I'm actually on the board at this—I don't know why I think I can do all this stuff, but I'm on the board at this environmental learning school called Island Wood. And it's a great. I mean, my son went there with his class, and basically what it is, it's an inner urban youth that are invited to this campus which is about 250 acres and diverse terrain. And they go out there to learn about the environment and, you know, conservationism and that type of thing. I became, you know, enthralled with that particular organization because of their mission, you know, for kids. And also, it's like a fairy tale, the campus is. It's a lot like Pilchuck Glass School whereas it's on an old tree farm on sort of a protected area, and the people that are there are really incredible. And they're all mostly from the Northwest, but I've just sort of developed an affinity for them and supported them through their auctions. And so, yeah, I like them there. So I thought, okay, well, if I can—they wanted to actually expand their educational program, and so I thought, well, maybe that's something I can help out with. You know, I can at least make suggestions and be on committees and sort of help steer—obviously, not help out directly go teach there, but they do have an art studio. They wanted to figure out that maybe there's some way of working with recycled glass and making something, you know, or something like that. So that's the reason I got involved with them.

MS. SAVIG: And my final question will be: As far as technology goes, you're starting to work with more multimedia video. What other parts of technology are you looking towards or looking at that can change how you work? Are you going to stick with the traditional—

MR. SINGLETARY: I work in a very—in a much more hands-on sort of an old school way of executing the designs. I mean, I could potentially lay the designs out on a computer and all that stuff, but I'm just not technically savvy enough to do it. You know, I love the idea of Northwest Coast art as a stagecraft. I mean, that's what it is essentially. It's the storytelling with masks and different props and things that were utilized in the winter ceremonies, and I like—I mean, Gary Wyatt pointed that out, from Spirit Wrestler. And so I hadn't thought about it in that way, but, yes, there are lots of—I think there's a lot of potential to create sort of a scenography or something on an installation that would actually be playing with the light a little bit more specifically. I recently found a book about old vaudeville kinds of stagecraft and creating sets that move and—what was it called —*camera obscura* and all those kinds of things that you can play with the light, you can play with the objects, you can project onto glass, you could create lighting in special ways that would kind of create an effect that would be a little bit unique.

And so I think those are the kinds of things, almost like an old world way of the cleverness of the—kind of, with almost like creating a set which you'd walk into and then you would kind of—you could illustrate like the Raven story and maybe it would have a few sort of interactive pieces where if you walked up to it, lights would click on or something like that. So those are the kinds of things that I think that I'll try to work with and get a little bit more intrigue going that. With the museum exhibition, I created the soundscape and the video projections. I mean, that was wasn't like taking it to the extreme, but it was kind of stepping in that direction.

MS. SAVIG: It's all about progress, right?

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: So is there anything else you wanted to make sure you got included in your life history?

MR. SINGLETARY: Oh, boy. I don't know. I think I was pretty comprehensive, and I tried to insert a lot of things that I was thinking. But, yeah, I guess I think I already said it, but I think that the one thing that if I can accomplish something with my work would be to sort of inspire the next generation of indigenous people, that there are these—there's potential to create something new.

When I was starting to read these psychology books, when I read about Jung's—they call it the process of individuation. We all grew up in these—within families and then at some point, then you kind of break out on your own, you become your own person and all of that. Your mind has to start going —programming itself in that direction. And in a lot of ways, when I kind of broke off and did the whole Native American perspective, the Tlingit, Northwest Coast perspective, I did kind of separate myself from my glassblowing family. I think a lot of people didn't really understand what I could do or why I was doing it or how I could do it. But I think that every artist comes to a fork in the road where they go left or they go right and then you develop those influences. You put one foot in front of the other, and then it kind of — I guess Joseph Campbell might say it was follow your bliss..

I mean, that was the thing thatI didn't know what it would lead to, and I didn't anticipate that it would be so fulfilling because today, you know, I am filled with a kind of sense of purpose. And it's a privilege, really. It's a privilege to be able to connect myself to the Tlingit community, that I have that tie, that nobody can take that away from me. You know, no matter what they say about the work or whether they like it or they don't. It's still something that I've done.

And the other thing, too, was I wouldn't have necessarily chosen this path initially. It kind of chose me. And sometimes when I'm reading these books on the Northwest Coast shaman, they talk about a similar experience where they didn't chose to be a shaman, they didn't choose to have this vision or this power or whatever. And then something kind of forces them into the role. If I want to stretch it, I would put it in that perspective, too. I'm not claiming I'm a shaman [laughs]. I'm just saying that there is a little—with glassblowing, people always say there's a lot of alchemy involved there anyway. So you're kind of creating this mixture, and in some way, it's just the power and the experience that you have, the cumulative experience. And so it's kind of a fun thing to ponder, yeah.

MS. SAVIG: Absolutely. Well, you'll continue to ponder this for many years.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: And I'll be back probably in 20 or so years to see where you're at then. So thank you very much for this interview.

MR. SINGLETARY: Yeah, okay. Very good, my pleasure.

[END OF INTERVIEW]