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Oral history interview with Beth Lipman, 2012 September 18-19

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Beth Lipman on September 8, 2012. The interview took place in Sheboygan, Wisc., 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.

Beth Lipman has reviewed the transcript. Her corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. 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 Beth Lipman at the artist's studio in Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin on September 8th, 2012 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is disk number one. So we start out very easily. When and where were you born?

BETH LIPMAN: 1971, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

MS. SAVIG: Could you describe your childhood and family background?

MS. LIPMAN: Sure.

MS. SAVIG: Things that stand out to you.

MS. LIPMAN: Okay. I'm an only child. I grew up primarily in York and Lancaster Counties, Pennsylvania, although we did move around a little bit prior to my turning 3 or 4. My family is Reformed Jews and we were really living in like a slice of Bible Belt —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — in Pennsylvania. Specifically the Amish culture was there but —

MS. SAVIG: Why were they drawn to Lancaster County?

MS. LIPMAN: I know primarily about my mother's side of the family, less about my father's side of the family. So I can't really speak to that, but my mother's side of the family — my grandparents are both from Brooklyn and my grandfather was a scientist/engineer for the tobacco industry. Before the tobacco industry, they kind of moved around to a few different areas of the country, but he ended up working for Jones [ph] and General Tobacco in Lancaster. They settled there after my mother was born. My mother met my father there. My father's family — both sides of his family were there for a few generations, I believe. So it was an interesting area to grow up in.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: Really interesting. It was really specific. It was still very pastoral, very rural landscape at that time, strangely similar to this area in Sheboygan Falls and Sheboygan County. In fact, my grandmother commented on that when she last visited, that she thought it reminded her of Lancaster County.

MS. SAVIG: Big red barns.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, just like the rolling hills of corn.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: I mean, of course, like, minus buggies, et cetera, et cetera. [They laugh.] But very German — very German. My father is a salesperson and he traveled a lot at that time selling suitcases and other things, and also worked within the restaurant industry. My mother at some point, I think either when I was in first grade or second grade, started practicing art. She'd take a few classes here and there, but she started doing tole painting — and

MS. SAVIG: Tole?

MS. LIPMAN: Tole.

MS. SAVIG: Tole.

MS. LIPMAN: T-O-L-E, tole painting, it's practiced in the Pennsylvania Dutch tradition, or folk art essentially.

MS. SAVIG: Oh.

MS. LIPMAN: Like the brushstroke —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — that's like a teardrop. And it's very stylized —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — flowers and fruit and things like that. I am sorry to say that I don't know what the tradition of tole painting is. I believe it's German but I don't know what the background is of that. But by the time we moved to York County, which I think I was in third grade when we moved, she was really actively painting. She had a studio in the basement. We had modest-sized ranch house in Dallastown, Pennsylvania, which is just south of York. I can remember learning how to mix colors and help her sand things and paint. My grandmother, she calls herself a sewing technician. She's an incredible embroiderer but she also used to do knitting often. So both of those traditions have, I think, really strongly influenced me.

MS. SAVIG: Do you know what that was? Were you just drawn to watching them do it and you wanted to get involved with it? It's just a pleasant memory?

MS. LIPMAN: Well, it was almost like just what you do. It's what you do, you know. I think that it was what came naturally to me. It was just such an unintimidating thing to do, to make things, in a way that I think would be really foreign to another family that doesn't make things. [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, like mine. [They laugh.]

MS. LIPMAN: You know, like —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — "What are you doing, making something? What's that for?"

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: I mean, there was never any question like, "Why are you doing that? What is it for?" There was — none of those questions existed. It was, of course that's what you do. That's what you do. Then simultaneously was — and I've talked about this a lot in lectures, but just this obsession about food. I think in growing up as a Reformed Jew within that area and not really relating to the dogma of the religion but understanding the significance of food within the culture and how that was like — just permeated our everyday life —

MS. SAVIG: And again, it goes to the handmade part of the food too.

MS. LIPMAN: Oh, yeah.

MS. SAVIG: The scratch element.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: So your mom sold —

MS. LIPMAN: She actually supported our family at one point when I was I guess what you would consider a tween now —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — although that is a new term to me. I'm not quite sure what that is exactly. But "tween" I think is, like, preteen or — I guess that's what that means now. But at a certain point when I was in middle school, maybe a little bit earlier as well, she was actually — she had a product line —

MS. SAVIG: Oh, wow.

MS. LIPMAN: — and she would do the New York gift show at the Javits Center. I would go with her and help her. She'd do craft fairs, which are now almost a thing of the past. I mean, that kind of craft show is not really — I know there's a few shows— you can still find them. It was not really like the quality of the ACC [American Craft Council] show that she was doing.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: It was just below ACC.

MS. SAVIG: But above, say, a farmer's market sort of —

MS. LIPMAN: Like Wendy Rosen shows.

MS. SAVIG: Oh, okay.

MS. LIPMAN: So it wasn't like the top, top, top —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — blue chip craft fair. [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: But it was just underneath. It was definitely curated, well-crafted objects. She also did limited edition product at different points, like Estee Lauder and the Home Shopping Network and things like that — and a chocolatier. I would help with those that — and my father at times would also. He did woodworking so he would sometimes make the things that she painted, for a period of time. So what I thought at the time was that that was a career path that I did not want to pursue at all.

MS. SAVIG: Why?

MS. LIPMAN: I didn't like the insecurity of not knowing —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — whether you could survive financially. Those concerns were never shielded from me. That was always very kind of open and I felt pretty anxious about it. It was also a really hard life to do a craft fair and spend god knows how much money and go and bomb, not have a good show at all, not sell anything, and you've just lost —

MS. SAVIG: Stressful.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, it was very stressful. It seemed impractical. Also I was not really — it felt like work making a product over and over and over again. Some people who make things in a traditional craft process really get into the groove of that making, repetition over and over again, and that's what satisfies them and that's enough.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: I said I can't — that's not me. I don't really — even when I have to make multiples -I have to change everything all over again —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — to keep it fresh, even if I need a plentitude of something, it doesn't come easy to me to just get into the studio and just do that repetition. I don't know if it's because I have ADD now — [they laugh] — or I really am so used to multitasking —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — that I can't sit and focus on one thing. But I like to have many different things going on at one time, and using your creativity to make a product line — I mean, I guess it feels very comfortable to me now because I helped my mother and I did do it and I know how to do that, but it wasn't something that I —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — necessarily really enjoyed. That's not what I enjoyed doing.

MS. SAVIG: But you really enjoyed traveling and finding good meals with her as well?

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, we traveled a lot also because they did do a lot of craft fairs. So I'd go up and down the east coast. It was primarily the east coast with them, doing craft fairs. My parents were really good at traveling with me and we went to New York a lot because I think my mother has such fond memories of the city. She spent a lot of summers there, working for different relatives that were still within commerce in New York City and things

like that. So I think that was really like home for her. My family was — it's really a matriarchal family. My mother, she was alpha in the mix. So I definitely think she instigated — [laughs] — the majority of things that happened in my childhood. So I think that that was really mutually influential to me that I was kind of exposed to more urban environments, a lot of museums, some theater shows, dance, things like that.

MS. SAVIG: When you went to New York, and other cities even, what particularly stood out to you that you couldn't get in Lancaster County? Was it certain kinds of food or objects?

MS. LIPMAN: Well, everything. [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: You can't — I mean, in relation — now I can go back to Lancaster and I think, oh, this is such a great town. There's things that I miss that I can't get because I'm not there. But I think when you go to Philly or Baltimore everything is so exotic and unobtainable, and endless variety. I mean, D.C. also. It's just a crescendo of everything: culture, food, people, the diversity of people. Everything seems possible in cities, everything. I've found in my experience in living in cities that everything is really possible there. There is that kind of opportunity that even through peaks and valleys in the economy it's still that deep-rooted sense of optimism never leaves cities, in my experience. I don't know what your experience has been, but that's —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah. No, I agree. I don't think it's ever been put that way, of optimism in the city usually.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah. I mean, but I'm coming from a —

MS. SAVIG: No, I agree, right?

MS. LIPMAN: — seriously privileged — I know exactly my stratosphere, you know? [Laughs.] I'm coming from a fairly privileged upbringing. My family was not wealthy by any means. Crtain people in my family are but my nuclear family is slipping middle class, I would say. [Laughs.] But I think that —

MS. SAVIG: You were supported.

MS. LIPMAN: I was supported and afforded a fairly luxurious lifestyle that I'm now hell-bent on trying to give to my children. [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: Right. A good example.

MS. LIPMAN: No matter how much money I have or where my — I think that despite the financial worries that were kind of always hovering around me as a child — which I couldn't discern at that time, what was real and what was just —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — anxiety that was kind of being shared with me, that kind of thing — that I was afforded a really — a pretty privileged lifestyle. I certainly never knew true poverty or anything like that.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: So going to a city for me — even though I'd witnessed poverty I'd never truly kind of felt that. So, yeah. So I hope that doesn't sound too exceptionally privileged that I said that —

MS. SAVIG: No. No.

MS. LIPMAN: — but in my experience that's where everything has really happened for me in some ways.

MS. SAVIG: Well, with that in mind, did your parents encourage you to pursue art or did they sort of encourage you to do something that was maybe a little bit more financially realistic? Or did they just leave it up to you?

MS. LIPMAN: They were incredibly supportive in that they never really just tried to shape me in any way. They just followed my lead. That being said, I think my parents, in particular my mother, probably offered me opportunities that were exciting for her to think about.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: That was exciting for me. The craft program that I went to as a teenager when I was still in high school was called Horizons New England Craft Program. It's now Snow Farm. But that program, that was one of the only programs in the country that a teenager could go and learn how to blow glass.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: It was really like a great place. I think that that whole program and everything they offered was probably really exciting for my mother to think about because I didn't go looking for a craft program. But I loved camp.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: I'd gone to camp growing up, constantly. I started going to day camps, and then I went to a Jewish girls camp for a couple of years. Then I went to a theater camp that also had visual arts. I finally ended up at Horizons. That was kind of the last camp. I'm a firm believer in camp. [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: I love camp.

MS. LIPMAN: I love camp. [They laugh.] I love adult camp, you know?

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: Oxbow's School of Art, Penland School of Craft, Pilchuck, Corning, Haystack — great programs. So I think in that regard they did, like, steer the ship, but within that I don't think — there wasn't much steering, you know. If I was enthusiastic about something and wanted to pursue it, they really tried to figure out a way to allow me to pursue it. So they were pretty incredibly supportive of me that way, I think.

MS. SAVIG: How did you decide that you wanted to go to art school eventually?

MS. LIPMAN: Well, after I went to camp —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah. [They laugh.]

MS. LIPMAN: After I went to camp it was just absolutely what I wanted to do. Horizons was one of the most full-impact places when I was a teenager. That place was just — I learned to draw there when I was 15.

The first year I took a surface design class and I took a drawing class. Both of the teachers were really powerful. The one teacher, Jaymes Leahy, he was particularly — I consider him one of my first teachers.

MS. SAVIG: And he was at Horizons?

MS. LIPMAN: He taught at Horizons.

MS. SAVIG: Okay.

MS. LIPMAN: He had been a recent graduate from Cranbrook.

MS. SAVIG: Oh, right.

MS. LIPMAN: Okay? Textiles, surface designer from Cranbrook. He's no longer — he's passed. He died a long time ago, actually. But the next year I took a glass-blowing and surface design class. So Jaymes taught two years and I took both of his classes. I also took both of his classes and then I also took the glass-blowing class with —

[**DISC ONE 19:35]**

MS. SAVIG: Lewis Knauss?

MS. LIPMAN: No, Lewis Knauss was my fiber instructor at Tyler.

MS. SAVIG: Those are the two instructors they had. Okay.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, Lewis is my second, like, really formative instructor.

MS. SAVIG: Okay, we'll get to him later.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah. But — yeah, [… Tony Davlin — BL] he was my teacher at —

MS. SAVIG: We can add it in later if you remember.

MS. LIPMAN: Okay. He's in Boston. I hated blowing glass pretty much. Like, I really didn't like it. And then somehow I really liked it. After three weeks I made something and it was — I don't know what. It wasn't — when I think back at that time, it wasn't these, like, very conscious decisions like, oh, my god, I'm going to go to school

for glass because of these reasons and fibers because of these reasons. I think it was because I found these huge chunks of my identity at that camp in these classes, and so it was this natural — I just never questioned, like, what am I going to — why am I going to go to art school? It was just the path I was on because it's where I found myself — you know, just found my voice. Like, it was the most natural feeling thing in the world for me.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah. But at first — so then you — so you went — from Horizons you graduated high school and then you went to —

MS. LIPMAN: Mass College of Art —

MS. SAVIG: Oh, yeah. Okay.

MS. LIPMAN: — in Boston. Great school.

MS. SAVIG: And then to Tyler.

MS. LIPMAN: And then Tyler. And I transferred because Mass Art had their Longwood building, which was where they housed all their three-dimensional practice, was being torn down and the shop was being rebuilt. And it kind of — at the name branch of the school, which was only a couple of blocks away. But I was going to be without hot glass for two years of my studies.

MS. SAVIG: That's difficult.

MS. LIPMAN: And also the out-of-state tuition went up, like, 200 percent or something.

MS. SAVIG: Oh.

MS. LIPMAN: So it was kind of a natural thing.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: Mass Art had an incredible faculty, though, and really incredible students. I was one of the youngest students there because it was so affordable that there was a lot of people coming back for second degrees. So I think the maturity of the students there was something I really missed when I went to Tyler, even though in the end Tyler ended up being a really good place for me. And Lewis Knauss was at Tyler. So I did a double major in fibers and glass in both places. And Jon Clark was my teacher in glass, who, I have a great relationship with Jon. I think he had some really inspiring ideas at the time that I was in his class. I mean, Lewis definitely challenged me beyond anything that anyone else ever did. He was able to really engage in a discourse about every level of the practice that we were working in. And his knowledge of everything was so expansive that he could really bring things to what you were doing that would — you know, like the hammer. [Laughs.] He really, like, just came down and — it wasn't always tough love. It was like — you know, it was positive —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — too, but there was definitely times where he knew that it was time to be strict.

MS. SAVIG: To challenge you a little bit?

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah —

MS. SAVIG: Push you?

MS. LIPMAN: — and call me out — like, if I wasn't ready for a critique or something, he would — and I would admit it, he would say, "You're right," and he'd turn and, like, escort the class away kind of thing.

MS. SAVIG: Oh.

MS. LIPMAN: He was fearless —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — in a way that — you know, when I look at academia now, and just having visited a lot of programs, I think that students tend to have a lot more power, or exert their power more now —

MS. SAVIG: Absolutely.

MS. LIPMAN: — in school, and maybe certain teachers might be cowed by that a little bit because they fear losing their jobs too.

MS. SAVIG: There's a lot of top-down pressure right now.

MS. LIPMAN: It's tremendous. I know people who lost their jobs. I am not one of those people that would ever have challenged either in that way. [Laughs.] I mean, I'm —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: I don't think I felt entitled to doing something like that at the time.

MS. SAVIG: It takes one person.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: So were you doing pretty equal amounts of work in fiber and glass? How did you choose?

MS. LIPMAN: The glass department was incredibly dynamic at Tyler. The students were really — and of course working in glass is something that is completely just very exhibitionist, seductive, practice to witness, to watch. So it was always something that people —

MS. SAVIG: Hypnotizing.

MS. LIPMAN: It is. It's very social and there's a lot of ego and a lot of hormones floating around on both sides of the fence. And I think — so I think that the heart, like, gut of my experience was really in the glass department. The fiber department was a lot quieter, but Lewis was really — he made that a really electric experience for me in challenging — it was also a nice place to kind of retreat to, and I felt like the ideas that I was most interested in were tied more to fiber, like that fiber materials studies as opposed to glass. Jon Clark was teaching the history of the vessel for the majority of the time that I was his student. I'm glad he did that but it wasn't what I was interested in. So I think it took a long time for me to really understand what I was interested in, in the material. Now when I use a vessel I think I really understand and am always first and foremost looking at it as a vessel. So that was really —

MS. SAVIG: What didn't you like about it at first?

MS. LIPMAN: Like what didn't I respond to in terms of the —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — the idea of vessel? I think what — the material did not — the reason I was drawn to the material was not because I was blowing a bubble and creating a vessel. [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, Okay.

MS. LIPMAN: Okay? I mean, it wasn't that. It was never that. It was more about the floppy, soft, fluid, expressive kind of memory that happens in the material, the fragility of the material. I think that's why it took so long to kind of find my voice in the material because I didn't care whether the bubble was on center. Let's be clear: It was difficult to keep the bubble on center. So all of these traditional craft, like, concerns of process of making the material were, like, not interesting to me. It was not a process that came naturally to me. It took a really long time to have any sense of control over the material.

And on top of that you're witnessing people that you've been in school with who — I was blowing glass a lot longer than most people because I started as a teenager. I would come to college and there were people that started, you know, at the beginning of that college year and were better than me. For me it was like this constant practice of humiliation in the material. It's still true to an extent, but I don't —I've harnessed that now. That relinquishing of control is very important conceptually for my work.

So I think I've really found a way to take ownership over some of the ideas that were impressed upon me as being important at the time. And so it's like a reaction to those ideas —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — more than anything.

MS. SAVIG: The way you — conceptually it sounds like your approach was very much rooted in textiles and the ability for the material to give way.

MS. LIPMAN: It still is to a certain extent, you know?

MS. SAVIG: Just sort of very, very fragile material.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: Very fragile medium.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah. It still is, though, that process of — like that additive process of building.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: It's really a — that was my fiber background.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah. That's a very unique approach then.

MS. LIPMAN: Weaving or knitting or, you know, adding layers of things — patterns, building patterns. It all is coming right from that type of background.

MS. SAVIG: So what motivated — or I guess sustained your interest in glass through this period of frustration method?

MS. LIPMAN: That's a good question.

MS. SAVIG: Were you just stubborn so you didn't want to give up?

MS. LIPMAN: It's in some ways really difficult for me to even tell you, like, why do I keep working with it now, because it's so deeply engrained in what I do. It's really an extension of myself. And it's difficult now to say, well, why did you continue on? I suppose I could say it was the qualities of the material, the elusivity of the material, the fragility of the material, the beauty of the material, the way the material recorded that moment in my working, the challenge, whether I could actually make what I wanted to make, and what did I want to make? I was constantly trying to find a way to join fibers and glass when I was in school. I felt like it was really important to marry the two materials that I was working in. So I was doing all these experiments of knotting around glass —

MS. SAVIG: Wow.

MS. LIPMAN: — or making marbles and, you know, kind of filling a tool, you know, sack. And then I realized — I think after I graduated I realized, oh, it's not — it's not that I have to marry the materials; it's the qualities of the materials of both the soft sculpture that I was interested in and glass that are the same. [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: It was like a parallel interest. That was a moment where I was like, oh, I don't have to join these two things. [Laughs.] What was I thinking? Because it was a struggle.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: It's really hard to combine materials.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, especially those two.

MS. LIPMAN: Really hard, you know?

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: So I think that — I mean, why do we make anything at all? What continues to motivate us to come into the studio and drive us to make things? I guess at that time that was the materials that I was most enthusiastic about. I chose to pursue them for that reason and I continue to chose to pursue them because that's what I do, is I make things. I mean, I guess I could have done — I did take some photography classes, and I really wanted to also go into printmaking. But when I was at Mass Art my guidance counselor, whatever, refused to allow me to have three majors. [They laugh.] He said, "You have to choose." I was furious and in the end I never ended up pursuing printmaking but I —

MS. SAVIG: Gosh, you're so close to Madison now.

MS. LIPMAN: I know.

MS. SAVIG: You should go to Tandem sometime.

MS. LIPMAN: I have visited Tandem and I was so blown away. I was like — [gasps]. Actually I worked with the print department at Alfred when I visited there last year — Will Contino — and I was so excited. I was going to go back this past year and I had just a series of circumstantial things that happened this year and I didn't go back. But it's on my list of things to do. I do think — I think that the prints that I'm doing now are, you know, a way to kind of — I think that's a way that I've come back into that interest even though I'm not the person to actually — I'm not involved in the process of printing in the way that I would have been as a printmaker, and I think that that's Okay. I don't desire that, you know. But I've always held a grudge against that guy. [They laugh.] I don't even remember his name anymore. I'm just like — in some ways I feel like I went to the wrong school —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — because if I had gone to Alfred University, where they encourage those students to just be a visual artist and to try all of these different things, I wonder what the outcome would have been for me. Not that I have regrets but just, you know, there are points where I've felt like that was — that was restrictive, I thought, in a way that was unnecessary.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: Like, why do I have to choose?

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: It was so behind the times when you looked at how the majority of artists work now — I mean, having to choose a material. What I do is considered antiquated, you know, because I focus on one material. I mean, really, you know. So I have multiple conversations about that with students and emerging artists, where I find myself not necessarily on the defensive but defending, like, you know, my practice of pursuing one material basically.

MS. SAVIG: It's something that I feel contemporary craft is battling with, and has been battling with for decades now, this sort of defense of choosing a medium. What other artists, when you were in art school, were you looking at — contemporary or at museums?

MS. LIPMAN: In art school I was really inspired by Magdalena Abakanowicz, Ann Hamilton — I can't think. It's a long time ago now. It really feels like a long time ago.

MS. SAVIG: Why did those two jump to mind right away?

MS. LIPMAN: I think they were really, like — they were deeply influential to me. You know, when I think about, okay, who was I really thinking about, it was those two. Some people that came through Tyler have also — I've followed their work because I thought it was really powerful — Judy Pfaff.

MS. SAVIG: Oh yeah, she came through —

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, and Rikrit Tiravanija, who — I don't know if I'm saying his last name right but I — so I really, really love his work. You know, so there's, like —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — people like that who — actually, did Judy Pfaff come through or was it Petah Coyne and then Judy Pfaff at Pilchuck? But I had — I was working either at a summer school or at Tyler and I witnessed Peyta Quina [ph] — I definitely listened to her lecture and it was pretty powerful. Judy Pfaff I think was at Pilchuck actually. She might have come through Philly too. So there were people like that, that — I can't say I was looking to them for inspiration but I was really fascinated with their process and their practice.

MS. SAVIG: Did Rikrit make food?

MS. LIPMAN: I don't think he made food. I think he just did a lecture when he came. Josiah McElheny came through.

MS. SAVIG: Oh, yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: I can't say that I looked to him for inspiration, though. I find artists' lives fascinating just because I'm really endlessly looking towards some sign of how people are doing this, you know? [Laughs.] I really, like — so, I just soak all of that stuff in because I really wonder how people live and continue to make and how — you know. So that's really —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: I spend some serious time reading about that, I think.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: But I can't say that I was looking towards history for inspiration at that time —

MS. SAVIG: Okay.

MS. LIPMAN: — even though I was studying the history of art and the history of —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — femininity and philosophy, et cetera, et cetera. I don't think that there was anything that I really — there was no singular practice like the still life tradition I'm working in now —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — that I really discovered at that time —

MS. SAVIG: So, background.

MS. LIPMAN: — and said, oh, this is my thing.

MS. SAVIG: Right. What did your work look like then?

MS. LIPMAN: It was both glass and fiber. So I did a lot of soft sculpture, like my BFA thesis exhibition was a very big — like a 20-foot-long soft sculpture of a pink vinyl club. I made a — it wasn't a chalkboard. It was inspired by a chalkboard but it was a one-way or two-way mirror that I had drawn — I had written on that people could see their own reflection and read what I had written. I did a map with gut sandwiched between glass. I did —

MS. SAVIG: Like cat gut or —

MS. LIPMAN: Like pig intestine.

MS. SAVIG: Oh, okay. Wow.

MS. LIPMAN: I did —

MS. SAVIG: Is that still around?

MS. LIPMAN: No, I have no idea where that is. I did a piece that I actually still really like — [they laugh] — but I have no idea — it's totally destroyed. I don't even know if I have an image of this thing. I don't remember the title but it was a big rectangular box that was padded in also — I think it was pink vinyl. And behind glass were folds of vinyl, and within that rectangle was — embedded was a speaker, a black audio speaker. I was interested in ideas of absurdity and how much — I was inspired by museum installation and this idea of authenticity, which I guess may have been indirectly influenced by Josiah, but I believe I was working with some of those themes prior to his visit. So I was really interested in this idea of the opacity of information with ornamentation. So this, decorus kind of object perhaps that gives you nothing back, that is this —it's a sheer understanding of whatever it is, this — I did a piece also that had — and I just saw, like, a more famous artist who did this earlier than I did or something but I didn't know about it at the time. But I made a small box with a beige curtain that opened and closed. When you opened the curtain there were — behind glass was another row of curtains. So it was like this —

MS. SAVIG: Oh, yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — just this revealing of, like —

MS. SAVIG: Interesting.

MS. LIPMAN: — of nothing, essentially.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: So I also did some work on the body. I made some glass pieces that were cut. And that's when I really started breaking through the vessels, when I started cutting things apart and could kind of get to, like, a shell, you know, like some understanding of a shell or skin, which then brought me back to fibers. So it was like that kind of thing that was happening. I was making some body —it wasn't really ornamentation. I don't know. It was harnesses kind of.

MS. SAVIG: Oh.

MS. LIPMAN: Like shells. That was pretty early on, yeah.

MS. SAVIG: So then you graduated and what did you do then? Did you —

MS. LIPMAN: I graduated. I spent far too long in school. I was in school for five-and-a-half years.

MS. SAVIG: I was for five.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah. [They laugh.] Which is why I think I didn't go back for my MFA actually, because I was like, hmm — you know, now I have other ideas, but my number-one goal when I graduated was to just keep making work, that I was not going to go back to school before I proved to myself that I could make work outside of an academic context. So that was my main thing I wanted to prove to myself.

MS. SAVIG: And you did them both?

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, but herculean — like, hard. Really hard. I understand why people pop back into school, because it's just a cold world out there. So I was working for — I think maybe I'd been working for this guy also while I was in school a little bit, but I was working for an oriental rug restorer, between Germantown and Chestnut Hill in Philly. I applied for a job with the Barnes Foundation —

MS. SAVIG: Oh.

MS. LIPMAN: — to reinstall their permanent —

MS. SAVIG: [Inaudible.]

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, their permanent installation. And the reason they hired me, they told me later, was because I had a textile background and I was doing oriental restoration, which was actually — there were some questionable things that this practice — you know, like coloring the rug with markers he had me do. I was just like, this is wrong — like really wrong. [They laugh.] Wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong. But they didn't know that. They were like, oh, rug restoration. So they ended up needing someone to specifically train with a textile conservator to archivally hang the Roualt and Picasso tapestries at the Barnes Foundation. So I ended up working with this woman, Sarah, who had trained at Winterthur [(DE) Museum — BL]. I was stitching into these tapestries in the center of the Barnes —it was an amazing experience.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: So I did that, and that kind of — then I fell backwards into art installation. So the year after I graduated I was basically doing art installations. I started working at the ICA in Philly. I did some work at the PMA. I did some work at some other historical houses in Philadelphia like stitching their labels, archivally — stitching for $7 an hour. I ran into one of my teachers on the street, who was a visiting artist in glass, Deborah Czeresko, who is a phenomenal woman, like amazing, amazing artist, designer, maker. And I was really — I was pretty close with her actually when I was at Tyler. She was really dynamic. I was completely smitten with her. I ran into her on the street. And she was fully entrenched at UrbanGlass in Brooklyn. She says, "I want you." She was visiting with her girlfriend down in Philly for a weekend away or something. She said, "Gosh, you should come up and, like, TA for me for my NYU class at Urban." So I ended up commuting. I was up in New York three days a week and I was in Philly four days a week. I did that for five months. You can imagine.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, that's a lot of train. Train or bus?

MS. LIPMAN: It was Peter Pan bus.

MS. SAVIG: Oh, ouch.

MS. LIPMAN: I watched *Free Willy 2* seven times.

MS. SAVIG: Ouch. Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: Seven times. I once met a guy who was doing an internship at the Museum of Natural History and had also watched *Free Willy 2* seven or eight times. [Laughs.] It was like —

MS. SAVIG: I didn't even know there was a *Free Willy 2*.

MS. LIPMAN: No, I know. You wouldn't. [They laugh.] You wouldn't know unless you ride Peter Pan bus for five months, because you can't turn it off. Anyway, that was a hard life. Like, my cat — I'd come home and my cat

would pee on my coat, you know? [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: She was pissed. I went seriously into debt. Like everything went on the credit card.

So this must have been in January that I ran into Deborah— or maybe it was in the fall and I started working for her in that spring, so that was in the spring of ’96, I guess. Then the fall of ’96 I moved to Brooklyn, on a wing and prayer, you know? I was totally anxious. I was asking my friends who also were affiliated with the Urban, “Am I going to have enough work? How am I going to survive? Do you think the work will come?” At that time it was still really easy to get work. If you were remotely dependable, hard-working, if you could bluff more than you knew, which I certainly could — [laughs]. I think I was really truly young —

[Cross talk.]

MS. LIPMAN: — in that way. I was, oh, I know this. And it’s like, whatever. I was like, I can teach that. So I went up there and sure enough — I went up there because I had proposed a class, which was a really big deal for me at that time, with my friend Ruth Shortt, to co-teach at Urban —

MS. SAVIG: What’s her last name?

MS. LIPMAN: Shortt.

MS. SAVIG: Oh, Shortt, okay.

MS. LIPMAN: Ruth Shortt.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: I was so excited: Oh, my god, they accepted our class. So we went up there. Then I picked up work. I started doing cold working for people. I did cold working for Alan Glovsky, who is no longer with us. I was working for Deborah. I kept working for her, which was really difficult. It was a difficult relationship for me. I was a nervous wreck around her. She’s incredibly demanding and I am not very skilled. [Laughs.] So it was a bad recipe, I think. It was brutal for me. But it was this huge eye-opening experience. So I ended up —often when you work for yourself you work more than you would normally work when you work for someone else.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: I ended up working, like, nonstop, through that following January in ’97 or something, got terribly sick and recovered after the holidays. Karen LaMonte, she and I had become friends at some point. I think I TAed for her when she was teaching for NYU [New York University] or LIU [Long Island University] or Parsons. She was the education director there and she decided to quit. I don’t necessarily think it was my idea to apply for that job because I had no experience. I had taught at Horizons. I had gone back and taught in the summer after I graduated from college. I did that for two years. That was really my only — I felt like I was a fairly organized person but I didn’t really have an arts administration background or anything like that. Not that many people do who work in those —

MS. SAVIG: You’ve got to start somewhere.

MS. LIPMAN: — yeah — positions. So I applied for the job and I got it. It was almost like they were, like, okay, you’re standing next in the job.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: I really identified with that position fully — so much so that I really didn’t make very much for the first year that I was in that job. That was a hugely gratifying job for me. It was a small staff, at that time it was, like, five people.

MS. SAVIG: Wow.

MS. LIPMAN: I think it’s still pretty small, even though they’re renovating now. But that position enabled me to meet pretty much everyone in the glass field that I ever wanted to meet.

MS. SAVIG: Everybody —

[Cross talk.]

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: And, you know, plus I got to see Robert Rauschenberg's tire being blown.

MS. SAVIG: Really?

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: Cool.

MS. LIPMAN: Claes Oldenburg came in, signed in, had a conversation with John Perreault, and laughter.

MS. SAVIG: What?

MS. LIPMAN: It was like, "What?! Really?!" You know, Kiki Smith is hanging out in the lamp-working studio occasionally.

MS. SAVIG: Oh, wow, yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: Sandy Skoglund. It was like these great people. I managed to completely humiliate myself in front of Audrey Flack. [They laugh.] You know, things like that, but just the — Tony Oursler. I was just at Brooklyn Glass last week and he was there working again. People that I really admired that I never thought I'd be working around were coming in the door there. I was also working part-time as Heller Gallery's weekend girl when I got that job.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: I think I only worked for them for five or six months. Then when I got the education director job, then I had to quit that job because it was too much.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: Am I just rambling?

MS. SAVIG: No. No, this is great.

MS. LIPMAN: Okay. [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: No, this is great.

MS. LIPMAN: Okay. So major reminiscing here.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah. No, it's great.

MS. LIPMAN: Major —

MS. SAVIG: I'm loving it.

MS. LIPMAN: So I never intended to show with Heller. I felt pretty ill-equipped to handle introducing myself and my work into the larger art world. I was totally anxious about being in New York and being able to kind of —

MS. SAVIG: Well, yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: If you're around Kiki Smith it's tough to —

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, just to figure out where you are within that.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: I still feel that way.

MS. SAVIG: As a young artist.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah. I mean, I still — I don't spend nearly as much time thinking about things like that anymore, but when I just moved to New York it was really confusing and really exciting —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — super, super exciting. So between Heller and Urban I really got this crash course on not only what I didn't know, which was just about everything technically — I really didn't know that much — but just all of these people, just witnessing all of these makers —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — and what that was about. People who work in glass typically are really friendly, accessible —

MS. SAVIG: You have to be.

MS. LIPMAN: — funny people. You know, just good people.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: It's a good group of people.

MS. SAVIG: You just have to be in order to get something done.

MS. LIPMAN: It really is a certain specific kind of person for sure. So, yeah.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: So that was, like, '97.

MS. SAVIG: So even though you had this job, you found time to continue making your own work —

MS. LIPMAN: I did.

MS. SAVIG: — and applying for scholarships and —

MS. LIPMAN: I did. I established a studio, a variety of different studios. The first one was in Williamsburg on Metropolitan Avenue. I had a variety of misfitted attempts at finding a studio space there. Then I shared a studio with two other people in Dumbo before Dumbo became Dumbo.

MS. SAVIG: Gosh, what do you think that stands for now? [Laughs.]

MS. LIPMAN: Oh, my god. I know that our rent for a nice-sized space, a space that was probably akin to this size, my studio, was, like, $900, $950. So we split that three ways.

MS. SAVIG: In the '90s.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah. Yeah. And there was nothing down there. There might have been one bodega within walking distance, a few washed up heads on the beach. [They laugh.] But other than that, there was not much.

By the time I left, like, GAle GAtes et al were down there at the Dumbo Arts Center. There were things that were happening. And then of course they were sandblasting and whitewashing, like, the portion of the Manhattan Bridge that the — the new clock tower condo could see from their window — [laughs] — at the same time. So you could just see —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — the transformation of the area just — I mean, within, like, two years or something.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: It was really not that long. I was making work — and I can show you pictures of this actually, but I was making work that was using water imagery a lot. I was doing some experimenting with memory and trying to conjure up — and I still use in this in my work quite a bit, but I was trying to almost trick your mind into seeing past what is in front of you, the object in front of you, into this quintessential memory of something. I was using water to explore that. So I was doing the horizon drawings on the wall with strips of sheet glass that I'd silicone to the wall, or hot-glued to the wall sometimes. I also did some kiln form drawings where I would take ceramic fiber and just make a literal drawing and then cut that out and slump the glass over it and then drill it and hammer it to the wall type of thing. So then I was recreating this drawing over and over again every time I installed it, which I also do now in these compositions. So I think moving to New York I just was looking for some relief from all of the impact of everything around me.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: I went to this very kind of quiet, more landscape-oriented place, which became complete whiplash recently when I was doing the *Glimmering Gone* project with Ingalena, because most people would say, “Oh, well, the objects are Beth and the landscape is Ingalena.” It’s like actually —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — Ingalena’s done some objects, I’ve also done landscape, but people don’t really know us for either of those things.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: So it was like a really interesting mash-up, and then also like a cyclical kind of peak again somehow.

MS. SAVIG: Right. How did those correlate to your memory?

MS. LIPMAN: What I was doing is I was taking my understanding, my recollection of something benign and also kind of universal, this understanding of standing in front of a body of water, for instance, and trying to recreate it in such a way that — I was trying to communicate to the viewer or someone else, a witness, this place of calmness that you would come to if you were standing in front of a body of water. In one case I did a waterfall that was out of white stained glass and copper foil that was applied directly to the wall. It was based on a photograph — a drawing of a photograph.

MS. SAVIG: Okay.

MS. LIPMAN: I have no recollection of standing in front of this waterfall. It was a waterfall I was standing in front of in Mexico in the Yucatan. I found the photograph years later. I could not recall taking the photograph or the waterfall. So that kind of tricked me into this fragmentation of memory and the disintegration of a moment in time. Then I abstracted that so far that it became an abstraction. I got tired of that piece because it took way too long to make. [They laugh.] People didn’t really understand it. So then I started doing these just very direct, intuitive drawings that were not planned out, that were not interpretations of something else, that were just immediate drawings on the wall with glass and plaster, or hot glue and glass, or something like that. And I think — once again, why glass? But it’s why not? That was my material of choice to draw in and continues to be. So that’s what I was doing when I was in New York until John —

[End of disc.]

MS. LIPMAN: [In progress] — Perreault invited me to participate in the Brooklyn Museum show, where I could choose anything from the museum. I instantly gravitated to the Severin Roesen painting, but that was really the impetus for the whole still life kind of exploration I’ve been doing. Before that show I had been to the Rijksmuseum like a year before, or something, maybe two years —and I had bought some post cards of some of the still lifes in that museum. I had been looking at still lifes but not in a focused, conscious way, like I’m going to do something with still life.

MS. SAVIG: Right. I think I have seen postcards there. When you did the Brooklyn exhibition, was that before or after you got the Creative Glass Center of America fellowship?

MS. LIPMAN: That was before.

MS. SAVIG: Okay. And when were you able to leave? Did you leave Brooklyn for fellowships, for new opportunities?

MS. LIPMAN: So I was a visiting artist at Franklin Pierce College in New Hampshire. I met Frederic Chelminski—

MS. SAVIG: Okay.

MS. LIPMAN: — up there, who was to become my first husband, a machinist and inventor. I was totally in love. [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: So the last two years of living in New York I was commuting, every weekend, every other weekend, up to New Hampshire. Then in 2000 I moved to New Hampshire, to a town of 5,000 people, from Brooklyn. It was definitely culture shock —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — and a very bucolic setting — 1860s farmhouse, plenty of space to make my work, and a house that the wind blew through. I mean, really somewhat primitive. He had a machine shop behind the house. And from there I went to Wheaton. This is how it went down: I moved I think in August, and from August — I don't even remember when my wedding was. It was sometime in — it might have been the end of August now, the beginning of September. Then I went to the Creative Glass Center of America. I was there for two days and then it was 9/11.

MS. SAVIG: Okay.

MS. LIPMAN: So I had, like, literally just moved from New York —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — moved up to New Hampshire and then moved down — I was, like — really within a period of month or something that's what happened. Yeah. I used that residency to make the majority of the work for my first solo show at Heller, which was the following — is that right? Am I getting that right?

MS. SAVIG: I read that you were at Heller in 2000.

MS. LIPMAN: I was —

MS. SAVIG: That might not have been when your first solo was.

MS. LIPMAN: I think my first solo show there was in 2001 —

MS. SAVIG: Okay.

MS. LIPMAN: — because the Brooklyn Museum show was in June of 2000. Then I participated in a group exhibition at Heller that summer —

MS. SAVIG: Okay, that makes sense.

MS. LIPMAN: — because they had seen — they had heard about the still life and had expressed interest, which I didn't believe actually. I said, "Yeah, right, Doug," because I was this weekend girl, you know? It was like, whatever. I made him a piece for that summer and then I was invited to have an exhibition I think in May or March. I can't recall. I have it written down somewhere and I probably have an invite but it was in the spring of 2001. I'm pretty sure that's how that went. [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: We can look those up later.

MS. LIPMAN: Yes, we can check it out but I'm pretty sure that's how it was.

MS. SAVIG: Okay. So then do you sort of feel like you were on your way? Was that sort of the turning point, 2000 or 2001?

MS. LIPMAN: I have to say that I really didn't feel like I was on my way until maybe a couple of years ago. I mean, it's funny because Frederic was — he was positive that I was on my way. When I talked about going out and getting a job, because we were totally broke, he was just, "Wait. Just wait. The work is going to sell. Just wait." I'm like, "It might not sell." So I really never had faith in the marketplace or the commercial aspect.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: If you mean if I was on my way based on —what do you mean was I on my way? [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: I guess I meant really you sort of —

MS. LIPMAN: Let's go back and stand here for a second.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, I know, I think the commercial aspect is important but I kind of meant the sort of — you found your rhythm and you found the still life, something that would sort of become something that —

MS. LIPMAN: Okay.

MS. SAVIG: — you know what I mean, that became your more signature, opening entry into the art world.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah. I have to say, if I'm being completely honest with you —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — the first still life I made at the Brooklyn Museum, I felt that it was interesting, but I had no understanding of whether or not that would be something —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — that was something I wanted to pursue. I thought it was interesting. I was under the belief at that time that I was never going to pursue anything that specific in depth for this long —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — because I had these misconceptions about what that meant about being formulaic or selling out or whatever it was. I just didn't see myself doing that. Initially it was from sheer encouragement from others that opportunities arose —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — from that event in my life —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — that afforded me to continue to make things. I chose to pursue those opportunities. But it was a very conscious choice at that moment. I was choosing, okay, I can either make this piece for Heller Gallery or not.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: There's no other — like Barbara Gladstone, Gagosian, not over here. [They laugh.] Andrea Rosen: Hi, we're waiting for you. It wasn't like that.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: It was like — and Heller is an excellent gallery. It's hands down, an amazing gallery, and their history and the significance of the history of that gallery in this material is huge.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: And so I was tickled.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: But I don't know if I would have necessarily pursued still life. It wasn't this —

MS. SAVIG: Magnetic thing.

MS. LIPMAN: Well, when you make something, it's just so new when you first make it —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — that there's a certain emptiness that happens after you finish it, and I think it takes — it then holds the same value in some ways and the same interests as everything that came before it. It's not going to be nearly as interesting as whatever the next thing is that you're going to be doing. [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: I don't think that I place more value on that moment —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — than I did the moments that I was exploring landscape.

MS. SAVIG: It's always been about the process.

MS. LIPMAN: It was just that I was afforded opportunity from that moment and I chose to continue to pursue it, because I had opportunity coming to me and I knew that that would reaffirm my identity as a maker and also be a way to move forward where I could be afforded more opportunities to make in a variety of different ways. I knew that was a key thing.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: But John Perreault, when he saw the piece, was like, “This is it for you. This is your thing.” I was like, hmm. He said that.

[Cross talk.]

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: And John — I deeply admire John and I still admire John. I always made sure he saw what I was doing, but he never — he liked some things, not other things. Some things he was like, “Eh,” and I was like, “Fine, I don’t need you.” [They laugh.] Like, whatever. So I was reacting to him but he was — because I worked with him every day and he was the director —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — and because of who he is and his history —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — I was really deeply respectful of him as a person. When he said that, I paid attention to what he said. I can say to you that after probably two years of working in still life, then I really started to feel like I was really feeling it, like it was why it was important to me specifically —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — why it continues to interest me. The more I discovered about the tradition and the more that I continued to understand about the tradition, it has afforded me, like, such luxurious experience in practice, in making, and I can’t think of anything else that is more relevant to do right now than work with cultural objects and material culture, which is where my inspiration is right now. It’s funny how the universe sometimes steers you into the direction —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — that you need to go, but I think because those “aha” inspiration moments are deeply intuitive for me, and then I figure out everything intellectually behind it, sometimes it affords me a luxury of continuing to be completely engaged with my practice in a way that is really discovering the unknown, even though perhaps on the surface my work has a lot of continuity and is — you know what I mean? Like I think that —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: I think, depending upon how you look at it, it could look very linear in some way. I don’t know how other people see the work, but I know that the path has taken me into a place of really just like blissful kind of like discovery of understanding of concepts and things like that —

MS. SAVIG: That’s really interesting.

MS. LIPMAN: — in a way that I would not have — that I didn’t know when I started it.

MS. SAVIG: I think we should focus a little bit more on that tomorrow, more specifically about the still lifes. So maybe just sum up —

MS. LIPMAN: Oh, yeah, it’s 10:00.

MS. SAVIG: — tonight, looking back and just talking about just your education and how you became an educator. Other than the ones we’ve gone over, what have been some other rewarding experiences, or maybe not rewarding but challenging in a way that pushed your boundaries?

MS. LIPMAN: Well, if we’re talking about that time frame in my life, the semester abroad in Italy was huge —

MS. SAVIG: Oh, okay. I didn’t know you went there.

MS. LIPMAN: — for me because I had no facilities, so I was really forced to think about making outside of — having new approaches and process.

MS. SAVIG: Did you go to Murano?

MS. LIPMAN: I did, but the thing that was the most inspiring to me was actually just doing — I did some environment-modifying events in Rome late at night where I’d go out and kind of alter existing environments.

I also did a series of drawings of food. That was really what specifically brought me to working with food was going to a bakery and buying cakes and bringing it back to the studio and eating it and drawing it, and eating and drawing until I found a point of resistance in the drawing and the eating. So I started thinking about consequence and desire and decadence in those moments, in way that was really pure —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — I think, really just very direct. That was really usually influential to me.

MS. SAVIG: And you were there for a semester, a year?

MS. LIPMAN: Just for a semester. I think back at it now and that is definitely — congealed some of the ideas that I will probably continue to work with for forever, as long as I'm making.

MS. SAVIG: I can tell you're still very engaged in that. Maybe one last question for today: Given the fact that your mom was self-taught and then you had a formal education — and then Brooklyn is sort of a mix, isn't it, of people who are taking courses or formally trained, and also people who just want to take workshops to learn the processes —

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: — do you think ultimately there's a difference or a route that has appealed to you more, or —

MS. LIPMAN: If I had to do it either way again or —

MS. SAVIG: — could you just talk about the distinctions, I guess, and what they mean to you?

MS. LIPMAN: Well, I think it's very easy for me to kind of disdain the route that I took a little bit, but the fact is the route I took really gave me what I needed in many ways. I became self-sufficient and resourceful in creative problem solving. I became critical, maybe hypercritical — [they laugh] — in school. Those skills have been hugely helpful in every aspect of my life — [laughs] —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — because I really did apply them to making money and to survive as I was making my work.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: I mean, just that aspect of —that's why I think it's such a tragedy in this society now that we don't value creativity because people think of it as just the arts, whatever that means to them, but they don't —

MS. SAVIG: Right, let's —

MS. LIPMAN: I mean, the aspect of — creative people can excel in any circumstance —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — in a way that is vital and necessary. I'll get off the soapbox now, but I think that those are the most positive things that I received from being academically trained as an artist — where to look, how to look —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — where to go to get things, that kind of thing. Ironically, the work that most inspires me now is work primarily of untrained or nonacademically trained artists. The work that I find to be most authentic or pure is —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: That's one of the reasons why I knew I'd be absolutely fine in Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin because the John Michael Kohler Arts Center specializes in —

MS. SAVIG: Putting people —

MS. LIPMAN: — outsider art but it's their — "the vernacular environment builder" is the catchy phrase —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — they came up with to describe outside artists. [Laughs.] But that work is the work that really —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — like, it brings me to my knees —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — more than anything. Also in turn slightly different but similar practice is the history of the dec arts now. Of course there were guilds and there are shops, and there's partnerships and there's a system of learning in that, but it was — and perhaps I'm romanticizing it because I wasn't there, but in most cases it was not centered on ego, and it was —that was beside the point. You might have a big ego but not because of what you do. So this kind of being driven for reasons other than the self —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — is really a powerful inspiration, I think, for me.

MS. SAVIG: That seems to point to your work with sort of community engagement and as well as your teaching philosophy too. Has that informed —

[Cross talk.]

MS. LIPMAN: Oh, absolutely.

MS. SAVIG: Okay.

MS. LIPMAN: Absolutely. I'm really extremely interested in what you know. I'm much less interested in what I know, because I already know what I know, or what I don't know, which is more. I don't know more than I do know at this point.

MS. SAVIG: Someone always knows things you don't know.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: I agree.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah. In witnessing other people making, it's such a sacred thing to do that, and if you practice nonjudgment in that witnessing, it can be a really powerful thing. It's not that the objects are not important, but they're not more important than the process of making it —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — and what that person has to go through to make peace with themselves to make something. So, my mother last year was talking about going back to school to study visual art and to get a degree. I had to say, "Don't do that." [Laughs.] I said, "They're going to take everything that's unique about what you do. You already are so far" —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — "beyond what they could teach you on many levels that all they will do is" — "they," — "but is managed to kind of like, through ignorance on their part, like kind of try to squeeze you into the academic box" —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — "that there is. You may find yourself learning a lot from it and may be inspired, but they're going to make you more like them." And academically trained art is very specific.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: And we don't need another —my mother does not need to have that degree —

MS. SAVIG: Right. No.

MS. LIPMAN: — because what she does is unique —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — in what she does. I think it's just out of an insecurity on her part that she wants to do that, and also that she thinks she'll go further with the degree. I'm like, "Not necessarily," you know?

MS. SAVIG: Yeah. Right.

MS. LIPMAN: I think there's very real limitations to getting a degree in visual arts. [Laughs]. I don't know. It's something I really think about a lot —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — because I think, oh, maybe I do want to teach someday. Maybe I want to be a tenure-track professor, but I'm pretty sure I don't because I'm highly sensitive to — I don't know what I would tell those people. I don't know what I would tell students.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: I know that I probably have far more experience than many of their teachers in being a practicing studio artist.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: That's realistic.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: I'm saying that. I don't think it's pompous or arrogant to say that —

MS. SAVIG: No. No, it's not.

MS. LIPMAN: — because of the way that universities hire. However, I can't tell someone, if you do this, this and this you'll be practicing in 10 or 15 years and you'll get a certain amount of recognition, which everyone needs a certain amount unless you're an outsider artist — [laughs] — because you need to have some impetus to continue to make, unless you're in a position that you can just make outside of the realms of society or something like that.

MS. SAVIG: Independently wealthy.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, essentially.

MS. SAVIG: Which no one is anymore.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, so I think that's my main concern is what would you tell those people?

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: I don't think that the academy would welcome having me around for a long time — [laughs] — because there's no formula that you can give to someone that is going to —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: At the same time, it's such a valuable, critical —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — like, mind-blowing experience to discover yourself within the context of a truly supportive environment, whether it's a tough environment or a soft environment — it doesn't matter — but just that you have that and then leave that. It's such a polar opposite kind of if you never have that to begin with, would you — would you consider even identifying yourself as an artist? I don't know.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, I think it just goes back to what you were saying about it's the process — the learning process along the way that is actually at odds with academia because that's not the point. It's the grade at the end that becomes the point, the end product.

MS. LIPMAN: And I know because I visit schools a lot and I deeply enjoy that because I really am curious about what people are learning. But what gives me the right to tell anyone else what they should be making or not make, or what they should be thinking about or —it's such a vulnerable place to make anything at all. And then

you put yourself in the position of a student who's even more vulnerable. I can't imagine how you could be nothing except completely a total cheerleader and be supportive of whatever anyone makes at all — [laughs] — like let alone, like, try this or that.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: Like, who am I to say that? Anything that I would say would really influence that other person in a way that I don't choose to do that, because that means that they're thinking more like I would think then. Who cares about that, you know? So it's an impossible case. At the same time, the best teachers are just the best teachers —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — that are just — you can't —

MS. SAVIG: No, their teaching philosophy is totally different, which that's okay.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: Everybody can have their own approach.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: But it's great to hear what your approach is. I think that's a good place to stop for today.

MS. LIPMAN: Okay.

MS. SAVIG: Okay, until tomorrow.

MS. LIPMAN: Thanks.

[End of disc.]

MS. SAVIG: This is Mary Savig interviewing Beth Lipman at her studio in Sheboygan Falls the next day. It's September 19th and this is disc two. I think my first question will be, do you think of your work as part of any particular traditions?

MS. LIPMAN: It's a part of the still life tradition. It's in keeping with the still life tradition.

MS. SAVIG: Can you explain your thoughts on why you placed yourself in this tradition?

MS. LIPMAN: Well, I think that the actual compositions themselves are really directly in keeping with the traditions of still life. I've kind of spun off in one way or another. For instance, the quality of mimesis, which is common in the history of still life, is something that is less interesting for me. That's not necessarily my goal is to do something that is mimetic, although representation is important to me. So the ability to capture a moment in time is translated in process instead of a visual representation. But my primary concerns are the primary concerns of still life — issues of mortality, the symbolism behind the objects, what they signify in relation to identity as individuals and our culture as a whole.

MS. SAVIG: That's a good answer.

MS. LIPMAN: Representation of status and wealth or — and also, as I mentioned before, desire, consumption, consequence. These are issues that are central to what fascinates me. I can't imagine that I will stop thinking about those issues — [laughs] —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — given my trajectory at this point. They're really central to what I think about. The great thing about the still life tradition is that it encompasses so many different issues that I've found enough room to move throughout the tradition. So initially the thing that was most interesting to me was the parallel between our society and the Dutch golden era, and the kind of the display of wealth and status within objects, and consumerism and — I was really very interested in that initially. That was about 10 years ago now, or more. But now I will say to you that I've gradually evolved to really be thinking much more about the vanitas tradition and issues of mortality and also issues of identity. I almost view the work as portraits of self, or portraits of other, or composite portraits of — the last couple of pieces I've made have been portraits of institution plus perhaps one other person and myself. So there's been this mash-up that's happened through objects, which directly relates to material culture in that tradition within still life. So the possibilities in some ways are really endless.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: Although I will say also —that's been my primary focus, but then when I really look at the bastions of art history, like landscape —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — portraiture, still life —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: —these massive genres of work, I feel like I have an affinity to all of these different ways and different —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: And it's comforting —

MS. SAVIG: Yep.

MS. LIPMAN: — to rest there and know that in some ways — especially recently where I've started to combine more allusions to nature or dysfunctional nature in some ways, invasive nature, combined with overconsumption or excess within objects — the ideas within the tradition of still life are still relevant today and will continue to be relevant, not just for me but I think just for everyone. I can say that.

MS. SAVIG: How do you think your choice of objects has changed to sort of parallel your trajectory of how you see the genre of still lifes? So early on it might have been — as you were saying something about the Dutch golden era and its parallels to the contemporary, now are you looking more specifically for sources that do symbolize death and morality and mortality more overtly?

MS. LIPMAN: The vocabulary has become so inherent in what I do; it's become so second nature that I don't necessarily think that a lot of the symbology of what I've chosen to use has changed that much over the last 12 years. I can tell you what I tend to avoid. I avoid objects that are temporal, that could be dated really easily. Although I have to say that a lot of the objects —Flemish metalwork, things like that, they are specifically dated. I understand that. That's not something that we use in our contemporary society but they've become almost timeless.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: When you look at a still life painting you're not thinking, oh, that's so dated. [They laugh.] It's really not. I mean, of course it is also.

MS. SAVIG: That's so 1750.

MS. LIPMAN: I know. [They laugh.] So yesterday. So the symbolism and our understanding of the symbolism has evolved over time but the objects aren't the same. I think that that consistency is really powerful. I've had a lot of people ask me, "Why don't you make a cellphone and stick it in there, or an iPod?" Or wouldn't that be funny if you did this or that? I'm not looking for funny —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — and I'm not looking to trick people. I don't want something that is going to be out of fashion, specifically in my work. Now, I have used some obsolete objects. For instance, when Ingalena and I collaborated on *Glimmering Gone*, a lot of that was about obsolete objects and the passing of time, and the exoticism of something that we don't even know how it was used in some ways and how everything becomes obsolete in some way over time. So I know I just said the exact opposite thing where there's this category of timelessness and everything is also in obsolescence. So, it's both of these things —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — at the same time. Everything matters and nothing matters.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: But I will say that, I specifically try to avoid current material culture, I would say. I do look for this medium where things are believable now as they might have been before. Then also specifically within — like, what I'm working on right now harkens to what had its heyday in the Victorian era. I'm working on a sideboard.

There are certain times where I choose things that are rooted in specific periods of decorative arts, and in particular I'm really fascinated with Victorian decorative arts and how they view the home and decorating the home and adorning the home at that time; that was really a representation of your direct link to God or godliness, or your morality. That is deeply fascinating for me, and how it all is on the surface. It's all about the surface, the show. It's not even really functional and useful in any other way. I think what I can say is that the things that have interested me probably in the last four or five years have been within the still life tradition but have deeply broadened into this more almost like the domestic realm, domestic arts and, in a greater sense, the decorative arts. You know, how do we arrange a space or a home? So I think that's changed, is like just understanding a broader context for these compositions to live in and how that manifests.

MS. SAVIG: With the recent focus on domesticity, are you gesturing towards more implicit or explicit statements about gender or class?

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: I don't know; whichever one you prefer to answer.

MS. LIPMAN: I guess I'm certainly aware of myself at this moment in time as a woman making work in what was historically a male-dominated field within this traditional craft process, which is glass. I think it is very interesting that in the 1880s, at least initially, the decorating of the home was — it was the male place to do so and not the female place, even though it's become the female place to do so. So I know that I'm interested in an understanding of power maybe more so than gender, within understandings of — but it was such a powerful thing to decorate one's living environment. It was so critically important in terms of what that said about you that it was not trusted to the females. [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: Right. In many ways it was creating a portrait of yourself.

MS. LIPMAN: Exactly. Exactly. So that's the thread that I'm really very taken with at the moment. And then when I think about the role of decorating or nesting in today's society — and I look at Martha Stewart or I look at these nesting magazines or this obsession with the home or obsession with the objects, I think those things do — they have become bastardized into what we have now, and how we are unable to fulfill the ideal of having what we long to have. So I think that emptiness of trying to fill the void, or that longing for unification, which probably relates directly to both spirituality and mortality, is manifested through this coveting of objects, creating environments, this kind of thing. *Sideboard with Blue China*, which I'm working on now is just a referral to Oscar Wilde's, I'll never be able to live up to my expectations of my blue china. [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, that's a good —

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, it's really right there for me.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: That kind of thing, the inability to truly gain what we need through objects, although objects remain after we're gone, and what that says about us. So these questions are really, really valuable to me right now, and I don't have this — what I'm making is a response to those questions. They're not necessarily answers to those questions.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, because I do see a paradox on those, for example, Dutch still lifes or Victorian home decoration, where it didn't seem as if the objects were as disposable as they are now. It seems like the things that Martha Stewart sells at Macy's are not something that would be saved in a sideboard.

MS. LIPMAN: They're not keepsakes, right.

MS. SAVIG: Are you grappling with that at all, of this sort of juxtaposition between things that were meant to be timeless and saved at least through a few generations and the increasingly disposable consumption?

MS. LIPMAN: Society that we're living in.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: Well, I think that that's a really interesting question, and that the temporality of our lives seems to really have just been heightened, especially through our use of social networking and technology now. And it seems like the objects have really paralleled that disposability of everything.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: We were just talking about letters and the preciousness of actual written letters now, where we

don’t have that anymore. So it does feel like sand is really slipping through our fingers at a more rapid pace. And there’s not rocks anymore.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: There’s just sand. I think that when I use clear glass — this is just something that — of course, I don’t have my own formulas, but the clear, colorless glass for me really captures that sensibility of an elusiveness, an ephemerality of something that’s there and also not there, and available and completely unavailable visually. That is an important aspect of using the material in the way that I do, to talk about some of the ideas that we’re talking about.

MS. SAVIG: How long have you been using the clear glass?

MS. LIPMAN: Probably since the beginning of the still life tradition, which would have been in 2000, although the collaboration that I did for my BFA thesis, which I did with Sarah Thrower, who is also clear food — clear, solid — [inaudible] — food.

MS. SAVIG: It kind of reminds me of what you were saying about a previous work that was supposed to symbolize or be a metaphor of water. Do you see the relationship between landscapes and how it is right before you but it is not something that you can necessarily grasp?

MS. LIPMAN: Absolutely. That’s something we explored — Ingalena and I explored in *Glimmering Gone* is our inability to really unify this and be one with nature or the wilderness, and our longing for connection with the universe around us, and yet feeling apart from it, for a variety of different reasons, and using cultural objects to compensate for that in some ways. They become surrogates for what we cannot have.

But I don’t think that that idea was really clear to me. I know that was not necessarily what I was thinking about in that way prior to doing the piece with Ingalena, but I think it made me revisit the work that I had done prior, which was also about memory and longing. So it was something I was working with, but I never contextualized it in that way.

MS. SAVIG: So in the studio right now there’s clear glass, there is opaque glass, and sort of a cloudy semi-opaque. What is your thought process in determining what you’ll use for specific work?

MS. LIPMAN: Okay. When I was using black glass in the last couple of years, I was really doing it as kind of an homage to Victorian culture. You know, like constant mourning. So I was definitely interested in using black in that tradition of silhouette or shadow or mourning.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: So that’s why I chose to use black glass, and continue to — so it’s really memento mori. The work that’s in the studio right now— there is some opacity to some of the work that you’re seeing. There’s also some casting. I’ve really rarely used casting. The *Sideboard with Blue China*, which I’m currently creating, the majority of the kind of “decorative” elements that I’m using around the centerpieces — the ovals on the bottom of the board are cast. I chose to make those in castings because I needed multiples. And so when I think, oh, I’m going to do this or that, what I’m really thinking about, beyond necessity, is also the way your eye is going to move around the composition and how it’s going to ebb and flow from completely transparent glass to something that’s more translucent or in some cases opaque. Because I’m going to be painting this sideboard white I’ve inserted some areas of kind of white opacity in some of those castings so that I’m hoping that it also has a direct connection with the wood in the work. I don’t really concern myself that much about “matching” the glass, making sure everything has the same look, because I’ve found that that, in the end, is a little bit too static. It’s more interesting to kind of move your eye around by using different textures —

MS. SAVIG: Yes.

MS. LIPMAN: — different scale. I don’t mind if I burn the glass while I’m sculpting it hot. If I’m using a torch sometimes — like the hands over there you’ll see they’re almost brown, these hands.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: I’m counting on that —I could have thrown that away and started again but I don’t mind that charring of the glass because if that’s charred and this other thing is charred, and this other thing down here is charred, then you’ve got —

MS. SAVIG: A plurality.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, you’ve got another visual component that it is. So what I will say to you is I practice

nonjudgment in the work. So everything has its place, and I'm happy with the piece although I charred it with a torch. So I don't care —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — which really separates me, I will say, firmly from someone who is more invested in traditional craft process.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: Like, I'm really not that interested in craft process. I'm only interested in it insofar as whether I can create what I want to create, and after that I place no judgment on any of the kind of historic things that would basically call the object for someone else, like bubbles or stones or dirt or scarring or — all of those concerns —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — to me they're symbolic of the frailty of life, the inability to create the ideal while striving to create the ideal. It's like this — everything is imperfect so why strive for control? It's a relinquishing of control. What is important is to try to create something that is not campy or kitschy or comical, which is very easy to do in solid, sculpted or blown glass. It's incredibly easy to make something comical.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: And that is something that I am highly aware of when I'm working.

MS. SAVIG: Let's talk a little bit about memory, because you've touched on it a few times. How does memory play a part in the creation and meaning of your work? Let's explore that a little bit.

MS. LIPMAN: Okay. When I create components for my work, many times — if I've never made something before, I might work from a photograph or a drawing that I've done, but many times I will create objects from memory. What I am striving for is to kind of capture the essence of an object, or to trigger someone else's understanding of what that object is. When I'm actually in the hot shop, free sculpting these objects, that is the space that I'm in, in my mind, is trying to grasp and conjure up my memories or associations of that particular object.

MS. SAVIG: So you — and I think you've said this in a video before — don't draw as you go along. It's mainly an intuitive process?

MS. LIPMAN: My drawing is the work that I'm doing in the shop. So I'm drawing three-dimensionally —

MS. SAVIG: Okay.

MS. LIPMAN: — in glass, first in the hot shop and — or also in kilns to —kiln form, which I also do, or on the torch. And then I also draw three-dimensionally when I'm composing the objects. So it's all really additive and some subtractive process, but it's essentially —it would make no sense for me to draw the work and then go draw the work. It would be like drawing the work multiple times. And my drawing would be as valid as the —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — drawing I was making in glass. So when I do draw, I typically am either drawing to interpret my ideas for someone else to understand what I'm talking about, or I'll draw to draw, which I really love doing but I haven't done often, besides doodling, because I'm constantly drawing in my practice.

MS. SAVIG: How would you think audiences whose own memories are being tapped when they see your work of either still life paintings or other material culture, maybe their own banquets at home, how have they received your work? Do you think that — yeah, I'll just leave the question there.

MS. LIPMAN: Well, I mean, it's — I think the personal, which is me, becomes — you know, it's micro or macro. The personal dialogue that I'm having with the work and the relationships that exist in between the objects in the work are things that happen that I kind of care-take. I am the conduit for that to happen. And to date I would say that many people have really responded to whatever that dialogue is within the work in a variety of different ways, based on their own personal history, and that's all I can hope for is that I am presenting something that can be responded to by others.

Another thing I really like about the still life tradition is how universal it is, and that everyone, no matter what culture you're coming from, is going to have some relationship to object, really bottom line. You know, that's also true of portraiture or landscape, which is really important to me. It's important to me that it's sustainable work in that way, and also it was important for a long time that it was seen as an underdog of the traditions of

art-making in some ways as well. So I think it just depends on who the person is and what — if someone doesn't look at art often and they come to a glass still life and they marvel that glass can do that and they've never seen glass do that before, that's cool. Like, I don't care. [Laughs.] If that's the way that they can engage the work and — or they think it would be beautiful as a centerpiece in their home and they don't want to engage the whole history of still life being used as symbol of status or wealth, that's fine. It doesn't mean it's not there. Just material culture, just like we were talking about, it's all inherently there at whatever level you choose to engage.

MS. SAVIG: Right, and especially your subjects that seem to have elements of excess as well as mortality. I think those two elements especially resonate with people because they're very — they're present in everybody. And on that note, why is sort of the symbolism of mortality and maybe even religion — why are you continually drawn to that and — [inaudible] — that?

MS. LIPMAN: Well, I would say that until this year I haven't really kind of fully addressed the theological aspects of the work. I certainly know it exists, and that was the impetus for still life painting to begin with. It was really first and foremost formally rooted in religion and theology, which I think is interesting, but that was not initially the thing that was most fascinating to me. It was more the transplantation of the symbols of wealth and decadence on something that was inherently a moral or spiritualistic pursuit, which is — it's the same thing, just not so —

But I just finished a piece for the Jewish Museum this year that will be installed in November, and the curator initially wanted me to create a piece that was specifically about being Jewish, and I didn't want to do it because it's not interesting to me in some ways. But, I came around to a certain extent because part of me felt like, oh, well, I don't really have anything to say about being Jewish. But then I realized that's not true. I do, because I'm basically an assimilated, nonpracticing Jew living in the upper Midwest. That became very apparent when I was making the work, how I was responding to the work and how I was kind of responding to the Jewish Museum's collection and that — I found it curious that I would have a role to play and something to say within that context as basically a nonpracticing Jew, and that they'd still want to hear it. [They laugh.] You know, like it didn't matter that I was — so that's interesting, I think. In fact, *Sideboard with Blue China* will have an altar in it.

MS. SAVIG: Interesting.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, it will. I'd say my primary concern of the two subjects is mortality, and I've been pretty obsessed with dying for a really long time. It seems like the most significant thing to comment on while I'm living is death and the futility of doing anything, making anything or doing anything at all when you know you're going to die. [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: You know, it's very strange. Some people have said, "But isn't it comforting to know that your work will continue on in museums after you're gone?" I'm like, "I don't care." I don't care. I mean, sure, but, I'll be dead. [Laughs.] I'm not going to care, you know? It's like this very — that is comical to me.

MS. SAVIG: Wow. Yeah. Well, I've heard the opposite, of artists who create knowing that that's comforting. Like it's a piece of them living on.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, I don't think that in some ways.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: I really deeply don't.

MS. SAVIG: It might be a situation of ego, I guess.

MS. LIPMAN: Maybe. Maybe. I wish it was a comfort, actually, and I wish that I was a believer in religion. I think that people are much happier if they're deeply religious. They have peace. They believe something. [Laughs.] So it's a balance between this futility of making and feeling that I don't have enough time to make everything that I need to make, and also feeling really indulgent to myself that I'm using all of these really valuable resources to create these very excessive pieces in the world that we're living in now, the environmental collapse looming and children growing —

[Cross talk.]

MS. LIPMAN: It does.

MS. SAVIG: It gets people to think about —

MS. LIPMAN: It does. That is my hope.

MS. SAVIG: It's a thing that gets people to think about things. [Laughs.]

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, that is my hope. But, I have to say I do it for myself first and foremost —

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: — and I've been very fortunate in that it's resonated for a number of people who have chosen to support it, and I'm very thankful for that. But when I think about making now, the number-one issue in my mind is mortality for sure — necessarily religion but mortality.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: And that each object as it comes to a close is really a souvenir of that moment in time for me right now. Wherever it ends up, okay, but just — however it ends up, because a lot of the work gets recomposed without me — most of the work does at this point — and how that reflects on those individuals who re-created the work, whoever it is, whether it's New Museum or someone's home.

So specifically mortality —I'm making this sideboard, and it is a combination of objects — depicting objects that we consume with aspects of the human body. That's once again a really direct combination of — so it is body and it is also what we've consumed. I can't really say more about it than that at the moment. I could describe to you what it is but, it's very much about the human condition of our mortality and also —

MS. SAVIG: So do you think your work has moved from general consumption and the acquiring of goods to the actual consumption of food in our bodies? Is that sort of what you're getting at?

MS. LIPMAN: I think more specifically it is our identity through what we do, to a certain extent, and who we are, and the roles that the different parts of our body play within that, in the — [inaudible]. My parents are both not well at this point — different illnesses. So some of it is also very personal, so it's a direct reflection of them and also of me and my husband in some ways, and so it is like — it's almost a family portrait. That's really the deep tissue kind of subconsciousness that I think is floating around for me right now. I have no idea what it's going to do. It's very different in that way. It really is.

MS. SAVIG: Do you think your objects or material culture in general, then, has agency on its own, or do you think it's only through the processes of people making it and consuming it?

MS. LIPMAN: That's a good question. I would like to say yes —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: That yes, it does, but I don't know — I can't separate it. We can't separate out what we know —it's the nature versus nurture question, like we could suppose that something is nurtured or is a part of nature, but you can never divide the two from each other. It's like a theoretical question that you can't answer in some ways. It takes a viewer to respond with what they know in order to have any power at all in what it is.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, I mean —

MS. LIPMAN: I think that people who are within Western culture will perhaps have a more —the work will resonate for them more than not, because they're closer to who I am as a person in some ways. Maybe there's more to relate to, but maybe not. I don't know — I don't know.

MS. SAVIG: Something to think about.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: So — well, then that's — [inaudible] — because you are the maker. You're making things that speak to people. Just generally, how do you start with an object or a source — and you don't replicate it exactly. You sort of —you're creating the essence of the original. Could you just talk about when you start a new project or a new work or what you do?

MS. LIPMAN: Well, depending upon what I'm doing, I will usually start to just amass components, because the majority of the work that I've made, it is an additive process that takes a tremendous amount of components to fabricate into a whole. So when I think I have enough objects that I can begin something, I'll start to compose — I'll lay down a piece of paper, usually.

This is different sideboard is a little different in the way that I've — yeah, and also, everything is very distinct. Like, each cutout in the wood has a very specific thing that goes into it as opposed to putting down a piece of paper and starting to compose objects on a piece of paper, but that's essentially what I'll do even — I just

completed *Flotsam and Jetsam*, a piece that is basically detritus and cuds of vine growing over it.

MS. SAVIG: Oh, yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: I'll put plastic or paper down, and I'll start to arrange things, and then I'll get some sense of what else is needed, and I'll make more things. When I say make things, I usually blow or sculpt things in a hot shop. Sometimes I pay other people to do it as well. Sometimes I work with other people to make the work. I also kiln form — I use sheet glass and slump the glass over into molds and fuse it together. Sometimes I'll deliberately break objects, and I just start to assemble sculptures in that way, whether it's a still life or an installation.

I've also made wallpaper where I've either cut sheet glass or fused crushed glass into repeating patterns and then glued them directly to the wall. So in the case of the wallpaper— it's going to frame the sideboard, I did — I was looking at Zuber landscape wallpaper, and I did kind of a rift on the aspects of that particular image I had, and then I start to cut the glass to kind of basically form the general shape of the wallpaper itself, but my kiln is only so big, so everything's divided down into almost a puzzle. Then everything's numbered, so every time something is assembled, it's usually a little different. In this particular piece — sideboard with bleach in it, it will be probably one of the more static pieces I've made, because there's really not much variation that's going to happen after the pieces are installed.

MS. SAVIG: What are just some general qualities of your working environment that are important to you?

MS. LIPMAN: Well, definitely the cluster flies. I love them. [They laugh.] I try to have as many cluster flies surrounding me as possible. [They laugh.]

MS. SAVIG: And you're always moving — you're always moving, yeah. Lots of tables.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, I have a lot of tables that always seem to get filled up immediately. I really enjoy having the studio behind my house — is the first time I've had that, and it's been fantastic, because I can walk into my space and be instantly in my head, but still have a closeness to the house that I can toggle back and forth having children.

This year is the first year that we've had a hot shop. I had rented studios prior to that, but it's been awfully nice having my own hot shop. So I also need a lot of space. In order for me to mentally understand that I can make something, I need to have the space to make it. So it's not a tremendously large space, but it's like a 35 by 20-foot space or 17-foot space, something like that. It's also a very flexible space. I spend a ridiculous amount of time kind of moving tables around, moving something from place to place to try to make it fit the needs that I need for it right now, and I think some of that is procrastination for me — [laughs] —

MS. SAVIG: Yeah — [inaudible] —

MS. LIPMAN: By way of like, nesting. I have to move those; I have to clean this corner over here. Of course, you couldn't tell by looking at the studio at the moment, but it tends to be a fairly tidy, and when I'm in the thick of a project — like right now, it's difficult to find the time to organize, but I also realize that my head space is affected by not having a cleaner kind of organized environment. It gets to a point where I can't function, and then I'll have to do something about it.

MS. SAVIG: How regimented is your time? Do you balance — it's probably not very possible with the hot shop, but do you like to break up your day by maybe doing a little bit of lamp work and then glass blowing, or is it pretty segmented — [inaudible] —

MS. LIPMAN: I'm usually working on many projects at once. This is rare in that I only have like one — essentially one — that black table is really finished.

MS. SAVIG: That gigantic thing —

MS. LIPMAN: So it's just taking up space at the moment. But this is rare that I'm really only focusing on one thing, but I usually have four or five different things going on with various degrees of urgency, but — and I'm really, at this point, only working half days, and then Ken, my husband, is also working half days while our — before our kids are in school. So I'm sure you've figured that out. So that's been really helpful.

I turn the hot shop on, and I blow for a certain amount of time, and then I turn it off, and I can't use my big kiln while I have my furnace on; I don't have enough electricity. So it is very specific. I have to make sure that I get certain things done so that I can use the big kiln when I turn the hot shop off. I try to keep the kilns firing all the time no matter what I'm doing. I'm trying to just keep those kilns firing, because it makes me —it's kind of a nice way of starting the day. I'll come in and make sure that if there's anything I can do, I'll do that and fire those

kilns — keep them busy, constantly making things.

So this week, for instance, the hot shop is on, and then I'll turn it off, but I have to make —X, Y, and Z — I have to make bones, flowers, wrists —all of these different things so that when I turn the hot shop off I can then continue on this project. So it's the facilities are really dictating the way that I move and use my studio at this point.

MS. SAVIG: It sounds like there's a lot of repetition in making the sheer amount of elements of a work. What do you learn from repetition, or maybe from breaks in repetition?

MS. LIPMAN: Okay. Repetition, for me, is a little bit like a staycation — [they laugh] — you know —

MS. SAVIG: A mind break. It's a little — [inaudible] — like [mowing the lawn ?] —

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah. I know what I'm supposed to be doing. It's keeping my hands busy. It's working towards a goal, and it's giving my mind time to kind of rest but also regenerate and think about things in a different way. So because working is pretty second nature to me at this point, unless I'm really problem-solving how to do something new, it's generally fairly enjoyable. As I mentioned yesterday, I never really make — I don't really repeat myself. It's not a goal of mine to make everything exactly the way the last thing was, although I do know a lot of makers who strive to do that and really enjoy that challenge. But for me, that's not my thing.

So that's how I use repetition. Sometimes — it's also been really freeing within the last five years, because I have employed a lot of people here and there to help make things that I don't have time to make. Especially when my kids were born, the only thing I really could manage to do was to compose the work. I had no time to make the components. Being forced into that circumstance, given what the parameters were, it was — the thing that I find most enjoyable is the composing, actually. It's not necessarily the component making. Even though I love the exercise of going into the shop and making something, I'm equally or more gratified by seeing a final project come together through the composition.

If I had to stop making things tomorrow for my work and just compose it, I would probably be quite fine. I'd probably be happy and feel gratified that I was really getting what I needed from my practice. Because it is that drawing that I'm doing in that moment. So —

MS. SAVIG: And that's the most important thing to you. How have technological advancements guided your process or improved it?

MS. LIPMAN: Not very much. I'm not really affected by —of course, if — it depends on —

MS. SAVIG: [Inaudible] — your work and things like that.

MS. LIPMAN: Well, I don't do 3D rendering or — yeah. I don't really use any of the computer-generated objects; I don't really photoshop things. I'd like to have some knowledge to do some of those things, but I don't find myself in a position that I really need to do that. The technological advancements in terms of my two-dimensional prints — it's huge, because I'm using a digital camera. I'm working with a photographer, and then because of my lack of knowledge, he's doing a lot of the photoshopping when I say I want it to be this way or that way. I crop, I can crop things on the computer, but in terms of the layering and things like that, I —one of my goals would be to learn to do all of that by myself, but I haven't really had the time to really do that, and I've been happy with the results of what I've done. So —that has directly impacted my practice, I would say.

MS. SAVIG: Also directly impacting your process — other than death, what seems to permeate a lot of your process is — and thinking about art is also something that permeates much of American society, and that's plumbing. Could you talk about your work with Kohler and [bridging ?] with the industrial aspects?

MS. LIPMAN: Sure, sure. First, I was a resident in the arts industry program in 2003, and I worked alongside — I was accepted into the pottery. There was two different programs: foundry and pottery. I worked for two and a half months in clay. I had never worked in clay before. I had never done slipcasting before. And working alongside the associates that were casting urinals and lavatories and things like that every day was just such a profound experience for me. These people do not identify themselves as artists or crafts people, even though they clearly are incredibly skilled crafts people and they know what they know. It might be a very narrow slice of what they do every day — this one thing with this material, but the intimacy with the material, the intimacy with the process is no different than a master's understanding of the material on one level.

So that was hugely influential to me, to think about identity in relation to making and whether —how arbitrary it is, in some ways, that you can choose an identity like, I'm an artist, I'm a maker. If I had fallen into a job at Kohler or not chosen to work at Kohler, as the case may be, I would have a different identity surrounding the same practices. So that was interesting. Working in multiples while being surrounded by people working in

multiples for different reasons — also very, very interesting. Working in a historically decorative art material — clay — used on an industrial level for plumbingware or something that was technically not decorative was also very interesting.

So it was like seeing another universe, like looking through the mirror at another universe with different rules and regulations using a similar practice and material. I was really overwhelmed by the experience, and also the artist as catalyst is a little bit of a fallacy within that environment. You think you're going to come in and people are going to be deeply interested in what you're doing and possibly have some epiphany about art or life because you're there making and you end up going there and understand that they've seen 40 years of artists come in the making, and you're like entertainment during the cigarette break or something.

But for me, having never worked in a factory before, never seeing that practice, I was blown away by what they were doing. So the change went the other way, even though, as an artist, you're seen as this like — you're talking about gentrification earlier — this ability to be a catalyst within a community. The role is completely subverted within that residency.

In 2005, I came back and took the job as arts industry coordinator. So I oversaw the residency for five years, and that was really an exceptional experience. It was a great day job, because I got to meet the most incredible artists. I could go in the factory weekly — sometimes daily, depending upon what was going on. I also go to witness kind of the change in manufacturing and the dynamics of a privately-held family business — that's a global business, and really deeply understand the impact of that particular family and company on this county. I always refer to my time here as like, I'm pioneering. I feel like I'm still pioneering here, because as a visual artist in Sheboygan Wisconsin — [laughs] — I'm, to a certain extent, pioneering. There's not that many people around me that are practicing artists. My point being is that staying here and living here and understanding directly the impact that one philanthropic family can have on a community of this size is really powerful. The whole community benefits, whether they've even ever stepped foot in the art center or not, the spilloff — the runoff of — if nothing else, being just completely unintimidated by creative

[End of disc.]

MS. LIPMAN: [In progress] — or art. I don't think it's an anomaly that there's a lot of self-taught, non-academically trained artists that have popped up through the upper Midwest when you have the Johnson family and you have the Kohler family. You have these pockets of extreme philanthropy for the arts.

MS. SAVIG: Pleasant Rowland.

MS. LIPMAN: And then — and then people, "I can do that."

MS. SAVIG: Yeah. [Laughs.]

MS. LIPMAN: Go home, go tinker in their barn for 20 years. "I've made something." You know?

MS. SAVIG: Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: Like it takes — it strips away these inhibitions that you may have as, like art as other.

MS. SAVIG: Right.

MS. LIPMAN: It's something you can take ownership over because it's been made accessible to you, or at least different. So I think that that's really quite interesting to witness that. It's always an honor to witness how other artists react to the — [inaudible] — and what happens to them.

MS. SAVIG: Right. It reminds me a lot — I don't know if this is true, the story that when Duchamp came to the U.S. from Paris for the first time he was so floored by American plumbing and advancements in just building and health from — they had built from the beginning, from the industrialization of New York and the skyscrapers. Plumbing was part of it, whereas Paris everything had to be added after the fact.

MS. LIPMAN: Later, yeah.

MS. SAVIG: And how that kind of repeats what you were saying about he might have had this moment when he realized that the artist isn't the catalyst; it's the everyday that can become a catalyst for art. So it is really interesting to think of how that happens to everybody as they come through here and they realize. That also goes back to still-lifes and your work of sort of these things that are sort of the still-lifes and industry, these things that are always the backdrop and never the flashiest parts of the museums and industries and part of museums, and how you're giving that more of a voice, almost.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, the commonplace.

MS. SAVIG: Mmm hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. LIPMAN: Mmm hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SAVIG: So, with that in mind, do you think of yourself as part of an American tradition or an international tradition or in any sort of tradition with transnational?

MS. LIPMAN: I think it's an international tradition, I do. But I think that my particular bent on it is very American, absolutely. I'm just, stream of consciousness. But I'm just thinking about James Peale, whose still-lifes I greatly admire and whose life I find fascinating. And how in some ways you could — [laughs] — he's also directly and truly American in his approach to still life, but — even though his still-lifes are so different. So I'm in the tradition of the craft art movement in this country — completely a product of that. The fact that I had —

MS. SAVIG: Studio glassmaking.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, that I had the access to traditionally industrial or decorative art process in this material, in a school environment, being taught solely for the use of artistic expression, of my own individual artistic expression, not as an apprenticeship to a company or a person, is important. I couldn't have done this a hundred years ago, there's no way. Not only because I'm a woman — [laughs] — but because the means were not there to do it.

MS. SAVIG: Right. Other than your trips when you were younger, that we've talked about, to New York and other cities, what other travels really stand out to you as being formative?

MS. LIPMAN: I really enjoy traveling. There's so much knowledge to be had from traveling. So I think every trip that I've gone on has really influenced me in small and large ways. I'm sorry I can't be more specific than that, but I really value it in that it kind of — it becomes a reflection or a mirror back at myself about what I think I know and who I am and what my identity is and I really value. And that's not just international travel. That's, just going down to Oklahoma City to install a piece and seeing what Oklahoma City is, having never been there. And —

MS. SAVIG: Coming to Sheboygan and —

MS. LIPMAN: Exactly. Exactly. I'm happy that I was given the opportunity to live in the upper Midwest and to create a life here. I never, ever, ever thought I would do that. I thought I would be on the East Coast. I thought I'd be in New York my whole life. And it didn't end up that way. I think I personally am a better person for it. I think it was a good growing experience for me to really understand who I was by leaving who I was. Understand who I am by leaving who I was, is what I really want to say.

So I actively seek out opportunities that can continue to expand my awareness of how other cultures exist. My relationship with Ingalena Klenell has been incredibly influential to me. She is fabulous. Understanding some of the similarities and differences between Scandinavian culture, and specifically Swedish culture, and our culture — although, it was kind of arbitrary the way that we met and that relationship formed. Of course, it was and it wasn't. We taught at the same time, but I didn't go pursing — like, I want to be in Sweden. [Laughs.] That was never my goal, but having met her and developed a deep affection for her and then spent time getting to know her, her family and the culture through her eyes, and traveling in Sweden has been hugely influential to me in terms of what it is to be a practicing artist there, to raise a family there. So I think having that perspective has been really wonderful. I really admire her specifically because she's dedicated her whole life to having experiences like that to help her grow as a person. So I aspire to be more like here. [They laugh.] But —

MS. SAVIG: Well like, many glass artists— collaboration is almost a part —

MS. LIPMAN: It's huge.

MS. SAVIG: It comes with the territory. What are some other group exhibitions or other collaborations that — because there is that really beautiful book with the collaboration with her. What else have you done that's not in the beautiful book?

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah. Well, that was by far the biggest collaboration I've ever done. As I mentioned, I did a collaboration for my BFA thesis exhibition with Sarah Thrower. There's aspects of my work that are collaborative. *Bancketje* at the Renwick was not completely collaborative. I mean, I'm very careful with that word because I was really the choreographer of that work so it wasn't just giving —

MS. SAVIG: Right, directing. Yes.

MS. LIPMAN: You know, it was not a true meeting of individuals with influence from both parties in a way, because I was still capping the whole project. But —

MS. SAVIG: Great definition.

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, I think it's — I think it's important distinction. Usually —

MS. SAVIG: It is. It is. Collaboration is often thrown out —

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah.

MS. SAVIG: -- you know, into discourse without really consideration of what collaboration is.

MS. LIPMAN: And I think that my collaboration with Ingalena was a huge learning experience for me in helping to really define what is a true collaboration because I think, you know, there were spots and circumstances within that collaboration that were difficult because it made me re — you know — think who I was as a person, how I communicate, what, you know, kind of control I need over what — like what is essentially — has my name on it. Like, all of those things were really challenged in a major way in that collaboration. It's, like, in some ways really a miracle that that happened — [laughs] — in the way that it did. I mean I think it was successful in many ways and I'm proud of that collaboration. But I — it was, like, quite enough for me. And I think Ingalena felt that way too. She was like, "I will never do this again." [They laugh.] But she collaborates a lot more than I do, so I think she was much clearer in — going into it what that meant and just so much further along in her career as well. I just rely tremendously on other people to help make my work. [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: I was just going to say, so you —

MS. LIPMAN: So I mean, to —

MS. SAVIG: There are many people involved, but you're the orchestrator.

MS. LIPMAN: Oh my God. I couldn't do it. Yeah, I couldn't do it without a lot of help — a lot of help. I mean, I — it's — I'm constantly feeling completely indebted — [they laugh] — to a large number of people who out of, like, the kindness of their heart, their generosity, possibly their interest, have chosen to, like, help me execute things. So that is a huge part of my work. Sometimes just, you know, money — [laughs] — too. Just like you pay someone a lot and they'll do something to help.

MS. SAVIG: But so you have to rely on them, even though you're paying them to fulfill your vision.

MS. LIPMAN: That's right. That's right.

MS. SAVIG: And you get to also be clear in your vision, not just giving them —

MS. LIPMAN: That's right.

MS. SAVIG: Are there any other communities of — or artists or not artists that are important or influence your work? Probably besides your parents and family.

MS. LIPMAN: I mean, other than the people that I've mentioned, I would say — you know, I ebb and flow in terms of keeping myself informed with what's going on currently in the larger art world. I try to stay informed. At the same time, I try not to be over-informed. And I find that the most isolation I have, the more time I need to be isolated. [Laughs.] So I mean, certainly I've — you know, we've talked about this a little bit, but I just — I've looked at — I've looked at the lives of different artists for inspiration. The case of *Glimmering Gone* it was Abby Williams Hill, who's a little-known painter from the Pacific Northwest. On the invitation of Diane Mullin, who's the curator at the Weisman Art Museum, I embarked on an adventure, possibly doing a commission which did not come to fruition, but it — I was deeply enmeshed in, like, Marsden Hartley's work for a really long — for years.

MS. SAVIG: Oh, yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: And I'm still fascinated by him. Of Louise Nevelson, Louise Bourgeois, in terms of their lives, just invaluable, just — you know. I — both of those women are people that I revere completely — just really — not just their work, but what they — who they were as people, even though, of course, I've never met either of them. But I just — from what I've read, read their — some of their correspondence as well. I just find those — the times when they were working in — Eva Hesse. These are women that I kind of lived on, that I've spent time — I've spent time with their work or their lives in different ways.

MS. SAVIG: If you want to continue exploring Louise Nevelson, her entire archive is digitized and our website.

MS. LIPMAN: [Gasps.] Okay!

MS. SAVIG: Every letter, every photograph of her in very dramatic pose, holding her cats and posing.

MS. LIPMAN: I'll have to — I'll have to — I'll have to do that.

MS. SAVIG: She's just — she really is personality.

MS. LIPMAN: She's phenomenal, too. Her work is just — I think her work in relation to what I'm interested in, it becomes more and more, like, really pressing for me to spend time with her work. It's so phenomenal. [Laughs.]

MS. SAVIG: Yes, I love it.

MS. LIPMAN: It is so phenomenal. I'm really taken with her work and it just blows me away every time I see a piece. I've known about her for a long time, but it just took time, I think, to come around again to her. And now I've spent time with her, and I — you know, in my mind, and I really — I think about — [inaudible] — a lot.

MS. SAVIG: Yeah, what are some other — so they commissioned work with the Weisman, didn't come to fruition —

MS. LIPMAN: It didn't.

MS. SAVIG: — but did any other commissioned works that were memorable?

MS. LIPMAN: I recently completed a piece for the Norton Museum of Art.

MS. SAVIG: I love that museum.

MS. LIPMAN: A great museum — called *One and Others* whose title was actually taken from Louise Bourgeois' early 1940s sculptures. But that piece was a response to aspects of their permanent collection, as well as the fact that the museum itself is next to a graveyard and that I found out afterwards that — the museum is built on an early settlers' gravesite. So the piece had objects taken from their still-life painting collection that were about absence, and then the whole piece was kind of covered with pineapple plant parts, because the only identified settler in the basement was a pineapple grower.

MS. SAVIG: Interesting, yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: And it was actually sitting on a casket that was built to my dimensions.

MS. SAVIG: Oh cool, yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: So that was —I finished that in and installed it in January of this year. The Jewish Museum piece was a commission, so I chose objects from their permanent collection and covered the piece with rocks, with glass rocks, as well. And there's also ham hocks that are kind of buried under the tablecloth that you can't see. [They laugh.] So it's been smaller-scale commissions like that. It hasn't been anything — all of the really massive, for me, installations that I've done — I've funded myself.

MS. SAVIG: Like *Banketje* that —

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, that was also partly sponsored by Wheaton Village at the time, which is now Wheaton Arts and Cultural Center. The director, Sue Gogan, was someone I knew from residency and I had the opportunity to have the exhibition at the Kohler Arts Center here. I didn't have enough time to make the work or the money, and she gave me a special two-weeklong visiting artist residency essentially to create the majority of the works that went on that table.

MS. SAVIG: Nice, yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: That was the first time I started working in depth with a lot of the people, so there was 15 other people that helped me with that piece of a variety of different skills.

MS. SAVIG: Needed it, yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: So —

MS. SAVIG: How did it end up at the Renwick then and not the Kohler?

MS. LIPMAN: Kohler didn't have the funds for — I don't think they had the wherewithal or the funds to buy it. And they really only collect outside art. They have the permanent collection pieces that were left behind from my arts and history residence.

MS. SAVIG: Oh, right.

MS. LIPMAN: So that's the two main legs of the collection.

MS. SAVIG: So that piece is often on lists of things that are a must-see in Washington, D.C. How have other critics responded to your work? Have you had any contention with critics or would you want to call them out now?

MS. LIPMAN: I've had some —I've never had a complete like slam dunk from a critic. I've had some constructive criticism from critics. I had one writer at one point kind of call me out a couple of years ago about a review of my ICA exhibition [*Meticulous Ferment — BL]* that the work was a much-needed evolution in my work, that it was growing stale, that kind of thing. That happened once. Nothing that I haven't thought of myself, of course, before — [laughs] —being really hyperaware and like you don't want to stagnate into — I keep having these internal wrestling matches about the validity of continuing to work in still life. Then I just keep — yeah, so I have — [laughs] —I have the tennis match —

MS. SAVIG: [Inaudible] — score, right.

MS. LIPMAN: — with myself, because the tendency of today is to really take broad, sweeping changes and evolving as an artist in your work, and to not focus so specifically on one way of working. But then I look back at James Peale's work and all of the Dutch masters, and they didn't feel like they had to justify doing what they did. [They laugh] You know? Even Louise Nevelson, she found her voice exploring something that was pretty focused and specific in the way that she worked. So I think —

MS. SAVIG: Because —

MS. LIPMAN: What's that?

MS. SAVIG: Changing for the sake of changing is dangerous too, you end up like — [inaudible] — [laughs].

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, I think — of course, there's risks to both decisions. It's just a decision. I think for me, some of the decisions in the practice come down to very small, incremental changes that are very deep and wide in my practice that you don't see until you look at it over time. When I look at the work now, I think, oh, I have changed. It is changing. It is evolving. That was like a little turning of the knife in the back or something when I read that, but it's only because I really have thought about it often that was probably why it triggered me at all. I think Adam Gopnik did not — or not Adam — Adam's the one that writes for the *New Yorker*. It's Blake?

MS. SAVIG: Blake, because the —

MS. LIPMAN: Blake Gopnik.

MS. SAVIG: — he was the *Washington Post* writer.

MS. LIPMAN: That's right, I don't think that he was particularly taken with my work, in that Renwick craft invitational. I think he was pretty dismissive of that show generally, that I had in the Renwick — so that was also —

MS. SAVIG: Right, I've never really recalled him embracing craft though, really anything at the Renwick.

MS. LIPMAN: Some people do and some people don't. I always love it when people say, oh, there's not that much good craft art out there or glass — they say glass, they don't say sculpture made with glass. I'm like, there's not that many good painters out there, either, you know? I was sitting on a panel one time and a curator said, "Oh, well, we have to have at least one glass person that gets this award." I'm like, "Well then we should only have probably one painter that gets an award too." You know?

MS. SAVIG: [Laughs.] Yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: I mean, it's just a ridiculous way of aligning yourself to think in those terms, I think.

MS. SAVIG: Right, and your relationship with your dealers has been a long-standing one, the Heller Gallery, especially?

MS. LIPMAN: They're actually no longer my dealer.

MS. SAVIG: Oh, really? Okay.

MS. LIPMAN: We left on good terms in February. I was with them for 12 years. I was approached by Claire Oliver Gallery in December of last year about possibly working with her. She has an exclusivity agreement and I chose to leap off the cliff and go to someone — [laughs] — that — I knew of her gallery for a long time, and I admired

her for several artists in her program. So I was very familiar with her gallery. But it's always scary to change something that you know. And Doug and Katya were great and Michael and Bob are — were — are just great people, just great people to work with. And the history of that gallery, as I mentioned, was really very, I mean, significant to the history of the craft art movement. And since 2008, I've been working with Cade Tompkins Projects in Rhode Island also, who I'm also still — I'm still working with her. And she's a lovely, lovely person. She has a great eye, she works tirelessly on my behalf and — [inaudible] — on the behalf of her other artists. So — yeah, so the relationship with Claire is new, but I have to say that I'm excited about it. I — it kind of gave me a shot in the arm in a way that I — it was — it was really liberating to go with her and to try something new, you know.

MS. SAVIG: What other new directions are you moving towards?

MS. LIPMAN: Well, the project I'm working on now is pretty huge.

MS. SAVIG: It is, it's — [inaudible] —

MS. LIPMAN: It's huge visually, physically — [laughs] —

MS. SAVIG: It's like the length of this — you know — this —

MS. LIPMAN: So — and there has been dialogue about having a traveling exhibition that would include this sideboard, with other objects that I've wanted to make for a long time that will clearly wait until this is finished. But the other objects are pieces of furniture and clear glass; one is an adult shaker rocker for rocking the moribund. There's a picture of it right over there on my wall. The other would be a crib that was sinking into the floor at an angle, without the bed — the mattress, it was just the frame. So those three objects would be in the traveling exhibition, the crib, the cradle and the sideboard.

MS. SAVIG: When you mentioned that you're making a shaker-rocker, brings me back to Lancaster. [Laughs.]

MS. LIPMAN: Yeah, I mean, it's not quite the same tradition —

MS. SAVIG: Right, yeah.

MS. LIPMAN: — but it's a similar tradition. I was researching caskets for the *One and Others* piece for the Norton Museum at the Rakow Library in Corning and came across an image of this rocker, which just took my breath away. I started fabricating different aspects of it in residence at CMOG last April — was it last April — two Aprils ago. Is that a possibility? That's right.

MS. SAVIG: I think I have it written it down.

MS. LIPMAN: I think that's true. It was two years ago now. So those are new things. I think the *Flotsam Jetsam* that I made feels new, even though it really directly relates to my piece, *Material Culture* that was a mound of cultural objects on the table, that was like a — so I'm just cycling back like this.

MS. SAVIG: Well, that does sort of bring us to the beginning, so is there anything else you wanted to touch on that you thought we might have missed?

MS. LIPMAN: I think I've heard myself talk enough. [They laugh.]

MS. SAVIG: This is great, now we just need to come back in another 20 years.

MS. LIPMAN: Oh god. [They laugh.]

MS. SAVIG: We'll talk to —

MS. LIPMAN: There'll be very little to say at that point. [They laugh.]

MS. SAVIG: Probably not, this was a great interview, thank you.

MS. LIPMAN: No, thank you, thank you so much.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]