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Oral history interview with Clark Richert, 2013 August 20-21

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

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Clark Richert on August 20-21, 2013. The interview took place in Denver, Colo., and was conducted by Elissa Auther for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Stoddard-Fleischman History of Rocky Mountain Area Artists project.

[Narrator] and the [Interviewer] have reviewed the transcript. Their corrections and emendations appear below in brackets appended by initials. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

ELISSA AUTHER: This is Elissa Auther interviewing Clark Richert at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Denver, on August 20th, for the Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, card one.

Clark, when did you decide to become an artist and what led up to that decision?

CLARK RICHERT: I think I know almost the exact moment when I decided to become an artist. I was living in Wichita, Kansas, going to high school, Wichita East High, and was at a local bookstore perusing the books and I saw this book on the shelf that really puzzled me. The name of it was the *Dictionary of Abstract Art*. And I opened up the book and flipped through the pages, and I came to this painting by Rothko which really puzzled me. So I bought the book. I pretty much read the book. I became Wichita, Kansas's, expert on abstract art, and nobody else in Wichita had ever heard of abstract art.

So I knew everything that was happening way back in 1958. I knew who the abstract expressionists were. And I wish I was an investor then because I would have invested in all the right people because I could see what was happening.

And I subscribed to a magazine, kind of an obscure magazine. It was a kind of a document — documented the abstract expressionist scene. It was called *It Is* magazine. And I want to get some copies of that. I found it — after searching for it, I found it on Amazon, so I could find some of the copies.

MS. AUTHER: How did you originally find it?

MR. RICHERT: *It Is* magazine?

MS. AUTHER: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. RICHERT: I am not certain, but it was when I was in high school so I was — I was very tuned into abstract expressionism and I had two friends that were too so we had kind of — there was a small group at our school that was really into abstract expressionism and we started painting in large paintings, like six feet by eight foot paintings. So we were the abstract expressionists. And we were really — we really paid attention to the art magazines, and if there's any art shows in the museum, which was really rare that it would be an interesting art show, but we were paying — so we paid attention to as much as we could get our hands on, and — eyes and hands on in Wichita.

MS. AUTHER: Was anything in the *Dictionary of Abstract Art* or *It Is* magazine in color or were you looking at all these things in black and white reproduction?

MR. RICHERT: The *Dictionary of Abstract Art* is — most reproductions are color. And it starts maybe with Malevich and continues up to abstract expressionism. So the year was — so it must have been published in 1957 or '58 but it did have DeKooning and Rothko and all the key abstract expressionists. And there was a show that was really important to us at the Wichita Art Museum, which had a piece in it by Alan Kaprow, so I knew about Alan Kaprow when I was in high school.

MS. AUTHER: Do you remember the name of the exhibition?

MR. RICHERT: No, I don't. I've been trying to find out better information about that, including I'm trying to remember the name of the director of the museum.

MS. AUTHER: But it was some kind of survey show.

MR. RICHERT: Yes.

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: And the Kaprow piece wasn't a happening. It was actually a painting hanging on the wall but it really got my attention because it had kind of shredded paper stuck to it, and then lying on the floor was a shredded paper as if it was bad craftsmanship and the shredded paper had fallen on the floor. So that really caught my attention.

And so after reading that book, it was the turn of semesters for me, and I was — up until that point, I really thought I was going to do like my brothers had done, which was go the route of science. And I was enrolled in all these science courses. I had all my essential courses covered, so I decided to drop all my science courses and just enroll in art courses. So that was a good semester.

MS. AUTHER: So that's really the transition then, when you left behind the idea that you would become a scientist and you fully immersed yourself in the art world.

MR. RICHERT: Although I would say that was until then — I was really very much considering being an architect so I did a lot of house designs on paper. And the two friends and I kind of were together, so we kind of made our decisions together so we all — we went to art school together. I mean, we went to the art department of the university together. The first school we went to was Wichita University. We went there for one year, but then we were hearing that more exciting things were happening at the University of Kansas so we all switched and went to the University of Kansas.

MS. AUTHER: In — wait, what city is that?

MR. RICHERT: It's in Lawrence, Kansas.

MS. AUTHER: All right. Lawrence. Okay. And so you joined the art department. You were an art major from the get-go.

MR. RICHERT: Right.

MS. AUTHER: What was it like then, the art department?

MR. RICHERT: The art department — one thing that was happening in Wichita that was interesting and kind of surprised. It doesn't meet people's expectations of Wichita, but Allen Ginsburg noticed it, and he named it the Wichita Vortex. And so there's a number of people around the Wichita Vortex, people that had lived in Wichita recently and were living in San Francisco, or were living in Wichita or going back and forth between Wichita and San Francisco.

So like Bruce Conner was one of the peripheral figures in the Wichita Vortex as was my first year painting instructor at the University of Wichita. His name was Corbin LePell. And my high school teacher was also in the Wichita Vortex. But other key people you may have heard of were Michael McClure. And they kind of hung out — in San Francisco, they kind of hung out around a gallery, which still sometimes I hear about. It's called Batman Gallery. And there was a relationship between Batman Gallery and the San Francisco and Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles. So there's a little bit of exchange between — at that time, San Francisco was the hot scene and Los Angeles was peripheral.

MS. AUTHER: So the Vortex were basically a group of people who moved in between these cities.

MR. RICHERT: Right. Actually, the Wichita Vortex has two different definitions. One is kind of positive and one is kind of negative, so I told you about the positive definition.

MS. AUTHER: What's the negative?

MR. RICHERT: I don't remember. It's bad things, drugs and stuff.

MS. AUTHER: You get sucked in. Yes. [Laughs.] Okay. So back to college — were you a painting student? I mean, what were the options at the time?

MR. RICHERT: I — one thing was very clear to me: I wanted to be painting major. So I was a painting major at Wichita and at Kansas. And the people I was really interested in at KU were painting majors. And there was — one thing about Bruce Conner. Bruce Conner was a very early influence on me and so he was a mythical character when I went to Wichita. And he had just flunked out of school there, but everybody was talking about him. Then I went to KU and everybody was talking about him at KU too.

MS. AUTHER: What was he known for?

MR. RICHERT: He was mainly known for making films, but he also made assemblages. An assemblage that is currently owned by SF MoMA [San Francisco Museum of Modern Art] was really important to me. I looked at that and I just really — I would say really informed my work for at least a year.

MR. SATTER: So two assemblages, Alan Kaprow and then Bruce Conner's.

MR. RICHERT: Right.

MS. AUTHER: Big influences.

MR. RICHERT: Right. And also Rauschenberg was an enormous influence too. I wasn't aware of Rauschenberg at that time.

MS. AUTHER: Okay. So what did your paintings look like in terms of their style at this point?

MR. RICHERT: [Laughs] Well, that reminds me of something that Martha Jackson asked me — when I went — I went to New York — a really funny thing. And this is right after high school. I went to New York to see the art and I was really disappointed. Like all I could see was cheesy art.

So I went to the phone directory and I looked up Claes Oldenburg and I dialed his number, I called him up, and Claes answered the phone. And I said, "I came all the way from Kansas to see art and I can't see any good art. Where should I go?" And he said, "Well, go to the Jewish Museum to see the Rauschenberg retrospective."

Rauschenberg was young. He had a big, major show at the Jewish Museum, and I think it must have been 1962. And then he said, "And go see the Rothko show at the Guggenheim." And it wasn't on the spiral. There was a normal rectilinear gallery at the Guggenheim. Then, it seems like I don't see it there anymore, so I think they revised it, but there was a nice rectilinear gallery at the base of the spiral and it had four Rothko paintings in it. They were dark. And I was just out of high school. So I looked at these paintings. This is the first and the last time that I ever cried when looking at art. So — I didn't bawl, but there was a tear coming down my cheek. I knew that they were about death. And it was years later that I read that Rothko said that all art must be about death, and then he committed suicide.

Those two shows were really important to me. And I had just seen the Rauschenberg show. So then I went to Martha Jackson gallery. And I was standing in there all by myself and then Martha Jackson walked in, and said, "Hi." And she said, "Are you an artist?" I said, "Yes." I had just been to the Rauschenberg show. And she said, "Well, what is your work like?" I said, "Maybe a little bit like Robert Rauschenberg." And she said, "Oh, really? Oh, I'd really love to see it. Do you have slides?" But I had no slides. So there's my first big opportunity - missed opportunity, no slides at Martha Jackson gallery.

MR. SATTER: Did you send her some later?

MR. RICHERT: No, I didn't. I wasn't thinking about a career then. I mean, I was thinking about being an artist, but I wasn't thinking about art career. But in retrospect I wish I would have.

But one way of describing them is some of the paintings were maybe slightly like Rauschenberg but maybe more like Bruce Conner. But it's not quite that simple because I was an enormous admirer of the DeKooning and so some of my paintings were an attempt — I mean, I didn't know it, but they were an attempt to be like DeKooning. And I would sign my name and that was — I tried to make it look like DeKooning's name, but I didn't know I was doing that either.

MS. AUTHER: So it sounds like there's a combination of the painting with the collage or the assemblage in some way.

MR. RICHERT: Right.

MS. AUTHER: Were you using collage elements?

MR. RICHERT: I made some collages. In some of my paintings maybe I'd have one collage element on it, like it might be a painting with a lot of drips and stuff like that, I might have one — I remember this one that — I had this fluorescent blue cap to a spray can, and I stuck that on the painting, and I thought that was great. But that was definitely informed by Bruce Conner. So —

MS. AUTHER: What did everybody else think in this community about your work?

MR. RICHERT: So the paintings I described now were done in Lawrence, Kansas. And the community I was in was these three people plus two or three more by that time. So it was kind of a group. And, interestingly, on the periphery of our community was Dave Yust. Do you know who that is?

MS. AUTHER: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. RICHERT: So he and I shared the same studio room. So I've known Dave for a long, long time. .Last week, Dave and I were on the panel out at the Arvada Center, so we got to discuss old times. And so there were some interesting stories, things I had not known about.

MS. AUTHER: Yes.

MR. RICHERT: But we are — our group was kind of — kind of notorious. So we stood out as a group of people that were pursuing contemporary art. And we weren't — a lot of people didn't view us as — in a complimentary light.

So the — and interestingly, I stayed in contact with all these people pretty much until they died. One of them is still alive when I — she actually lives right across the street from Richard Tuttle now and —

MS. AUTHER: Who's that?

MR. RICHERT: Her name is Karen Sexton. She has a great piece of property right across the street from Richard Tuttle. It's a very attractive piece of property with a number of buildings on it, great studio. But my e-mails from her lately have been from California so I think she's living in California.

MS. AUTHER: So did you all — I mean, how did your styles, or your style develop over time while you were in college?

MR. RICHERT: I — it seemed like I was torn between New York and San Francisco like I was really looking at abstract expressionism, but I was also really looking at the Bay Area figural painting and abstract painting. I was especially interested — well, I was, as I already mentioned, I was interested in Bruce Conner who was kind of in the San Francisco group. I was very interested in Jay Defeo, who recently had a show at Whitney, I believe. And I was — I was very good friends with her friend, Joan Brown. Have you heard of her?

MS. AUTHER: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. RICHERT: So we were actually very, very good friends. But she gave me a painting and on the back of the painting, it says, "For Clark." And when I — I've been divorced twice. In my first divorce, my wife kept that painting. And then, years later, she sold it to a California museum for $60,000. Then they somehow tracked me down. They wanted to find out who Clark was.

MS. AUTHER: So now your painting is in a museum.

MR. RICHERT: Yes, in California. I'm not sure which museum. Not a painting by me; a painting by Joan Brown.

MS. AUTHER: Right. Right. I forgot where we were. Oh, you were talking about influences in the bay area.

MR. RICHERT: Diebenkorn was really an enormous influence for me and so I think I'm a person that understands Diebenkorn.

MS. AUTHER: How so?

MR. RICHERT: I understand the facture. I understand what he's doing structurally and the layering of paint and the composition, division of space. And I just have a feel for Diebenkorn because I really looked at him at lot.

MS. AUTHER: Because Jay Defeo and Joan Brown, they all have very different styles. Were there specific things about Brown's work or Defeo's work?

MR. RICHERT: I love Joan Brown's work. The way I got to know her, by the way, was I'd gone to a museum in the San Francisco area in that park — de Young Museum.

MS. AUTHER: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. RICHERT: And there's a Joan Brown painting hanging there and I was so attracted to the painting — it had thick paint on it — I broke a piece of painting off and put it in my pocket. And then — then she came to Boulder as a visiting artist and I reached in my pocket and I pulled out that piece of her painting. And she loved that, and so we became very good friends.

MS. AUTHER: That's a great story. What about Jay Defeo, because she also had that incredibly thick impasto?

MR. RICHERT: Oh, I never met her but I was very aware of her because she was a good friend of Joan Brown's and so Joan talked about her a lot. And there's a quote from her — that I can never remember the exact quote--

but it really kind of informs my basic attitude, and it's something like this: only by chancing the absurd may one hope to achieve the sublime. So I think I was already valuing the absurd by then, but — and I still value the absurd.

MS. AUTHER: So when you were in college along with your friends, you were obviously very interested in the sort of broader art world on both coasts. What about politics or other aspects of culture?

MR. RICHERT: I had kind of a dim awareness of the Vietnam War. And I think I was one of the early people to have a dim awareness of the Vietnam War.

MS. AUTHER: What do you mean by dim awareness? What do you mean?

MR. RICHERT: I knew something was going on in Vietnam.

MS. AUTHER: Oh, Okay.

MR. RICHERT: And I didn't like it. And that was before we had many troops there.

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: But I'd read an article in *Time* magazine about the Vietnam War and I got upset about it. And so I was an anti-war person early on, but I wouldn't say that I was a Republican or a Democrat. I didn't have — I just didn't have consciousness of that.

I do remember this great enthusiasm when Kennedy became president. In fact, Gene Bernofsky and I bought into Kennedy's idea of how people should exercise. Gene and I decided we were going to — this was in Lawrence, Kansas — we were going to hike to Kansas City and back. But that was a big failure. We hiked for a while, then came to a small town, Eudora, KS, did the rest of our trip on the bus. So we were not really good exercisers but we did have this enthusiasm for JFK.

MS. AUTHER: Gene Bernofsky was one of the members of your inner circle, one of the three that you're talking about?

MR. RICHERT: No. Gene — so the group of three to five is kind of pre-Gene. But in the department of that time — the art department at that time was Jo Anne Bernofsky. So I definitely knew who she was and was aware of her. And then through her I got invited — actually, one of the — actually, the group of three of us got invited to a party at Gene Bernofsky's, which I was very impressed by because Karen Dalton was there. Do you know who that is?

MS. AUTHER: Mmm hmm. [Negative.]

MR. RICHERT: Well, Karen Dalton was a singer, kind of a folk blues singer who is very well respected now among the people that know what was happening. And she was a friend of Bob Dylan's. But she was in Lawrence, Kansas, at that time. Then she moved to Boulder, Colorado. So it turns out that she became — she was friends of a group of friends of mine from Boulder that date back to my CU Boulder days. So like Danny Hankin — do you know who that is?

MS. AUTHER: Mmm hmm. [Negative.]

MR. RICHERT: He's still a good friend of mine. I had dinner with him yesterday.

MS. AUTHER: How do you spell his last name?

MR. RICHERT: H-A-N-K-I-N.

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: But he — I'm trying to remember — do you remember the song "If I Were a Carpenter?"

MS. AUTHER: Oh, yes.

MR. RICHERT: Do you remember who sang that?

MS. AUTHER: No.

MR. RICHERT: Anyway, Danny was in the band.

MS. AUTHER: Oh, Okay.

MR. RICHERT: I'm trying to remember the name of the —

MS. AUTHER: I know exactly who you're talking about. Yes.

MR. RICHERT: Yes. So Danny remains a singer to this day, but he's not an amateur singer. He's a serious, professional singer, but he sings in places like Louisville, Colorado. But he's good, and — well, he's actually more of a guitar player than a singer. But there's a group of singers that were among our friends in Boulder. There's a lot of overlap between them and the art group people of the time. But interestingly, there is overlap between that group and the Lawrence, Kansas group going all the way back to New York City.

So Gene Bernofsky and Dan Hankin were friends in high school in New York. And so there was a whole — well, I guess I was going to try to keep this story clean —

MS. AUTHER: [Laughs.] It's Okay.

MR. RICHERT: — but the Drop City documentary shows the LSD aspect of this. So there also friends with them in high school and New York was Nick Sands and he is kind of famous now for having been the main manufacturer of LSD. And in that movie, do you remember in the movie there is a scene with his truck, which is actually an LSD lab? Do you remember that?

MS. AUTHER: Oh, yes. I remember that. I remember that.

MR. RICHERT: That's Nick Sands. So he was friends with Gene and Danny and some of them went to Erasmus High. And Jo Anne was in that group, too. So there was this group that was a high school group in New York, but then, strange, coincidentally had a lot of overlap with the group in Lawrence, Kansas and the group in Boulder, Colorado.

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: So it's kind of interesting how there's all these connections that date way, way back.

MS. AUTHER: Overlapping networks. So I know that eventually you and Gene shared an apartment and you all moved into kind of performance art activities that you referred to as *Droppings*. You want to say a little bit about that?

MR. RICHERT: Right. Right. Yes, the *Droppings* — in the way the painting of rocks predated that. It was actually the group of three of us that started painting rocks a couple of years before.

MS. AUTHER: And what was that all about?

MR. RICHERT: Well, we were all informed by happenings at Black Mountain College and John Cage and Buckminster Fuller, too. So my interest in Buckminster Fuller dates back I think to when I was in high school.

So Gene and I — well, actually, I moved into this loft. It was a great loft. I think it was about 4,000 square feet on the main street in Lawrence Kansas, and that was shared by one of the three that I went to high school with and myself. And then, one of us — well, his name is John Brewer — John Brewer moved out and so the loft was — so I was living there all by myself paying the high rent of $40 a month. And I — and I wanted to share that rent with somebody. [Laughs.]

So then Gene showed up because he had just come from San Francisco and had actually broken up with Jo Anne at that time so he moved in with me, but he didn't share the rent, so I was subsidizing Gene. I was paying his $20 a month. I think I was [inaudible].

But there's a great thing that happened then. And we did listen to a lot of rock music in that loft. And I remember one day, the rock music was playing fairly loud, and the loft was fairly long. So at one end of the loft was Gene. All of a sudden I hear this loud shriek. You might have heard this story before.

MS. AUTHER: Mmm hmm. [Negative.]

MR. RICHERT: I heard this loud shriek. I said, "What? What is it? And he said, "I can't believe it. I've just had an incredible vision." I said, "Really? What is the vision?" He said, well — he got out a piece of paper and started sketching it up. I said, "You should do a painting of that." But he'd never painted before so I helped him stretch up a large canvas. It was — if I remember correctly, it was six feet by eight feet, which was fairly a large — larger than most people in Kansas had seen before.

And then he started painting in my studio and he painted this big canvas. And a lot of people were wondering what is it — it was just — it's very geometric, hard-edge, and minimal. And it actually looked very good. And I

knew it looked good, so I said, “Well enter it into the” — what was called, the Mid-America Annual at the Nelson Atkins Museum in Kansas City. So he said, “Oh, really?” I said, “Yes, enter it.” So he entered the show and he won the Ford Foundation Award, the big award for the whole thing with his painting. And everybody — and *Droppings* were already underway so everybody at KU thought that this was some kind of fraudulent act that we had conspired together on. And they were really angry that here are all these serious artists and then this prankster wins the big prize. So that became property of the Nelson Atkins Museum.

And Gene could see that there was something there. He liked the painting so he actually started doing a series of paintings that looked really good. And in a way, he had a good connection, and it seems to me that something should have happened for him, but it didn’t. And his connection was Barbara Kulicke. Have you ever heard of her?

MS. AUTHER: What’s her name?

MR. RICHERT: Barbara Kulicke, K-U-L-I-C-K-E I believe. Now there’s — she and her husband owned the Kulicke Frame Company in New York and all the artists at that time used Kulicke frames. And she had the best art parties in New York at the time. And do you know who Mel Ramos is?

MS. AUTHER: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. RICHERT: Well, Mel Ramos did a number of paintings of her. So she was a big figure in New York at that time. And the time we’re talking about, I think, is 1963 or 1964. And so Barbara Kulicke was Jo Anne’s cousin, so Jo Anne got Gene invited to one of these super-hip parties. And Gene showed her the paintings. And she should have said, “Wow, this is great” — got him into the gallery but she didn’t — she didn’t think he was ready. But I think he was, so but I think he wanted instantaneous results and he didn’t get the instantaneous results so he stopped painting.

MS. AUTHER: Did he go back to filmmaking?

MR. RICHERT: I’m trying to think if he made any films by then. I think this is pre-filmmaking.

MS. AUTHER: You mentioned that the *Droppings* had already started. Do you want to describe what those are for the record?

MR. RICHERT: Okay. The *Droppings* — we have this — as I said, we had this great loft in Main Street in Lawrence, Kansas, and there’s a couple of lofts up there so it’s kind of a little mini-art scene up there. And we had access to the roof of the building and we’d go up on the roof and there were some rocks up on the roof, so we brought paint up there and we started painting the rocks. And then we started dropping the rocks, because this is the big moment, dropping the rocks down onto the Main Street of Lawrence, Kansas and we were kind of astonished at the reactions of people when these rocks would drop. And we assumed they’d look up and see us but they would not look up. They’d look around, 360 degrees around, and look, “What is going on?”

I liked it from an art point of view. Gene was a psychology major. I think he liked it from a psychological point of view. So he’s interested in the psychology of these people and I was interested in this as an art form. I think we fused our interests and so it became — we started thinking of it as kind of performance art but where the role between the performer and the audience is reversed. So we would drop down the rocks and then the people that were watching the rocks would become the performers and we were the audience.

So we did a number of — and we called these *Droppings* — and we did a number of Droppings. One of them that I liked a lot was a mattress. We had a mattress that we would drop from three stories up but it was tied to a rope so it would stop about eight feet high. So people would be walking by — it was kind of a mean thing — we dropped the mattress and they’d jump back and then it would stop. [They laugh.]

One that I really liked a lot, which I called *Pendulum*, was a boot on the end of a rope. And we swung this boot back and forth in huge arcs in front of the music store, three stories. Three floors down there’s a music store. And so this boot was going back and forth and the store owner didn’t know how to react to it. And he didn’t like it. He was angry. So he came out with a broom, started swatting, swatting at the boot. [Laughs.] So it was a great performance.

Another one was kind of informed by Man Ray. We had an ironing board with an iron on the ironing board but the iron was plugged into the parking meter. You know, we stuck it in through the penny slots.

But right across the street from our loft was the big hotel in town, the Eldridge Hotel. So we cooked up a breakfast. It was a nice looking breakfast way beyond what we’d do for ourselves, nice glass of orange juice, a plate with bacon and eggs, hash browns and coffee, a napkin, and knife, fork and spoon. We set it very carefully right in front of the sidewalk of the hotel. And so the hotel visitors would see this and they would keep their

distance from it. Nobody would walk close to it, like it's going to explode. So they would kind of walk in big arcs around it.

This was pre-video. I wish there would have been film documentation of this or at least photographic. But there was just no documentation. We did document it in a book. We had our book that was documenting everything. And the book got stolen. So I still wonder what happened to that book. The people were avoiding this breakfast, but finally a bike rider just rode right through it and he just kind of upset it and it splashed all over the place. And that was the end of that.

MS. AUTHER: So when did you graduate?

MR. RICHERT: I graduated in 1963.

MS. AUTHER: And where did you go from Kansas?

MR. RICHERT: Then I went to the University of Colorado.

MS. AUTHER: For an MFA or you were teaching or —

MR. RICHERT: No. I was going for an MFA [Master of Fine Arts].

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: And the *Droppings* did continue in Boulder but they also continued in Lawrence and they got big. They were done by other people than Gene or I. It kind of became a phenomenon in the — in the KU art department, there would be these big Droppings. They'd call them — droppings in the river bed of the Kaw River.

MS. AUTHER: K-A?

MR. RICHERT: K-A-W.

MS. AUTHER: Okay. But you didn't continue them in Boulder.

MR. RICHERT: Yes, I did.

MS. AUTHER: Oh, you did? Okay.

MR. RICHERT: Yes.

MS. AUTHER: Did you do them by yourself or did you —

MR. RICHERT: I did them by myself but I kept them anonymous. *Droppings* were kind of sometimes anonymous and sometimes not. But one big dropping which I thought was an important dropping for us, was the two of us went to Mexico City, and we just made these signs, printed up 100 or so signs that said, "Is This a Dropping' on it and we posted them all over Mexico City. And then I got interested in this idea of doing signs. So I started making signs. And I put them on the highway like highway signs.

MS. AUTHER: So it sounds like there could be potentially a lot of sources. I mean, you had the example of Happenings, but what about Dada or surrealism? Was that something that interested you at all or the concept of the prank as they — or the hoax as they understood it?

MR. RICHERT: Yes. I think we felt that this compared to Dada. And my interest in surrealism was more how it informed the abstract expressionists, but I was really never terribly interested in the — I'm more interested in it now than I was then. But I think my early idea of surrealism was Dali and Tanguy. And I wasn't — actually, I've never been enthusiastic about Dali, but I think I'm more enthusiastic about him now than I was then. But Miro — I was probably more interested in somebody like Miro —

MS. AUTHER: Right.

MR. RICHERT: — who I felt was more influential to the Abstract Expressionists.

MS. AUTHER: What kind of work did you do early on in grad school in terms of painting?

MR. RICHERT: I think my early paintings at CU Boulder were attempting not to be too much like Diebenkorn. And, interestingly enough, one of my paintings, which was definitely informed by West Coast painting, I entered in that same show at Kansas City. And the juror was Diebenkorn. And I won first prize. So Gene won first prize one year. I won the first prize next year with my Diebenkorn painting. So that was in the collection of the Nelson

Atkins Museum too.

MS. AUTHER: What did it look like?

MR. RICHERT: It looked maybe a little bit too much like West Coast painting at the time. I think it really had that like — this thick — it was painted with Bay Area Paint. Have you ever heard of the Bay Area Paint Company?

MS. AUTHER: Oh, not the paint company. I thought you meant the Bay Area figurative school.

MR. RICHERT: Bay City Paint it was called.

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: They didn't manufacture paint in tubes. They manufactured in cans so if it wasn't for that paint company, I do not think we would have West Coast painting or Bay Area painting at all because they painted with thick, thick paint which didn't cost a fortune. When Jay Defeo painted, that was painted with Bay City Paint. So that was very thick. But —

MS. AUTHER: It was oil they were producing?

MR. RICHERT: It's oil, yes. Oil painting.

MS. AUTHER: Interesting.

MR. RICHERT: And we knew that was the paint they were using in San Francisco so we ordered large orders of that paint that were shipped to Boulder. And so all Boulder students would be squeezing paint out of a tube, but my friends and I would be troweling paint out of big gallon cans of oil paint, Bay City Paint.

MS. AUTHER: Did you mix your own colors or were you using straight out of the can?

MR. RICHERT: Well, I would usually mix the paint. I mean, some of it would come straight out of the can. That would be a mixture of some — but you made me think of one thing I did try to do when I was manufacturing my own paint, you know, grinding my own, which is the worst paint I've ever used in my life. It's really terrible paint made by me.

And — but yes, my studio here would have cans and paint around. In each can, there would be a brush, and the brush would be like a two-inch or three-inch brush, so I'd would take big, big blobs of paint and smear them on the canvas. And I would have trowels, not painter's — not painter's knives, but carpenter trowels to trowel the paint, smear them on the canvas.

MS. AUTHER: So was it — it sounds like it wasn't overly gestural, if you're talking about Diebenkorn as an inspiration, something a little more restrained.

MR. RICHERT: No. I'd say it was more —

MS. AUTHER: In terms of gesture.

MR. RICHERT: — more gestural than Diebenkorn.

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: And some of the gestures maybe even more gestural than DeKooning. But also there would be hard-edge geometry in it, so it would be a lot of paint smeared around, but there might be a triangular shape that's pallet knived a hard-edge shape, so there would be geometry in these paintings as well as a lot of thick, oozing paint and a lot of drips.

MS. AUTHER: Where did the geometry come from?

MR. RICHERT: Well, most of my paintings would have — as they do today — would have kind of an underlying structure. So this painting I was talking about, the name of it was *Totem*. That's the one that Diebenkorn gave the prize to. It was named *Totem*, and it was a five-foot-by-five-foot square canvas and right in the middle was a white plus sign, definitely referring to the cross. But —

MS. AUTHER: Or even some of Malevich's works.

MR. RICHERT: Right. And so anyway, it was named *Totem* to nudge the reference to the cross. But it had geometric shapes kind of that were painted in carefully, but around — like it was a lot of thick paint that I'd trowel out of perfect shapes and kind of [inaudible] there was a nice, fairly clean geometric shape there and then

[I'd] paint that in carefully in contrast to all the oozing paint.

And the answer — I just thought of an answer to your question, where did that come from, I think one of the things I did like — I think I fused Diebenkorn, DeKooning, and also Bruce Conner, so I'm still into Bruce Conner.

And one of the things that I wanted to say earlier, one of the things that there was at KU that was very important to me was there was a teacher there who liked — he was a graduate student and he — his name was Thomas Coleman. And he liked Bruce Conner too and he brought a lot of Bruce Conner films to the school. We had an auditorium there and he would show the films. And so I think that was a big part of where I got my information.

MS. AUTHER: So what — like as you developed as a painter in the MFA program, did you try to keep this balance between the gestural and geometric or did one take over?

MR. RICHERT: I gradually moved to the geometric, the hard-edge geometric. And by then, I became informed by minimalist art. So I did a number of paintings that were clean, hard-edge, geometric, no slop, no drips, but they were — one way they would be different than the minimalist art is they would represent three — some of them would represent three-dimensional space.

Like one of them that I think relates to my interest to this day was a cubic lattice that was — I mean, it was a flat surface. It was a shaped canvas so it was shaped like a cube, and it was painted in with an illusionistic cube structure — very minimalist but illusionistic at the same time.

MS. AUTHER: Were there particular minimalist artists that you were interested in or that you looked at more than others?

MR. RICHERT: Well, one of my favorite artists at the time was Kiki Smith's father. What was his name?

MS. AUTHER: David.

MR. RICHERT: David Smith.

MS. AUTHER: Yes.

MR. RICHERT: No, no. David Smith was the sculptor, wasn't he?

MS. AUTHER: Yes.

MR. RICHERT: This was —

MS. AUTHER: A different Smith?

MR. RICHERT: Tony Smith.

MS. AUTHER: Oh, Tony, yes.

MR. RICHERT: So Tony Smith was into geometry as I was by that time. And seeing more recent videos of Kiki Smith, I realize that she was very well informed about geometry too, but she was making little geometric models for her father.

So I liked Tony Smith. I think in general I was envious of minimal artists and I wish I could do that, but I cannot do that because they are doing it. So in fact, that was really kind of the inspiration for *The Ultimate Painting*, which is to be the opposite of minimalist art. So if you look close at *The Ultimate Painting*, you'll see a little — a lot of the little details kind of refer to minimalism.

MS. AUTHER: We'll talk about that in more detail, but that's jumping ahead, isn't it? [They laugh.]

MR. RICHERT: But anyway, there was — while at CU and definitely while at Drop City, there was a high awareness of minimalist work, and envy — wishing we could — or I was wishing I could do that. And I have these fantasies about minimalist works that I wish I could do.

MS. AUTHER: Sculptures?

MR. RICHERT: No, they were paintings. They were shaped canvases.

MS. AUTHER: Okay. Shaped canvases so like the work with Frank Stella or Jo Baer or someone like that?

MR. RICHERT: A little. Yes, maybe a little like Frank Stella. I loved Frank Stella's work, his early — his early thin stripes, or those little thin stripes on black canvases. I thought they were great. And I did like Jo Baer a lot too.

MS. AUTHER: Was there something about the illusionistic quality that the minimalists had given up that you wanted to retain in your own work?

MR. RICHERT: There must have been, although like I would say my biggest love in painting was abstract expressionism but you can't do that so I don't do that, but I love it, but you can't do it now. And I think I felt the same way about minimalism. I loved minimalism, but I couldn't do it.

And one painting I really loved, and I got to see it at the Jewish Museum — actually, Rauschenberg's white paintings were there as were his black paintings. And everybody knows about his white paintings, but he also did black paintings. And I loved those, but I could not do it. I know I couldn't. So I think the illusion was maybe some kind of desperate act of trying to not do the minimalism that I kind of wanted to do.

So I would say minimalism was really kind of hanging in the background. There was this awareness of it but never straight implementation, although the hard-edge geometric paintings got the closest to them.

MS. AUTHER: Where were you — were you studying the mathematics and the science behind patterning and geometry or how did that happen?

MR. RICHERT: Like I said earlier, I liked Buckminster Fuller maybe as early as high school. So I was very interested in his domes and I liked them a lot. And now I think about KU, I did some — yes. I said I was informed by DeKooning and West Coast and East Coast painting, but I also very much liked Alfred Jansen. Do you know who that is?

MS. AUTHER: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. RICHERT: So he was really an important artist for me. In fact, I did — so when I was at KU, I liked Alfred Jansen and I liked Bucky Fuller so I tried to do these geodesic paintings; I tried to make them like domes but painted like Alfred Jensen. So that was another thing I was doing.

MS. AUTHER: So these were shaped canvases or constructive canvases.

MR. RICHERT: Yes. There were — they were flat and they're fairly small. They're flat canvases but they don't have any structures kind of bulging out of them. But we carefully painted them with a pallet knife with a hard edge very much like Alfred Jensen.

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: But they had — they were faceted like geodesic domes. And at the same time, I was doing my first spin painting so I did spin paintings at KU. That was before Drop City. And those were fairly geometric.

MS. AUTHER: And how did you do those?

MR. RICHERT: There were several different attempts at it. I was always looking for motors and looking for strobe lights. My first strobe light was a projector with a spinning disc in front of it. I had little slots in the spinning disc so that the light would come flashing through the slits. That didn't work very well. It didn't work anywhere near as well as high-quality strobe — scientific stroboscopic instruments.

MS. AUTHER: So you were trying to create a kind of strobe light.

MR. RICHERT: Yes. Yes.

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: So my first strobe lights I built mechanically.

MS. AUTHER: Got it. Got it. Okay.

MR. RICHERT: But then when I found the electronic strobes, I realized they were far, far better.

MS. AUTHER: So then you started positioning the strobe in front of a painting that was spinning.

MR. RICHERT: Right. And the painting should be about this size.

MS. AUTHER: Okay. And you had painted the surface.

MR. RICHERT: Yes, very geometrically.

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: Some of them were this size, some of them were this size, and some of them were actually cylinders that would spin so they were very geometrically painted cylinders that would spin and the strobe light would flash on them.

MS. AUTHER: Okay. So you'd already experimented with that and you returned to it in graduate school.

MR. RICHERT: Right.

MS. AUTHER: Okay. I know that you had the opportunity to hear Buckminster Fuller speak at UC Theater. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

MR. RICHERT: Yes. I think they still have — it is called the World Affairs Week. But back in the '60s, it was really a big deal and they would invite all kinds of important people. The first year I went, the two people I most remember are Buckminster Fuller and Marshall McLuhan. And I would say I was very impressed with both of them.

And you often hear that Buckminster Fuller would speak for six hours straight. And I think he did. I think he spoke about six hours straight. And it's amazing how the audience were just glued to their seats. They were really into him, just paying attention. It was a big auditorium and everybody was paying attention to everything he said.

MS. AUTHER: What impressed you listening to him?

MR. RICHERT: I was very impressed with his wide range of interests. Like I really liked his idea of synergy, and so at Drop City we were trying to implement that idea that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. One of his examples is in music there are the individual musicians which are all good, but when they are performing together, they create something way beyond what they could do individually. At Drop City we were thinking along those lines that we as individuals would synthesize some kind of creative effort which would be larger than what we could do individually.

MS. AUTHER: I want to come back to that, but let me just ask you about Marshall McLuhan. What was it about his presentation that intrigued you?

MR. RICHERT: I have to try to remember. So, I mean, the big idea then was that the media is the message, and I think I bought into that to a great extent. I don't think I ever totally thought that the message wasn't the message. So here's a — so Marshall McLuhan said, "the media is the message," and here's what I say, here's a quote from me: "the media was the message." [They laugh.]

But — I don't know, his style impressed. He was charismatic. He had a style — he looked good, acted good, but I don't remember exactly what he said.

MS. AUTHER: So he was charismatic.

MR. RICHERT: Yes.

MS. AUTHER: Yes. So what year — do you remember the year that you heard Buckminster Fuller speak at the World Affairs?

MR. RICHERT: That must have been 1965 because it was right after hearing him speak that we decided to build geodesic domes, or our attempt at geodesic domes at Drop City.

MS. AUTHER: And had you finished the MFA at that point?

MR. RICHERT: No. No. A touchy point with me is that Drop City never meant drop out, but I did drop out.

MS. AUTHER: Okay. So in '65, you left with — who did you leave with to establish Drop City?

MR. RICHERT: That was Gene and Jo Anne Bernofsky and I. Well, actually, while I was still in school before, right before the semester was over, Gene and I went on our big trip to try to find a property to buy. And we found it in Trinidad and came back and told Jo Anne about it. And Gene tried to scare her — so she was dreading the property. [Laughs.] So he actually told her that we'd bought the — do you know what the Huerfano is?

MS. AUTHER: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. RICHERT: Well, we told her we bought that.

MS. AUTHER: The whole county?

MR. RICHERT: No, no, the mound — the mound that it's called the Dwarf or the Horseman.

MS. AUTHER: Oh, right. I know that.

MR. RICHERT: Do you know that one?

MS. AUTHER: Right. I know that little mound. Yes. Okay. So you came back to Boulder.

MR. RICHERT: And we really — and Richard was really very involved, really —

MS. AUTHER: Richard Kallweit?

MR. RICHERT: Yes. So he was not there at the purchase of the property, but he was there in our early scrounging. So he — so we used his car to gather up some of our supplies. So he was involved really in a way from the very beginning, not — I mean, in the way the beginning starting in Lawrence, Kansas, but like the idea for Drop City started in Lawrence, Kansas. But once we bought the property, Rich was kind of right there. And he I think arrived at the property about two weeks later after we were there.

ELISSA AUTHER: So when you say the idea for Drop City started in Lawrence, Kansas, was it the idea for like a communal artist compound or was it about dome building as early as that point?

MR. RICHERT: No. The dome building came later, so in Lawrence, Kansas, we were thinking we would build A-frames. But we — the idea — it's incorrect to say it was the idea for Drop City, but it was the idea that we would buy some land and we would build our own buildings there and we'd live there. And that was going to be Gene and Jo Anne and I, but that we would invite other people to live there too. So that was — I believe that was in 1962.

MS. AUTHER: So when you settled on the land outside of Trinidad that you called Drop City, did you immediately start building domes? Was that the goal?

MR. RICHERT: When we bought the land, we still thought we were going to build A-frames and then I went back to Boulder and heard the lecture by —

MS. AUTHER: I see.

MR. RICHERT: — Fuller and that's when it switched over to domes. And so after that lecture, I went home and built a dome out of — I believe it was straws. And so that was actually the design for the first dome that we built.

MS. AUTHER: So besides the progressive ideologies that were associated with the dome, you probably were also attracted to just the geometry of it, weren't you, at this point, just given your interest in geometric structures and patterns?

MR. RICHERT: Yes. I was very attracted to the geometry, so — even though I misunderstood the geometry so the first dome that we built was not a geodesic dome by Fuller's definition of a geodesic dome, but it was a dome based on fivefold symmetry. So Fuller domes are based on the triacontahedron and our first dome was based on the dodecahedron. But the dodecahedron and triacontahedron are closely related structures.

MS. AUTHER: So you did it by accident.

MR. RICHERT: Yes. And I'm now glad I did it wrong because now I can claim it as my own dome. So —

MS. AUTHER: So that's the earliest dome. Was there a name for it?

MR. RICHERT: They went through several names. It ultimately became known as the Solar Dome because — I don't know. We believe it was the first solar — we believe it was the first solar heated building of the decade in Colorado. But there were — there was a solar house built in Colorado in the '40s.

MS. AUTHER: Interesting. How many domes were built at Drop City?

MR. RICHERT: Maybe I should count them. There's — I'll draw a little map.

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: There's the first dome, a solar dome, the second dome, and there's the Theater Dome, the Rabbit Dome. Then there's one called the Hole, which is the two story dome. Then our biggest one was called The Complex. So that could be counted as three domes, three domes that are fused. Then there's the smaller dome over here called the Icosodome. And over here is a medium-size dome, smaller than this, but — this is the

biggest actual individual dome, the Theater Dome. So if you count this as three, it's one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10 — one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10. And I usually say 11.

MS. AUTHER: Is this another small one — another small one?

MR. RICHERT: Well, there was a little, kind of a kids' play dome over here. That must have been the 11th.

MS. AUTHER: So do you want to describe for the record how you made them? I know the story is out there, but it would be good to have it as part of this interview, too.

MR. RICHERT: One of the things that it's kind of amazing is we did all this with no money. Down the road from Drop City there was a sawmill, and the sawmill manufactured lumber and they had a lot of reject lumber which they'd just throw away, or they actually wouldn't throw them. They'd stack it up in piles and let people of the neighborhood take it for firewood. But we took it for building supplies.

So really all these domes, with the exception of this one, which was — the Wadman dome was actually originally built in Boulder and then moved to Drop City. But all the rest of these were built with this reject wood that the sawmill rejected.

We built the structure of this first dome for a cost pretty close to zero. And then we covered it with tar paper and stucco. And then covered the stucco with what was called alumination. It's like a tarry type substance but the color is — it looks like aluminum. So you often hear that domes leak but I don't remember that dome leaking. I don't think it leaked.

MS. AUTHER: I don't see how it could.

MR. RICHERT: Yes. So that was the first dome, and that was the only stucco dome. The second dome was covered with plywood and then the plywood was covered with the allumination [sp], and then later it was covered with paint actually by Dean and Linda Fleming. They painted these domes with colorful patterns on them.

But both those domes were also insulated. So that was our biggest expense was the insulation. So for those two domes, we actually had to buy the insulation, but later we found a free source for insulation. So all our domes were all insulated, and a lot of people don't realize that we had electricity and we had plumbing; we had hot and cold running water and we had toilets. So in some ways we were very civilized.

These first two domes maybe cost maybe 2 (hundred dollars) or $300 each, and per square foot, they were probably our two most expensive structures. So — oh, wait. Now I remember the 11th dome. It's this one here. It's not round, it's elongated. It's called — this is called the Cartop Dome.

So what happened, we had our first three domes — this, the Theater Dome I built myself one winter when Richard had gone to Albuquerque to go to graduate school and Gene and Jo Anne went to New York to have their baby. So I was left there all by myself so I built that dome by myself.

MS. AUTHER: The Cartop Dome.

MR. RICHERT: No, no. The Theater Dome.

MS. AUTHER: The Theater Dome.

MR. RICHERT: That was the biggest dome there. And I built the structure by myself, and after that the car tops were put on by the group of people. What I was going to say is this dome, which is — it's 40 feet in diameter and about 22 feet high, and maybe around 1,500 square feet cost a total of $75. So it cost less than these because of the car tops.

MS. AUTHER: So that was the first one where you went and chopped off the car tops in a salvage yard.

MR. RICHERT: Yes. This is the really the one — the first one where we chopped off top car tops. This was the first car top dome that Steve Baer had actually done his own chopping in Albuquerque so these were all chopped in Albuquerque and then brought to Trinidad.

MS. AUTHER: Okay. Anything else we should know about the construction of the domes?

MR. RICHERT: Well, one thing that we worried a lot about was how would we handle wind because we knew they were light structures and we thought maybe the wind would blow them away or destroy them. But what we didn't quite realize was they're streamlined structures and the wind would just glide right over so you'd just barely feel the wind at all. So they did not catch the wind. They're strong structures. And we knew that geodesic

domes were strong but I think we were a little bit worried about whether we'd had them fastened to the ground securely enough. But that was not a problem.

I think a real important aspect of the domes is that they cost very little to build. Like this, the one called the Cartop Dome, I like to tell this story in front of Richard because it makes him mad, and so I'm the liar and he's the one that sticks with the facts. But I like to tell people, or I liked to back in the Drop City days, that we built this for $7 because it was built of car tops. Then Richard gets really angry and says, no, you keep forgetting the cost of the screws. They cost another $7. It cost $14. [They laugh.] So anyways. So this building cost $14.

MS. AUTHER: The Cartop Dome.

MR. RICHERT: Yes. And it was a fairly large space, about like this room. It was slanted so one end was higher than the other but the one end was about this high. And so we actually had two floors in that — in this end. It was a very usable space for $14.

[End of disc.]

ELISSA AUTHER: Okay. This is Elissa Auther interviewing Clark Richert at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver, Colorado, on August 21st for the Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, card two.

So Clark, we left off with the building of the domes at Drop City. Can you talk a little bit about the math behind those? Like how do you — how do you work the dimensions out?

CLARK RICHERT: Well, the interesting thing about the math is that on the first dome I had the math wrong. Buckminster Fuller's domes are based on the triacontahedron, which is [inaudible] become extremely interesting to me even to this day because for people that are interested in a higher dimensionality, as the physics world is now, the triacontahedron is considered a shadow from six-dimensional space. So the triacontahedron can be something — it's made up of 30 diamonds and the diamonds can be subdivided into smaller triangles and actually if you subdivide them once then you — it is what is called a one-frequency geodesic. If you subdivide them twice, that's called a two-frequency geodesic. So the more you subdivide them, the higher the frequency of the geodesics.

So I think the dome at Montreal is a six-frequency geodesic. So I should look into that. I counted it once and I think it's six.

MS. AUTHER: So that means the way it's — the triangles are divided?

MR. RICHERT: Yes, the number of times the basic facet of the triacontahedron is subdivided.

If you subdivide them many times, when you look at the diamond, it looks like it's made entirely of hexagons, but actually a spherical dome would always have 12 pentagons and might have 1,000 hexagons, but would have 12 pentagons. And the — if it was a hemispherical dome that would have six pentagons or maybe one pentagon and five pentagons that are cut in half.

So that is the way that geodesic domes are constructed, but what I did in the first dome is I took a dodecahedron, which is closely related to the triacontahedron. In fact, if you — there are the five Platonic solids that I believe all art students should know about. And my art students, they know about them. And the last two in the five Platonic solids, both have five-fold symmetry. So one is called the dodecahedron and one is called the icosahedron. So if you fuse the dodecahedron and the icosahedron, it generates the vertices of the triacontahedron.

What I did, I just stuck with the dodecahedron and I subdivided the edge lengths of the dodecahedron and triangulated it. And then I — and as I triangulated the face of dodecahedron, I pushed all the vertices to the surface of a sphere. So it's round and it's somewhat related to the geodesic dome because it still has that same basic five-fold symmetry that the geodesic dome has. So it would also — in a complete sphere it would also have 12 pentagons.

But this one, because of its scale and its subdivision, it was very low resolution, and also because of the way we put the windows in it, it looked quite a bit like a Jack O' Lantern. So people — so people laughed at it a lot. It's very funny to have, especially at night when it was lit up. And I was always embarrassed that I'd done that, but now in retrospect I'm glad I did it because now I can claim that as my original dome. It's not a Buckminster Fuller dome.

MS. AUTHER: And it doesn't seem to me that Buckminster Fuller rejected Drop City because you won an award that was given by him in 1966, right?

MR. RICHERT: Right. He knew about us and I think it's because we sent a photograph — we sent him information

about us, but also by that time we'd already had quite bit of newspapers' publicity, including an article in New Yorker, and big article in the Denver Post, and including this great cartoon strip called Gordo. And nobody knows what Gordo is anymore, but in the '60s everybody knew what Gordo was.

MS. AUTHER: What was it? [They laugh.]

MR. RICHERT: It was a comic strip in the Sunday papers that featured this overweight Hispanic man named Gordo. He had a very good attitude about things. In the comic strip he's reading the newspaper about these people in search of dwarves and elves near a town called Trinidad, Colorado. And that story, by the way, was one of the Gene Bernofsky's first big stories. So when the Denver Post arrived at Drop City, they got to Gene first and they asked who we are, who we were and what we were doing there. And he said, "Well, we're from outer space and we are [laughs] we are here on earth in search of dwarves and elves." Because he'd just been reading *The Hobbit*.

We had built this very crude, funky closet space. Like we didn't have enough storage space, so we built in the outdoor a structure just for storage space. And it looked a little bit like the Mercury capsule, if you remember the Mercury capsule. So he told them that that was our capsule that we'd arrived in. [Laughs] and the newspaper wrote it all up, and then that story made it to the New Yorker and to the Gordo comic strip.

MS. AUTHER: Is that how the artists from Park Place Gallery found out about you?

MR. RICHERT: No, we actually found him — we had gone to New York — that's Dean Fleming you're talking about?

MS. AUTHER: Mmm hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. RICHERT: It was Dean Fleming and his wife. She became his wife later, but at the time — anyway, they're kind of known as Dean and Linda Fleming. And we went to New York just to see the galleries and we went to a fairly prominent gallery called Park Place Gallery, which is where Mark DiSuvero showed and some other prominent artists. And Dean and Linda were both showing there. And when we went there, Dean and Linda — or Dean was there and a friend of theirs. I don't remember Linda being there. But we started talking, and we had an in-depth conversation. And I believe it was our meeting him there in Park Place Gallery that was really part of why they ended up moving to Colorado. And when they moved to Colorado, they first moved close to Drop City and they were at Drop City a lot.

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: So we found him, he didn't find us.

MS. AUTHER: So then Buckminster Fuller found you because you sent him the photograph of Drop City and there were other news reports already that early, like a year after you had settled the land?

MR. RICHERT: Yes, so we'd sent him numerous photographs and a description of what we were doing just to inform him. We weren't seeking the Dymaxion Award. But then one day in the mail we were very surprised to receive the Dymaxion Award — the 1965 Dymaxion Award.

MS. AUTHER: Did he ever visit you on site?

MR. RICHERT: No, he didn't, but we visited him in Carbondale, Illinois. And we toured his house. He eventually built a geodesic dome for himself. So we got to tour his geodesic dome. And we went to Carbondale not actually to see Fuller, but because of our tour — we would do this tour — to do college towns because our Peter Rabbit, which stood for public relations, he was the self-appointed public relations man, would line up these events for us at different schools around the country and we'd get money from them. That was one of our main sources of income. So we went to Carbondale and had a really good time at Carbondale.

MS. AUTHER: How much was the award for?

MR. RICHERT: It was for $500, which sounds like nothing now, but it sounded like a lot then.

MS. AUTHER: Sure.

MR. RICHERT: So —

MS. AUTHER: So the PR or Peter Rabbit setting up these visiting lecture gigs at different universities, let me ask you a little bit about that. When you went and talked to other students, did you just talk about your painting work or did you talk about Drop City as an expansion of your artistic practice? I mean, how did you understand what you were doing outside — I mean, was it all part of a lifestyle or were you strictly thinking one part is my

art, the other part is structures that I build to live in?

MR. RICHERT: Well, we regarded the structures as art and we regarded our life as art. So the whole thing was art. At our events, we would typically show a film, which was a collaborative film, but mainly made by Gene Bernofsky. But I made part of it myself. So one thing about Drop City is we had a fairly advanced film workshop, you look at Drop City and you think this place does not have running water. Well, actually we had a film workshop and we had two 16-millimeter cameras, a projector and film editing equipment. So we had the capabilities of making films at Drop City, which we did. And we would show them at these events.

And these films, for the most part, were about Drop City and they were kind of a picture of what happened at Drop City. But we'd also take *The Ultimate Painting*, the spinning painting and strobe light with us. So the show would consist of the spinning painting and Drop City movies and usually about three or four of us standing on the stage kind of talking about Drop City and a lot of it's questions and answers.

MS. AUTHER: Hang on a second. I'm going to put us on hold.

So can you say a little bit more about *The Ultimate Painting*, like a formal description and then how it worked?

MR. RICHERT: Well, speaking of geodesic domes, *The Ultimate Painting* was designed so the substructure of *Ultimate Painting* was actually a four-frequency geodesic. And so there were these geodesic lines running all the way through it, but they're kind of disguised by the painting. And one of the ideas was that when the painting spins five flashes per revolution of the painting that it would freeze that geodesic structure and it would kind of emerge out of the painting. And that never did emerge as much as I wanted it to, so if I do another one it will emerge better.

MS. AUTHER: But then there's geodesic or there's some form of geometry around the whole perimeter, too.

MR. RICHERT: The painting is very, very detailed and a lot of the detailed work probably kind of represents or refers to the minimalist art, which was huge at the time. There was maybe five people who worked on it. Two of them were Richard and myself, but both of us were very attracted to minimalist art. I actually wanted to do minimalist art. I had these visions of minimalist paintings I would do, but I never did them because I thought, minimalism is already done. There's no point for me to do it. So *The Ultimate Painting*, in a way, was a reaction to minimalism. It was an attempt to be the opposite of minimalism.

MS. AUTHER: So partly the title refers to the opposite of minimalism —

MR. RICHERT: Right. *The Ultimate Painting* —

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: But it included a lot of little detail work that looks like minimalist structures and a lot of geodesic structures, and then other things. So there's five people working on it.

MS. AUTHER: There's you, there's Gene Bernofsky, Richard Kallweit. Who were the other two?

MR. RICHERT: And Charlie DiJulio and JoAnn Bernofsky.

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: So now if *The Ultimate Painting* sells, we have to split up the profits five ways, which isn't fair because I did my part, most of the work. But the Bernofskys will get two fifths and then Charlie DiJulio's children will get one fifth because Charlie died recently. And Charlie did get to see the Drop City documentary before he died. I thought it came across very well.

And so anyway, if we sell the painting — and there was a museum inquired about whether the painting is for sale. It was the Walker Art Center. So we got all excited. And they asked me what would — or Adam Lerner asked me what the price of the painting would be. And I went with the price that I thought we had said back in 1965; I thought that we had priced it at $60,000. But now I've done a little reading, it turns out we priced it at $50,000.

MS. AUTHER: Was that part of the title, too? Because the title is slightly humorous, so that what you perceived as an outrageous price —

MR. RICHERT: Yes, we thought the price was humorous. But then I told the Walkers the price was $60,000, and I told the Bernofskys that and Gene was angry that I priced it too low. And I told my daughter about it and she was furious that we'd priced it way too low. And I now think we priced it way too low. But I'm also imagining that I'm not going to be around when it sells, but maybe it will sell sometime, some future date.

MS. AUTHER: So let's just also clarify for the record. It's a five-foot diameter tondo, a shaped canvas, and there's a strobe that projects on to it as it spins.

MR. RICHERT: Right.

MS. AUTHER: Yes, Okay.

MR. RICHERT: So it spins something about — like when you describe it that way, it sounds zany, but when you see the actual piece and realize what's happening, I believe it becomes much less zany. So like one of the things that will happen is if the light is flashing at the right speed relative to the rotations of the disc, the disc can look absolutely motionless. So it looks kind of like a frozen still and people might try to touch it and then it kind of throws their finger on it. Or it can superimpose upon itself symmetrically 180 degrees like a mirror image 180 degrees from it, so you get an exact superimposition of itself upon itself. Or you can have this happening at five-frequency intervals or six-frequency intervals. And with a variable strobe, we were able to change that constantly. And the way it's set up now is we have six different strobe speeds that if you push a button for a different speed and the painting will kind of shift between six different illusions.

Just very recently I called up by Mills College and the man I was talking to said, "The painting does not work. It jerks around and it's jumpy when I press this button." And I said, "Well, is the painting spinning?" He said, "Yes, the painting's spinning fine, but when I press this button, it gets jumpy, jerky," which is what is supposed to do. So he thought —

MS. AUTHER: Oh, Okay.

MR. RICHERT: — it didn't work, but then another man looked at it and said, "Oh, yes, it's working. It's working great."

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: So the first man did not realize it was working.

MS. AUTHER: So it was exhibited in 1969. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

MR. RICHERT: Was that '69 or '68? We did — as I told you earlier, we took it around and showed it at different colleges. But there was a big show organized by Robert Rauschenberg and Billy Kluver, who's an engineer. He was kind of in the art world. So — and Billy Kluver just recently died, but they'd organized this show called "Engineering, Art and Technology." It was a big show. It took place at MoMA and the Brooklyn Museum. So we were invited to participate in that show.

So we went to the Brooklyn Museum and we built a dome in the Brooklyn Museum and then we put the spin painting and the dome and the strobe lights. And it was a — turned out to be a major hangout for the museum-goers. They'd go in the dome and they'd sit in there, and I think they smoked marijuana.

MS. AUTHER: So I know the painting was recently recreated. What happened to the original that you used at your college lectures and that was exhibited in Brooklyn?

MR. RICHERT: Yes, the — when we originally set up the painting in Brooklyn, there were three of us, and so everything was responsibly being taken care of. But then I had to go back to Colorado and Ed Heinz [inaudible] on this list, had to go back to Colorado. And so that left Richard Kallweit in charge of everything, which was not really a smart move.

And one of the fellow exhibiters asked Richard if Richard would sell the dome to him. And Richard said, "I'll tell you what, I'll give you the dome if you ship this painting back to Colorado." So the exhibitor agreed to do that, and the painting never did find its way back to Colorado, so the exhibitor took the dome and the painting. And we tracked — and a couple of years later — one thing Richard did he felt guilty about was he informed Art in America about this, and Art in America actually put a photograph of the painting in Art in America and said, "Have you seen this painting," trying to help us to track it down.

And we did track it down. I think his name was Arturo Quetera. Arturo Quetera had a house in — near Philadelphia. I think it was a farmhouse. And we called up the house; we had the phone number. And Robert Morris answered the phone — famous artist Robert Morris. And so we described the painting and he said, "Oh, yeah, yeah, I'm looking at the painting right now. It's on the ceiling." [Laughs.] So we said, "Well, could you please send the painting to Drop City?" He said, "Oh no, I could not possibly do that. I'm just visiting here." So then we kind of intermittently stayed on top of it and we finally got a hold of Arturo. And Arturo said, "Well, unfortunately, the house burned down and the painting burned up with it." So the painting is gone.

But fortunately, there were photographs of the painting and also my memory of the painting process. So in the

recreation of the painting, I made a Photoshop file the same size as the original - in very high resolution. And so I was working in Photoshop on the painting. I almost felt I was at Drop City working on the painting. It took me back. I mean, it really brought my memory back, so I feel like the recreation of the painting is very accurate.

But, yes, I had fairly good photographs, reasonably good photographs to work from.

MS. AUTHER: So this is 1969. You're back in Colorado. Do you want to talk a little bit about how your work's evolved to this point? What does it look like?

MR. RICHERT: Drop City was really a very key point from a — relative to my work. It was Drop City and building those domes that got me into geodesic structure, which really got me into five-fold symmetry. Got me very interested in the geometry. And I'm still working at that geometry today in paintings.

MS. AUTHER: What is — just to stop for one second, what does five-fold symmetry mean?

MR. RICHERT: A good example of a five-fold symmetrical object would be the five-pointed star. So the — when you have three-dimensional objects that have points of five-fold symmetry, those objects are also called five-fold symmetry. And it's always kind of bothered me a little bit because it's not really five-fold symmetry, but that's what they call it.

MS. AUTHER: Could you tell us a little bit about the Zome Toy?

MR. RICHERT: Sure. I often hear about the failure of Drop City but from my perspective Drop City did not fail as Black Mountain College did not fail. Like a huge amount of things came out of Black Mountain College, but their business end failed, so they did not continue, but it was an enormously successful school. I think Drop City was very successful, too. A number of things that came out of Drop City, one of them being the Zome Toy.

So Zome Toy was developed by Steve Baer who designed a number of the buildings in Drop City. It was developed by Steve Baer, but with the assistance of other Drop City people. Like for instance, the Zome system is called a 61-zone system. So it's 61-dimensional. And 30 of those dimensions, by the way, were my idea. So I put those additional 30 into the system and greatly improved it. And I had to argue with them a lot to get that in, but it's now a 61-zone system. It used to be a 31-zone system. But it pretty much — it was really initiated by Steve Baer, but then definitely had the assistance of other Drop City people.

And he started a company in Albuquerque called Zome Works. And the name Zome, by the way, takes the word "dome" and combines it with the word "zone." The Zomes are based on zonohedra and zonohedra are are structures that are made of sets of parallel lines. So like a cube is a zonohedron.

They started the company in Albuquerque and they actually first started building domes — when their first dome was built at Drop City, and that was the car top dome — have you heard of the car top dome?

MS. AUTHER: Mmm hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. RICHERT: Okay, well, the car top dome was Baer's first Zome. But the name Zome actually came from — have you ever heard of Steve Durkee?

MS. AUTHER: Mmm hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. RICHERT: Well, Steve Durkee named it the Zome. So it was his clever idea. And he was involved in a light show group in New York called USCO. But he came to Drop City in the first year and we got to know him. And then he moved to Northern New Mexico. He started a community there called Lama, the Lama Foundation. And they built a number of Baer Zomes at Lama Foundation.

But around the same time that they were building these Zomes, Baer had the idea that it should be this kit of sticks and balls that you could snap together that could be like a Tinker Toy set, except capable of vastly more than the Tinker Toy set is.

So Tinker Toy system is actually a three-zone system. So there's the verticals, horizontals, and two sets of horizontals, and there's diagonals. But by adding the diagonals, you're not adding more zones because the diagonals are not parts of parallel lines, sets of parallel lines.

So the Tinker Toy is a three-zone system, but the Zome Toy was a 31-zone system. And then — so my argument is this came out of Drop City. And then, when I was living in Boulder, I met this high school kid that loved structure. He was making structures out of toothpicks and marshmallows, and I told him he should be informed about the Zome Toy. So I had a Zome Toy and I showed him and he loved it.

And then another kid his same age, a high school kid, and this Boulder kid is named Paul Hildebrandt. And then,

there's this other kid from New England named Mark Pelletier, who had found out about the Zome Toy, so he traveled to Albuquerque to meet Baer because he thought Baer was this great genius, which he probably is. Baer is a great genius, but he's also crazy, but don't put that in there. [They laugh.]

But Baer found this kid very annoying, so he told the kid that he should go to Boulder, Colorado to check me out. And he was hanging out in my studio and he was really very annoying. And it happens he's actually a good artist, very good, darn good artist. And I told him that he needed to meet Paul Hildebrandt. So they met and they immediately totally clicked. And they're total fanatics about the 31-zone system. And so they go to Albuquerque to work out a deal with Steve Baer to see if they can actually start a new company called the Zome Tool Company. And so that company is now located in Longmont.

MS. AUTHER: We got you off track. Do you want to go back to talking about the five-fold symmetry and how that affected your painting practice?

MR. RICHERT: Yes. Back in the Drop City days, I was definitely using numerous types of structures in my paintings, such as fractals. Fractals were big at Drop City. And that's before there was the term "fractal." So we were doing fractals before Mandelbrot coined the term. But there was this mathematician, Benoit Mandelbrot, who named them fractals, as if he had invented them. And he had this kind of attitude as the people who invented the fractals. But fractals have been around much longer than Mandelbrot. Maurits Escher used a lot of fractal systems in his etchings.

And a number of artists since — dating back at least to 1200 in Islamic art have worked with fractal systems. But we were working with fractal systems. Mandelbrot actually kind of found out about what we were doing and he came up with this really obnoxious statement. He said, "Well, it's true. There's other people using fractals, like some fractal — some artists use fractals, but mine are much better than theirs." [They laugh.]

So do you know who Mandelbrot is?

MS. AUTHER: Mmm hmm. [Affirmative.] How could they be any different? Like how would his be different from the ones that you're working with in your paintings?

MR. RICHERT: His — I mean, he worked with basic fractals, which are very geometric, but he would work with — one of the things made possible by the computer is this discovery of fractal structures that we had no idea existed before the computer. So the Mandelbrot Set, for example, which is said to be the most complicated mathematical object ever discovered, was discovered on the computer. And it's actually — one way of viewing the Mandelbrot Set is there's a view of our number system viewed through a filter. So — and nobody had any idea that there was a structure like this in our number system.

So — but the — using a very simple algorithm applied to a computer program will analyze every number in the complex plane. And there's an infinite number of numbers between zero and one. So it doesn't analyze every number in the complex plane because that's impossible, but analyzes a very fine structure of numbers. And given this algorithm, if the number zooms off to infinity very, very fast, it's colored black. And if it zooms off to infinity at a slower rate, it's colored a different color. So there's all these different colors that the numbers are colored. And what happened — that was really a strange thing and nobody knew it existed. It was right around the number zero and around between zero and one and minus two. So it's really right in there next — near zero, there's this really kind of strange black bug that has been called the Gingerbread Man, but I think it should be called the black bug.

But so near — so here's the numbers — the number set, by the way, is not a line. It's a plane. It's called the complex plane. So there's the imaginary numbers, positive imaginary numbers, the negative imaginary numbers. And so near the center of this plane — at the center of the plane is zero. And near zero is this strange bug. And then around the bug is this very wild, often called psychedelic pattern of colors.

And then if you zoom in with the computer at any place at random into the psychedelic pattern of numbers, if you zoom in far enough, you'll find a little bug that's very much like the central bug. And as you zoom in around the little bug, you'll find a tiny bug. Then strangely, all these bugs are connected to each other by kind of an umbilical cord of Mandelbrot numbers. So it's a fine filament. So a little bug has a fine filament going to a bigger bug, which has a fine filament going to a bigger bug, which has a fine filament that goes into the big mother bug.

So I saw a video on the Mandelbrot Set and the promotion for the video said, "Watch this video. It will change your life forever." So I watched it and it changed my life forever. [They laugh.]

So — but one does wonder why are all these strange bugs attached to the big mother bug and are numbers also — what is the meaning of it?

MS. AUTHER: So is there a term that's applied to the — like the fine little connectors?

MR. RICHERT: Well, the world of mathematics knew about so-called Julia Sets, way before they knew about the Mandelbrot Set. And Julia Sets might be a kind of a spiraling form that curves back upon itself, like a shape like that, but much more complex than that, in fact infinitely complex. And it turns out all Julia Sets exist within the Mandelbrot Set. So there's an infinite number of Julia Sets and they all exist within the big mother Mandelbrot Set.

MS. AUTHER: Do all these sets appear in your paintings?

MR. RICHERT: They have — it's hard to use the Mandelbrot Set in art because it just looks too cheesy. So — [laughs] — I have used it.

MS. AUTHER: So besides the fractals and the five-fold symmetries, what other kind of patterns appear in your paintings from this period?

MR. RICHERT: The big — my big discovery was when I discovered that the shadow of the triacontahedron produces these two diamonds that will tile together infinitely in a non-periodic tile. So it does not form a pattern. In fact, it's impossible for it to form a pattern, but it looks a little bit like a pattern. It looks a lot like a pattern, except it doesn't repeat. So I discovered that. And three years later, the mathematician Roger Penrose, discovered it. So it's known as the Penrose tessellation. If you read in the right place, it's known as the Richert-Penrose tessellation because some people know that I was using it before. And if you even read about the Penrose tessellation on Wikipedia, if you go down about nine paragraphs, it says — it acknowledges that an artist named Clark Richert was using this in the '70s before Roger Penrose.

MS. AUTHER: So were you exhibiting work when you were at Drop City or by 1969 had you come back to Boulder or Denver?

MR. RICHERT: There were some exhibits in conjunction with Drop City, such as the exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum. And we also had a show in Dallas, Texas of Drop City art and it was a show and an event, including movies and performance art and it was called the Doomsday Event. Have you heard of that before?

MS. AUTHER: Mmm hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. RICHERT: And so we went — we traveled to Dallas for the event. And in Dallas — actually, it was in Fort Worth — the gallery was in Dallas, but Peter Rabbit was in Fort Worth. So it was at that event that we acquired Peter Douhit, who changed his name to Peter Rabbit.

MS. AUTHER: Do you want to talk about the founding of Criss-Cross? Because this is about — this is the early '70s, right, when this appeared?

MR. RICHERT: Right, so Criss-Cross really evolved out of Drop City. And a lot of the — a lot of the Drop City thinking found its way into the Criss-Cross thinking, like one big word we used a lot at Drop City was "synergy." And that's a Bucky Fuller word and it means the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. So we're kind of going with this mythology that a group of people can produce something better than an individual. So when we — and for different reasons a lot of the original Drop City people left.

And probably in about 1972 or '73, we noticed that a number of the Drop City people were living in close proximity in Boulder. So we decided to start having meetings. And in our first three meetings I think we were trying to come up with a name for our group. And we finally named it Criss-Cross, which meant something along the lines of vectors coming into close proximity and then there being a spark of information passing between the vectors when they became — when they got close enough to each other. So that was — that's the way we envisioned our interaction.

MS. AUTHER: Who were the original members of the group?

MR. RICHERT: The original Criss-Cross members were Gene and JoAnn Bernofsky, Charlie DiJulio, Richard Kallweit and myself.

MS. AUTHER: So the early members and some founders of Drop City.

MR. RICHERT: All these people had come from Drop City. So — and the — so early on, we knew we wanted to do something, but we didn't know what we wanted to do. And interestingly, Holly Baer was aware of us. And she thought that we needed some help. So she gave us a grant — big grant. So — [laughs] — so we were all on salary. So we quit — we didn't have jobs. We were on salary. We worked for Criss-Cross. And we were trying to figure out what to do and we finally started an art school in Blackhawk.

And I just drove by there the other day, looking at where it was. It's really pathetic. I hate Blackhawk now, but it was nice then. And there was actually an art school that was run by a man named Michael Parfinof [sp], who taught at the Chicago Art Institute. But it was — he had this great building with apartments and the studios; really it was a great place. But he only used it in the summer. And so we worked out a deal with him that we would use it for the other nine months and it would be his school during the summer, but other nine months it would be the Criss-Cross Center for Creative Studies.

And we were making art — we were there in the Criss-Cross Center and several of us lived there because there were nice apartments there and there was great studio space. So we were making art there. And we had an exhibit there. It had a gallery space. So I think our first Criss-Cross exhibit was in that building. But then —

MS. AUTHER: What year was that, the first exhibit?

MR. RICHERT: I think that was probably — so these aren't necessarily wrong —

MS. AUTHER: Would that be it?

MR. RICHERT: No, this says 1974, so I think that's what it was.

MS. AUTHER: And what united you all as artists? Was it the style — the geometric style?

MR. RICHERT: The — well, the Criss-Cross group did tend to evolve into the group of artists. And Gene and JoAnn kind of dropped — they gradually faded out of Criss-Cross, so they were no longer involved. But around that time, there's the big movement, P&D, Pattern and Decoration. And we were paying attention to that movement. And it seemed to relate to the type of work that we were doing anyway. So —

MS. AUTHER: It didn't seem as mathematically rigorous as what you're — what you've been talking about.

MR. RICHERT: No, no it wasn't. So some people called us P&D. And I always said, "We're non-decorative pattern." We're not decorative pattern. We're non-decorative pattern. So —

MS. AUTHER: Can I ask one more question about the school? Did you have students or workshops?

MR. RICHERT: Yes, we had students. Like one of our students was Sidney Goldfarb, who is the person who wrote — I always like to introduce him as the person who wrote the initial screenplay for *Frida*. But he teaches — no, no, he's retired. He taught for years at CU Boulder. Another of our students was Fred Worden. But we had trouble distinguishing between our students and our faculty. [Laughs.] There were not real barriers between the students and the faculty. And it became apparent fairly soon that Fred should be faculty rather than student, so he started a film class. And we weren't strictly in arts. We had a — we had a solar energy class and we had a poetics class and the film class. And I think the rest of them were art classes.

Oh, another person that was there was Jack Collom, who's a fairly prominent poet in Boulder now.

MS. AUTHER: What's his last name?

MR. RICHERT: Collom, C-O-L-L-O-M. Have you heard of him? He's actually very well known, way beyond Boulder. And his — and film-wise, we had kind of relationship with the Brakhages. So there's Jane Brakhage and Stan Brakhage. And Stan Brakhage gave Drop City his goat. It was a really obnoxious goat.

So it seemed like — after nine months of this school, it seemed fairly apparent to us that this was — we were not really going to be a group of faculty and students, so we pretty much dropped the idea of the school. But we — around that time, we decided to publish a magazine. Have you seen the magazine before?

MS. AUTHER: Mmm hmm. [Affirmative.] This is Criss-Cross Communications — Art Communications.

MR. RICHERT: Right. So the magazine pretty much focused on — here, I'll show because this is the thickest one. I like that one because it happens to have a big section on Bruce Conner. I believe it's that one.

MS. AUTHER: Do you want to talk about how you put together —

MR. RICHERT: Here, there's the big section on Bruce Conner.

MS. AUTHER: You want to talk about how you put together this particular issue? This is numbers seven, eight, and nine from 1979.

MR. RICHERT: Right, so we were not very good at being on top of things. And now, we initially started this magazine funded by the grant from Holly Baer. And shortly after that, we tried selling advertising and

subscriptions. We sold subscriptions and advertising. And then we started applying for National Endowment grants. So I think this was mainly funded by a National Endowment grant.

MS. AUTHER: And who did — how did you put the content together? Did you solicit articles?

MR. RICHERT: Well, we were — by the time we were doing this magazine, we were renting on occasion this loft in New York which was owned by the Millennium Film Workshop. And it was a big loft. I think it's about 6,000 square feet. And the rent that we paid there was $250 a month. And so we would spend some time in New York and we would meet quite a few New York artists. So like this is one of the New York artists, and she still has stayed in touch with us. Like at our last Criss-Cross meeting, which was about a month ago, she showed up.

MS. AUTHER: Is this Deb Schapiro? What is —

MR. RICHERT: Yes.

MS. AUTHER: Deborah Schapiro, okay. I can't read the first part.

MR. RICHERT: Dee Shapiro.

MS. AUTHER: Dee, okay.

MR. RICHERT: So we — so Criss-Cross was started as Colorado artists, but then it kind of acquired other artists. We acquired some California artists and some New York artists. And also a largercircle of Colorado artists.

So — and we focused pretty much on what I was calling non-decorative pattern, but we also would include other people, such as Bruce Conner. One thing that we all had in common, we were all very interested in Bruce Conner. And we asked him to submit an article and he did.

MS. AUTHER: What exactly do you mean by non-decorative?

MR. RICHERT: Well, that word "decorative" is a really touchy word. [Laughs.] And I'm not certain what decorative means, but —

MS. AUTHER: Well, usually it's used as a disparaging term —

MR. RICHERT: Right.

MS. AUTHER: — in the art world, yes.

MR. RICHERT: I think I bought into the idea of art should be something — reflections of a higher level of decoration. But there's been a lot of defense of decoration since then, so if you're talking to a smart pro-decoration person, the pro-decoration person will probably win the argument.

But I — like how — one thing about myself I think I've said, I'm kind of torn between modernist ideas and post-modernist ideas. And the modernist ideas I think date back to — maybe to the Bauhaus or the Constructivists and the — and Bucky Fuller also liked a term something like "form follows function." And I pretty much believe that form follows function. And you don't just add things in because they're pretty, but they have to come from some inner deep structure. So — and I pretty much try to stick with that today.

MS. AUTHER: So it's closer to what people might understand as pattern or deep structure?

MR. RICHERT: Right. And the word "pattern" for me is something I definitely evolved away from and I now call my work quasi-patterns because patterns are structures that repeat and quasi-patterns are structures that might look like they repeat, but if you analyze them closely you find out they cannot repeat. So it's an actual mathematical impossibility. So —

MS. AUTHER: How many issues of Criss-Cross were there? We should just get the dates down for the record.

MR. RICHERT: So the last one I have here is —

MS. AUTHER: Looks like '75 to 1983?

MR. RICHERT: Well, Criss-Cross — okay, there were things that happened in '83 that were still — we were still calling it Criss-Cross. Like this is not exactly the magazine, but this was still Criss-Cross printing things up. And we had — I think our last show that we had — although we maybe — might be having a show coming up soon.

MS. AUTHER: So wait, this is 1979 in the gallery in New York City. The exhibition is called Criss-Cross Spring Pattern Show.

MR. RICHERT: Right.

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: Well, our most — our latest show did have a flyer like this, fold up, half catalogue, half flyer. And that show is in Mexico City. And I believe that show was in 1984.

MS. AUTHER: So you're still showing as a group right now.

MR. RICHERT: We — there's a gallery in New York in the East Village that Criss-Cross has kind of a connection with and so there's — it seems like for the last few years they'll have about one show a year that will have a number of Criss-Cross artists. So it's not Criss-Cross shows, but Criss-Cross artists will show there.

So like on this — let me look at this. I think our most recent show kind of as a group in New York was maybe 2010, I believe was the last one.

MS. AUTHER: Two thousand ten, okay. And then — but the — but then the publication itself, what was the — do you have the date of your last issue?

MR. RICHERT: I think it might be number 13. And let's see if there's a copyright date on this. I think it must have been in the '70s.

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: This reminds me of one of our problems is that we felt —

MS. AUTHER: Well, this is 7, 8, 9, 1979, so it must have gone into the early '80s.

MR. RICHERT: Oh, yes.

MS. AUTHER: Yes, that would make sense. Okay. So in looking at your résumé here, from '78 to '81, you were showing at OK Harris in New York?

MR. RICHERT: Right.

MS. AUTHER: So how did that arrangement come about — or that relationship?

MR. RICHERT: That — we were — in this loft that we'd rent in New York, we would have shows. And we got some — another article — like I think we might — might have been the first guerilla — what was called guerilla gallerizing. So I think Peter Frank — do you know who that is?

MS. AUTHER: Mmm hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. RICHERT: He wrote a big article in the Village Voice about our show and I think he's more impressed with actually the fact that we did the show than what was in the show. But — so we had several shows like that in that loft, and it was really amazing that these shows were well attended by the right people. So one of the people who was more or less a right person at the time, but I think later became less of a right person, was Ivan Karp. And he came up to the show and he asked me if I wanted to be in his gallery. So I said, "yes." And that was great. So for the next few years I lived off of art sales. So I produced paintings and shipped them to New York and then he would send me checks, which was pretty nice.

MS. AUTHER: And then in '81, did the gallery close or did you just move on to another — how did that happen? Did you move on to another gallery?

MR. RICHERT: Yes, Ivan Karp — and this might be just from my perspective, seemed to be really very conscious of trends and when to go with the trends. And he, at that time, he actually called me up and said he's pretty much switching over to neo-expressionism and that he would continue handling my work, but not in his gallery, but in his warehouse. And I didn't want to show in a warehouse. That didn't interest me. So like for me, and you might not like the sound of this — and I know Robin Rule does not like the sound of this, but the truth is I'm probably more interested in showing than selling. And the idea of selling out of his warehouse, but not showing, did not interest me. So I dropped out of that. I was kind of shoved out, but then I dropped out.

MS. AUTHER: Well, neo-expressionism pretty much eclipsed so much that was going on in the art world at that time, so — what did you think about the reintegration of the figure and through the abstract expressionist — or not abstract expressionist, but expressionist gestural brushstroke, the return of that in painting?

MR. RICHERT: I liked a lot of it. I liked Basquiat quite a bit. And I think I liked most of the so-called neo-

expressionists. I wasn't terribly thrilled with George Baselitz. But I kind of wanted — I kind — I don't know if I wanted it to go away or I just wanted it to become less dominant. So like there was a group here in Denver self-pronounced neo-expressionists and they had this slogan that I thought was very funny, and the slogan was "no thought." [Laughs.] And I think their worked reflected it, too. [They laugh.] So the Denver neo-expressionists, I did not have a very high opinion of them.

MS. AUTHER: So your style didn't change then in the '80s. You continued to work on sort of complex mathematical patterns and systems.

MR. RICHERT: Well, I'm trying to think what happened in the '80s. I did actually go through a period probably influenced by the fact that hard-edge pattern painting was not hip anymore. I did a series.

This is probably about a three or four-year series of paintings that were pictorial. I think the Denver Art Museum owns one of them. I don't know if you've seen it. It's a large painting. I think it's seven feet high by 12 feet wide. And it's pictorial, but it's still working with the same subject matter. The name of the painting is *World Game*, which is — was a Buckminster Fuller idea.

And so in the painting, there's a room. Look out the room — out of the window there and you see Bucky's Geoscope, which was to be a 200-foot diameter sphere that would be covered with little tiny light bulbs that would be computer operated. And on this sphere, you'd be able to show all the demographics movements of — all the movements of money and all the ecological resource movements. So he thought that this sphere would show — he thought it would solve the world's problems. So he said that he would have people from every country in the world playing the World Game inputting on a computer and they'd play the World Game and they'd solve the problems. Like you could have women versus men and see who wins, and I thought if you did it probably the women that would win. It would solve the distribution of food. So I liked that idea a lot. And I thought that —I actually thought that somebody should build that big 200-foot diameter sphere. But now — and then, one thing about the sphere is it was going to be informed by his world resource inventory. So he was keeping track of all the world resources around the world. And so when you're playing the game, you have all this information that you're working with.

But now, there is Google Earth. And that is — that on the world — his world game, as I said, 200 feet in diameter, you'd be able to see every house on earth as a little dot. But now there's Google Earth, which you can see many, many houses on earth as large as almost a square inch. You can read license plates, there's a lot of detail. So I think somebody should now develop some software so that you can play the World Game on Google Earth. And Google Earth does already have a lot of information in it, not just pictures of houses, but it also has — for instance, you can view the sea level 50 years from now. You can move a slider and the water rises and goes into New York.

MS. AUTHER: When did you buy your first computer? Or when did you first have access to a computer?

MR. RICHERT: I've had a computer for a long time — or I have numerous computers.

MS. AUTHER: Like in the early '80s —

MR. RICHERT: I think I had my first computer in 1981.

MS. AUTHER: Did you — did you use it at that point to create compositions for your paintings?

MR. RICHERT: No. I was mainly playing with a software program called — little kid software program — what was that called? Simple, simple program, but you could — Logo. I think it was called Logo. Have you ever heard of Logo?

MS. AUTHER: Uh-uh. [Negative.]

MR. RICHERT: Something like that. And you could program little pixels and so you'd get pixels to move around and you could program the way they moved around.

MS. AUTHER: So when did you start using the computer for your art?

MR. RICHERT: Well, my first computer was an Atari, so you can't do much with an Atari. [They laugh.] But then I bought a little Mac, then I bought what was the most powerful Mac at the time for $6,000. And that Macintosh now, you couldn't sell for $50. And it doesn't have the power of a calculator. But —

MS. AUTHER: But what did it do for you then?

MR. RICHERT: I was working a lot with tessellations on that Macintosh. So, yes, I worked with art ideas on that computer. So I really had a computer or some form of computer for about — for at least 30 years, but I still don't

know how to use a computer.

MS. AUTHER: Well, you use it now for your art, don't you?

MR. RICHERT: Yes, I do — use it a lot.

MS. AUTHER: So what do you do with it now? Like how does it affect the kind of painting you're doing?

MR. RICHERT: Well, one thing I do is I use SketchUp a lot and in SketchUp I build 10-dimensional structures. And then, in SketchUp, you can view the faces of 10-dimensional structures from different angles. And so I'm really trying to develop 10-dimensional painting plans. So you could — and one thing I like about SketchUp, you can either have perspective or — what was it is called — non — when you don't have vanishing points — it's like called orthographic — I'm not sure. But you can have — you can work with vanishing points or without, which — and I use both. But for painting plans, I usually like to flatten it out. So I can — so even though it's a three-dimensional structure or shadow of a 10-dimensional structure, it will flatten out as a flat image which then can become a painting plan. It can evolve into a painting plan.

MS. AUTHER: Do you want to talk about your work as a professor at Rocky Mountain College of Art and Design?

MR. RICHERT: Well, I like to teach a lot, although I'm very wary of the word "teach." So —

MS. AUTHER: When did you start there?

MR. RICHERT: Maybe 25 years ago. That wasn't the first teaching I did. So I taught at CU Boulder a couple of times for one year and then for a couple of semesters. Then I taught at Metro for a little while and I taught at CCD for a little while. But I do very much value the interaction with students in the classroom context, and I really feel I get as much from them as they get from me. And I really — one thing I do not do is impose my structural ideas upon the students. And sometimes they ask. And sometimes, off to the side, I'll show them some of my — some of the things I'm thinking about, but I basically kind of go with this theory of Mel Levine's.

He wrote a book called *One Mind at a Time*. And he says we now know how to teach, it's just a matter of implementing it. And he says — he says basically everybody's brain is different. Like Howard Gardner said there are eight different learning types. You probably heard that; eight multiple learning types. And he says, no, there's way more than that. He says the brain — one person's brain is as different from another's as people's fingerprints are different from each other. And he says everybody is different. Everybody has different skills and capabilities. And he says it's basically a waste of time to try to get somebody who cannot memorize things to memorize things.

So he says you should teach toward the student's strengths. And if you do that, he says that you will get really great results. If the students doing what they're good at doing, they will perform well. And you don't try to force them to do things they cannot do.

So I'm not one of the people that says you cannot be an artist if you can't draw a hand. But there are people who think that you can't be an artist unless you can draw a hand. But I know some really good artists that don't seem to have great skill drawing hands, or they don't even attempt.

I'd give assignments, but I try to make my assignments very, very open to interpretation so that the students can pretty much do what they're good at. And in a critique, I try to find out what they're good at and I try to encourage them to go that direction. So you were — are missing credit points. Was that once or twice? Twice.

MS. AUTHER: So — let me — hang on a second.

[Audio break.]

MR. RICHERT: — in high school, I've always been in maybe a little bit of an art clique. So when I was in high school, I had a group of friends and we were kind of artists, going around together. And we developed our ideas together. And so that was — and that high school group actually continued all the way through my education at University of Kansas. So we stayed together that long. In fact, we stayed together until they died. But that icosahedron that you showed me yesterday was not made by me. That was made by one of my high school friends. So — and he was really good, really good. And nobody's ever heard of him.

MS. AUTHER: What's his name?

MR. RICHERT: His name is Dennis Morgan. His wife has got his art in a garage in Wichita, Kansas. And this is really good looking art and something needs to be done with it. And some of his structures like that are

icosahedrons.

But — so I've pretty much always been in a group and it's my belief that artists can function better if they're in a group. I kind of think if you graduate from college, if you're not in a group you're going to feel lost. So you need to kind of stick with your group after you graduate.

So when I went to the University of Colorado, I basically went by myself, so in a way I was a little bit lost. My group wasn't with me. But there was a group of people that fairly readily found each other. And some of them are now famous artists. Like one of them was John DeAndrea. One was Dale Chisman. One was John Fudge, who's going to have a show. And one was Richard Kallweit. One was Margaret Neumann. And one thing about these — this Armory Group, we've all pretty much stayed friends, except for the ones that have died.

MS. AUTHER: You called yourself the Armory Group.

MR. RICHERT: Yes. It's because we all met each other in the Armory. And it also has that confusion with the other Armory Group.

But anyway, the Armory Group — that group of people, they're still my friends. Charlie DiJulio was in the Armory Group. I've been with them a long time and pretty much still am and they provide different types of connections and we've shown together on occasion. So like we showed at Singer Gallery. Do you know what the Singer Gallery is? And the name of that show —

MS. AUTHER: On your résumé, it says the Armory Group.

MR. RICHERT: Yes, okay. So we actually — we showed together maybe 40 years ago or maybe 50 years ago. And then, after we had been around for 10 years, then we regrouped and we had a show that was called the 10-Year Show. Then 10 years later, we had the 20-year show. Then we had the 30-year show. [Laughs.] And when we had the 30-year show, John Fudge said to me, "All right, all right. I'll be in that show. But I'm not going to be in the 40-year show, all right?" [Laughs.] So then we had the 40-year show and he had died by that time, but he was in the show.

MS. AUTHER: So was there any stylistic kind of connection between the members of the Armory Group or you all were simply friends growing up?

MR. RICHERT: I actually thought there was a stylistic connection, but I don't think anybody else agreed with me on this. But I said that — for one thing, our sense of color is informed by the altitude. The higher altitude colors are brighter and everybody in this group tended to use bright colors. And I said also our sense of space is informed by the fact that we have the plains on one side and the mountains on the — in the other direction. And so a lot of the people in this group, they kind of paint in a — have always kind of painted in kind of a stage-type setting. So like there's a backdrop and then kind of a stage. So I think a lot — like my painting in the Denver Art Museum, the *World Game* painting is definitely one of those. And lot of these paintings have been that. So I named this the Colorado style. But as far as I can tell, none of these people agree with me on that. And it doesn't spread out beyond us. It's just us that had that look.

MS. AUTHER: So let's talk a little bit about revivals. There's been a revival of interest in the art world related to geometric painting and then also the geodesic dome and counterculture issues. And you've participated in both of those revivals. You've shown a lot recently. You want to talk about that?

MR. RICHERT: Well, one way I could — like, one way I hear about the revivals is there are people all around the world that know about Drop City and like graduate students that want to — they want to write about Drop City. So I get emails from people all the time —

MS. AUTHER: You have something of a cult following I think.

MR. RICHERT: Yes, there are people interested in the '60s and in the counterculture and Drop City has a place in that counterculture. And a lot of these people seem to be Burning Man people. So I think if there's a revival and interest in geodesic domes, part of it is perpetuated by the Burning Man. Like there is a dome builder in Denver who — he helped build the dome at the Walker Center show.

MS. AUTHER: Timmy?

MR. RICHERT: Timmy Eden. Then he built — he does the Burning Man usually. He'll build a village of geodesic domes and he'll name the village Drop City. And — by the way, there's a clothes company — I like their clothes. They're kind of hip like clothes. I mean, the — I'm not hip, but they're coming — they're the kind of clothes I like. And the name of the clothes company is Comune. Have you heard of that?

MS. AUTHER: No, I haven't. That's funny.

MR. RICHERT: Have you heard of that? So those are good clothes, but they're really expensive, so I will never be buying them. They're good though. And amazingly, Comune runs a gallery and the name of the gallery is Drop City. And two of my ex-students are in the gallery. And they're both good. So one of them is — his name is Greg Hayes. Do you know who he is? He, by the way, is kind of an assistant, but I don't pronounce his name right, Rirkrit Tiravanija. I —

MS. AUTHER: Oh, yes, Rirkirt — let me write this down. Rirkrit Tiravanijaor something like that. I'll get the spelling correct.

MR. RICHERT: And another connector with Rirkrit is that Rirkirt used to be Fred Worden's — Fred Worden was the Criss-Cross filmmaker. Rirkirt used to be Fred Worden's assistant.

MS. AUTHER: Interesting.

MR. RICHERT: So Fred knew him as an employee before he became a superstar.

MS. AUTHER: So I'm glad you brought up Burning Man because I do think that's a source for the revival of interest in the counterculture and the geodesic dome, but it appears also in a number of different art contexts. Biennials, art fairs, you find them. And then this leads us, of course, to the dome that was — that you built for PS1 MoMA recently in Rockaway Beach.

MR. RICHERT: Oh, I didn't build that. That was built by Pacific Domes.

MS. AUTHER: Pacific Domes. How did you get involved in that project?

MR. RICHERT: I don't know actually. I really don't know. It was — [laughs] — I'm trying to remember the name of the main person I've dealt with. His name is Zach Miller, I believe. But he's not a PS1 person, he's a Rockaway Beach person. So there was the big — the big disaster in Rockaway Beach and a lot of people wanted to help out there. And Zach is one of the people who wanted to help out Rockaway Beach and he would hang out around that dome. And I knew the — and the dome was going to come down I believe on June 30th. And they wanted to have some activities to accompany the closing of the dome, and he suggested Drop City and the — and I think the Drop City documentary film.

So we did that. And he kind of made space for us there. But I think — I actually think our event was a little bit of a drop-in. So it was — things were not under control. Things were — like I arrived with my computer with the — with my PowerPoint presentation and the film. And we were going to show it from my computer. But I did not bring my power cord — [they laugh] — and there was no power cord there. It was kind of a near disaster, but fortunately, one of my students who happens to run the blogs for the New York Times, he saw the situation and said, "Don't worry. I'll take care of it." And he took care of me, set the whole thing up, so it worked.

MS. AUTHER: What was it like to see your work related to Drop City in the show West of Center: Art and the Counterculture Experiment after all these years?

MR. RICHERT: It felt good. If you read the Rhizome article, the first sentence in the Rhizome article. Do you know what Rhizome is?

MS. AUTHER: This is the one that's about the PS1 —

MR. RICHERT: Yes, the first sentence in the —

MS. AUTHER: — project.

MR. RICHERT: — the first sentence in that article or near the first sentence is — it goes something like this — "This feels really good." And that's me talking about being in the dome. [They laugh.] So — now, what was the question?

MS. AUTHER: Oh, I'm just interested in your reaction to seeing your work from the mid-1960s in a historic exhibition like West of Center, which is looking at countercultural forms of expression.

MR. RICHERT: Okay, now I remember that. I remember now how that feels — [laughs] — it felt good. [They laugh.] So it felt good seeing the dome and seeing the projection on the dome. Joan Grossman showed another film, but she made a film for the event. And I liked seeing that projection on the dome and I liked getting the spinning painting goingwhen it worked. It didn't work all the time. And I liked seeing old artifacts, so it felt good to me.

My involvement with Robin Rule dates back to my first involvement with Cydney Payton, who I thought was really a very — a really dynamic person. She did — got a lot of things going in Denver. And she'd one time visit

my studio and asked me if I wanted to —in my studio- and asked me if I want to be in her gallery. And I was actually a little bit skeptical about that because I didn't totally like the idea of giving a gallery half of the profits. And at that time, I was actually selling most of what I produced anyway because I don't produce a lot.

MS. AUTHER: What year is this or around what time?

MR. RICHERT: Probably around 19 — it'd be '80-something, maybe 1984. It might be-I think maybe they came to my studio in 1984.

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: And — but I did like her gallery a lot and I felt it was one of the best galleries in town.

MS. AUTHER: This is Rule Gallery?

MR. RICHERT: It was-At that time it was called Cydney Payton. [Telephone rings.] Oh, I've got to answer. This is Robin.

MS. AUTHER: Okay, go ahead.

[Audio break.]

MR. RICHERT: It was Cydney Payton's gallery and Robin Rule was in the back of the gallery running a graphic design business. And then she started doing all the graphic design for the gallery and then pretty soon they just got more and more meshed with each other. But I found that they were showing the best work around really at that time. I really very much liked the work of Lucy Lippard's friend Kay Miller. Do you know who that is? [Off mic exchange.] Yes, I liked her work a lot. And she was showing at Payton at that time.

So I decided to join the gallery. And so I went through — they were — there was Payton Rule — so then they joined forces so it became Payton Rule. And then Cydney became the director of the — I think at that time it was called the Boulder Center — Boulder Art Center. And she changed the name to the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art. And so then Robin started — kept the gallery going under the name of Rule Modern Contemporary, but then I think she changed the name to Rule Gallery. And now she's closed her gallery, but she's actually still functioning as an art dealer. She's putting together a show at the Pattern — do you know the name of that place? The Pattern something.

MR.   : Pattern Workshop.

MR. RICHERT: Pattern Workshop. And they've had several art shows there. And she's opening this John Fudge — and I'm kind of watching what's happening there. I think it's going to be really an excellent show. It's really fun seeing these old John Fudge paintings. Are you familiar with John Fudge at all?

MS. AUTHER: Mmm hmm. [Affirmative.] Yes.

MR. RICHERT: So I think it's going to be good.

MS. AUTHER: What's A.R.E.A.?

MR. RICHERT: A.R.E.A. [Artists Residential Environmental Area] is — my friends laugh at me because I've been working on planning this artist community for years now. For a while I called it Art Ranch. And so I have designs for Art Ranch that I think look pretty good. I think I've got them on this computer if you want to see themSo Art Ranch looked good. It was all built out of — steel buildings. So it costs — so it was very low cost, but actually looks really good. Like Dale Chisman said, "I would never live in a steel building," but when he saw my plans, he said, "Yes, I would live there." [Laughs.]

And then I started — I visited the Earthships in Taos. And I was really — and I think they look incredibly too cute. They look like little Hobbit houses and I don't like that. But I was really impressed with the fact that they're so thermally stable, so you can go in one of those Earthships on a hot, hot summer day and it's cool to cold in there. And they also — in the winter they're using the heat. So basically zero carbon footprint. And I got interested in those and started thinking that I wanted to redesign this artist community so that it would be very thermally efficient.

But I still wanted it to be cheap. I wanted it to cost next to nothing. I remember some of the Drop City buildings cost next to nothing. So people were already building with cargo containers. Like there's an artist community in London built out of shipping containers and there's an artist community in Tokyo built out of shipping containers. And they look pretty good. So I started thinking about shipping containers because they're so cheap and strong. They're strong and cheap, but they're not thermally stable. So I had the idea of an earth-sheltered shipping

container. So I designed A.R.E.A. with rectangles of earth-sheltered shipping containers with an atrium area in the middle. So — and probably a big complaint with shipping containers is that they seem like small, cramped spaces. But in my designs, they don't seem like small cramped spaces. They always seem like the biggest space you've ever had.

So I showed — at the end of the presentation at Rockaway, I showed some animations and slides of A.R.E.A. And the audience was kind of swooning. I mean, they really liked it. And then after the — I told you the story. After the — did I tell you the story of these two twins.

MS. AUTHER: Mmm hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. RICHERT: Anyways, those twins are really ready to go. I just got email — about three emails from them yesterday that they really want to get going.

MS. AUTHER: So they're going to build an A.R.E.A. in New York.

MR. RICHERT: That's their plan, yes.

MS. AUTHER: And now it stands for Artists Residential Environmental Area.

MR. RICHERT: Right.

MS. AUTHER: Is that what you call it? Okay.

MR. RICHERT: Yes. And Steve Baer's involved in this too. So he just sent plans for some buildings and I sent them on to them and they love his plans for buildings. And then one of the people that also came to the event in Rockaway sent me an email last week saying that he has all this free building — he says he has enough free building material to build a 4,000 square foot house. And it's all these SIP panels. And it just turns out that Steve Baer is saying he wants to build with SIP panels. These free SIP panels, Baer's designs to be built with SIP panels.

MS. AUTHER: So it sounds like it's going to be a reality.

MR. RICHERT: And the twins, and the — they got an architect. The twins and their architect love their design. So — which is all very exciting, but I hope my own designs don't get shoved out of the picture.

MS. AUTHER: You're an artist in residence at RedLine for three years.

MR. RICHERT: Right.

MS. AUTHER: You want to talk about that?

MR. RICHERT: Yes, I really am interested in the old RedLine concept, partly because it brings together these people so they're in close proximity. They interact with each other and exchange ideas around a central exhibition area.

And one thing I really want to see happen as an outgrowth of RedLine and I hear it might — and it might be happening with Adam, too, is live/work spaces for artists, low cost live/work spaces for artists. And so this is the top idea I've been interested in for a long time and RedLine was a really, really good, close approximation of the idea.

MS. AUTHER: And you were the first — one of the first resident artists there.

MR. RICHERT: I think I was the first one.

MS. AUTHER: What was the date — what date was that?

MR. RICHERT: I think it's about five years ago.

MS. AUTHER: Okay.

MR. RICHERT: Yes. Laura Merage asked Robin Rule who should she ask to be involved with RedLine. So Robin Rule told her that I was the person. So I was around very early on with RedLine. And I tried to express my opinion early on.

The Denver community things are evolving out of that.

MS. AUTHER: Out of RedLine?

MR. RICHERT: Including the one Amy Harmon is doing. Do you know what she is doing?

MS. AUTHER: Tell me what she's doing.

MR. RICHERT: And including what Adam is doing. So Adam is creating live/work space for artists. I believe it was — [inaudible].

MR. : In part.

MR. RICHERT: And Amy Harmon bought a building right next to the RedLine building. Did you know about that? It has a performance space in it.

MS. AUTHER: Mmm hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. RICHERT: And she wants to have a maker space in it, in which I'm interested in. The maker space typically will use MakerBots, which are 3D printers. And I've already used their MakerBot and printed a — of all things an enneacontahedron. Did I show you the — I told you about it, but I'm planning on printing another enneacontahedron and including it in the show that — the upcoming show we're going to have at Gildar Gallery in November.

MS. AUTHER: Okay. How have you been involved in Sustainability Park?

MR. RICHERT: I'm kind of marginally involved with Sustainability Park, but it has been for a long time, so I was kind of — so I proposed building the prototype for the building that would be an area at Sustainability Park. And so about two years ago, that was officially part of the plan. It was going to happen. But we never did find the funding for it, so it didn't happen.

But I really do like what's happening there a lot. And I think it's temporary, but I would really like to see the city make it permanent. And there's the — the property just north of Sustainability Park, which really looks like a promising place for artist live/work space. So I actually wrote up a proposal for that to become artist live/work space and presented it to — I was going to present it kind of officially, but I wanted a — I wanted all these people to sign my letter. And I couldn't get the right people to sign the letter. So I didn't — but I did submit the proposal to two people who liked the idea very much but who are not the people who could do anything about it. One is Jorgen Jensen. Do you know who that is?

MS. AUTHER: Mmm hmm. [Negative.]

MR. RICHERT: He hangs out at MCA a lot.

MS. AUTHER: Jordan Jensen?

MR. RICHERT: Jorgen. Jorgen — do you know who Jorgen Jensen is? Well, he's one of — one of the people that's in with Amy Harmon. And the other is — well, Jorgen Jensen and Adam Cooperman whose the maker space person. I believe are the ones that are redesigning the — I can't even think of the word for a Jewish church. What is that called?

MS. AUTHER: Synagogue.

MR. RICHERT: Synagogue, yes. They're — I think they're redesigning the synagogue to be a community center.

MS. AUTHER: Nice.

[Audio break.]

Clark, how-why do you think painting is the medium to display your ideas?

MR. RICHERT: Well, I — people often ask me what I am and I sometimes say I'm a painter because nobody can question that because I paint. If I say I'm an artist, then they're going to say, "Oh, prove it." But I am a painter. There's no doubt about it because I paint. But I do not think that is the medium that I use because I also use SketchUp a lot and other computer programs. And I do some three-dimensional work. A lot of the three dimensional work is actually done with the Zome Tool, but now some of it is being done with 3D printing. And then in the show at your gallery, I want to have a video, so — although it's not a video because it never uses a camera. It's all computer-generated animation. So I guess that is not video. I don't know. But it's projected on the screen a lot like video would be.

So I don't see the painting as the sacred medium, but I do definitely have a bias toward painting. In fact, there is a — there's a book title that I like a lot and I wish it was an art title, but it's a title for graphic design, but the

book title is *Flatness is God*. And I know what that means. So — [laughs] — so I like flatness. I like dimensionality. I like three-dimensionality. I like 10-dimensionality. But I really happen to like flatness, and so — and I think painters should like flatness because — I mean, they should understand that — what's so good about flatness.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]