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Oral history interview with Douglas W. Hollis
and Anna Valentina Murch, 2010 May 22

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Douglas Hollis and Anna Valentina Murch on May 22, 2010. The interview took place in San Francisco, CA, and was conducted by Mija Riedel for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the GSA Archives of American Art Oral History Project.

Douglas Hollis reviewed the transcript in 2018. His corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Douglas Hollis and Anna Valentina Murch at their home in San Francisco, California on May 22nd, 2010, for the GSA Archives of American Art oral history project.

Hello folks, again.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Hi. [Laughs.] Welcome back.

MIJA RIEDEL: Thank you. [Laughs.] We've agreed to start our conversation about the projects you've worked on jointly, with one of the earliest ones, one of your earliest proposals for a park in Alexandria, Virginia. Is that correct?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, that's right.

MIJA RIEDEL: And what was the date of this?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: I think it was 1989.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: In '89, I would guess.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MIJA RIEDEL: And how did the proposal come about?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: I was called by Patricia Fuller, who was an art consultant, and asked if I would be interested in putting together a team with potentially an artist and landscape architect to work on this traffic island, which was a very kind of key point near the Metro station, a kind of new center in Alexandria.

So I talked to Doug and we talked to Hargreaves Associates landscape architects and we decided that George and Mary Margaret—George Hargreaves and Mary Margaret Jones—Doug Hollis and me, we'd all work together on doing this proposal.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you were aware of each other's work, but you hadn't really collaborated before. Is that right?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Well, I had worked with George on *Candlestick [Point Park]*. That was the first time I had worked with him.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I don't think he and I did another project until we got to this.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No, until this one.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: But we all got to know each other, and we were all friends. And so we thought it would be kind of an interesting way of being able to work together.

And we went out to the site and visited. And the main thing that we were really interested in doing was finding a way of making it a place, not just a traffic island that you drove around. Because on one side, there was the most amount of traffic. And on that side, we used these berms, in fact, to begin to block the sound. And that

really came from looking at the old forts that were around that area in Virginia.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: There's these sort of earthen forts from the Revolutionary days, maybe Civil War, too, but certainly from there.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Which were actually really quite steep angles and quite beautiful forms, land forms. And so that's where part of the ideas came from.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: So the idea of—both the form vocabulary and the idea of some kind of fortification against some noise pollution are both manifest in the project, both through the use of the earth forms and the water elements that were specifically intended to react to the amount of traffic or the amount of traffic noise occurring, so the tunnel coming down the center there would have sped up or slowed up depending on how loud it was on the other side.

MIJA RIEDEL: How interesting.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And the water spout was all from the projectile of the old cannons.

MIJA RIEDEL: That is interesting.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And there used to be a pump on this site. There used to be kind of a town water pump where people would come and collect their water and probably gossip and so forth. So it's a kind of reference back to that—[inaudible, cross talk].

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, sort of a contemporary version, interpretation.

And this piece got to proposal stage?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes, it was a competition. And we all—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Went out.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Went out and made the presentation. And then they decided to go with Buster Simpson and —

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Laura.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —: —his wife, Laura Sindell. And I can't remember the architects' names.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: I can't, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And I guess that must be something that you're both familiar with, the proposals. You put all that work into them, and they don't pan out. But to the point you were making earlier, you don't know where they're going to lead next.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right. No, it was—the good thing about the project was that it led to other things and we had a really good working relationship. I think we were all disappointed that we didn't get it. But later, what happened was that George and Mary Margaret were working on UC-Davis. And in that project, there was no money for art, but they wanted to find a way that we could continue to work together. And so they brought us in to meet with the people in Davis. And they liked the idea of us being involved and said that maybe they had a budget for furniture that could be expanded so that we could work with them.

And so what happened with that, too, is that we began working with Hargreaves right from the very beginning in the overall design and not just coming in at the end, which made it much more interesting for all of us.

It wasn't a very large budget and it was a kind of very difficult site. The site was the—they wanted it to be the entrance of the college. At the same time, it was over a bowling alley, so there were certain areas that there could be nothing green or no watering or—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Or weight, for that matter.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —: —weight. Right. And as well, it was almost the outside lobby of the memorial theater there. So we also liked the idea that it became somewhere that people could actually go out in the evening because it's quite hot evenings in Davis.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: So when they're attending a performance and there's intermission, people would normally

wander outside. But the idea of having a kind of theatricality to it also was a kind of underlying form-giver, if you will, for conceptualizing.

MIJA RIEDEL: And as an entrance, too, that seems to work well together.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: So it was kind of a conflicting program—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —: —because on one hand, they wanted it to be this sort of wonderful entry to the campus. At the same time, they also wanted it to be a place where students could come and sort of have a more contemplative, quiet sort of zone, so it wasn't so much about having parties and stuff out there for them as it was more of a casual meeting place that could be used.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you had the real weight constraint as well.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: The sort of food service building was at the back end of the site. And on the other side of that, is quite raucous. There was a kind of dining patio out there, and it was much more kind of active.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Party. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: So how is it different for the two of you to work with Mary Margaret and George? I'm sorry, is that Margaret?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, Mary Margaret. How did it affect your working process? Is there any way you can discuss, or were the differences very subtle?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Well, I mean, they were landscape architects, and they had—they were interested—I mean, they knew all the practicalities of things. But also, they were also interested, I think, in doing something different. I mean, their whole—in some ways, George was very interested in design and the kind of sculptural element of design.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: In fact, George sort of was always thought or trying to think of himself as more of a sculptor than a landscape architect in some ways.

MIJA RIEDEL: He was one of the fellows with the sandbox, was he not—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Exactly, uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MIJA RIEDEL: —: —that we talked about a couple of days ago? Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And yes, so they really—they have a high aesthetic, let's put it that way. And so the idea of working with artists or as artists themselves in a way or in something that was essentially an art project was interesting.

MIJA RIEDEL: And I imagine it gave you access earlier than you might have had otherwise because you were coming in with a landscape architect rather earlier on in the project rather than later.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Exactly. And so, I mean, I think it went back and forth a lot about what we did. You know, they were able to kind of deal with the—I mean, it didn't break down about we did one thing and they did the other. It was very much more interactive. I mean, when it came in the end—the overall layout of where we could have grass, or the idea that we both—I mean, which extended from the last project, the berms, again, protection from the street noise, making a grand entrance. The wind chimes, again, making a sonic entrance so it was a sculptural form added onto the land forms.

The use—the idea of this separate seating that would be—conceptually, what we were interested in was that it was an agricultural college, as much as Davis doesn't want to be known for that, but we actually thought that was wonderful. Therefore, we wanted to do something that showed phenomena and, really, so that all the atmospherics and the things that all the kind of farmers and all the people were doing agricultural studies, were aware of.

And so that's why we made the—the sun screens have this incredible moray pattern, on the benches as well. And you know, George and Mary Margaret both, they all liked the idea that there would be this kind of special dramatic lighting as well. And it was a very simple plan really. But I think we kind of all worked together to make it happen.

MIJA RIEDEL: It feels very integrated.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes, it was—I really think of this as kind of a basic conversation among four creative thinkers. And you know, unlike other times, nobody was sort of dominant.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No. No. And we all got on very well through this one. [They laugh.]

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Exactly. And then there was Tucson.

MIJA RIEDEL: And then there was Tucson. [They laugh.] Do you have an image of Tucson?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: What was interesting about both of these—I think it's true on this one. I don't think we went to their office much. I think they used to come to—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: They used to come to our house, yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —: —to our place when we worked on both Alexandria and this one, because it was, again, it was like I was describing the other day about *Candlestick*, was trying to modify the kind of normal conditions so that you could maybe think differently or have a different kind of—rather than being in the middle of their office where there's a kind of energy, we thought it was more conducive to this conversation to do the project at our studio instead.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And also, there's more distraction for them when the phone rings and let their people go and get them and everything. So they were much more relaxed when they came to—actually, that was a very good point, Doug, when they came to us.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: It was more of a fun project for them then, which was good.

MIJA RIEDEL: Of course, it makes so much sense that, here, the environment would affect what was actually transpiring.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It was at the 25th Street place that I showed you the picture of—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, right.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —: —which in and of itself was a very conducive place—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —: —for cooperative thinking.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And then we worked on—and then with Tucson, I think, again, who was it? Someone sent me something. Someone, I can't remember who it was now. I got asked again if we'd be interested and willing to put a team together to work on Tucson. And Tucson was a master plan for the old library building, the Carnegie Library block. And it was the art program—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: The Pima Arts Council—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —: —gave us a grant.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Got a grant from the NEA to redesign that space. And—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It had been a Carnegie Library for a number of years. And then I think for maybe five or six years before we started the project, it had been turned into a children's center.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And what was interesting—well, it really wasn't in our original scope, but we kind of insisted on sort of doubling the size of our scope because the park across the street from this particular block had a seniors center on it. And also, the two things just, except for a street running through it, felt like one place.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: So we said, you know, we should really think of the whole thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: They were open to that?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Oh, yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yeah. We made a really compelling case for that. And we had a lot of community meetings on that particular project. A lot of—

MIJA RIEDEL: Does a community usually weigh in on projects?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It does, yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yeah. It's very common now, has been for a long time for even when we're doing our own projects, for there to be some kind of community involvement, some kind of presentation. We'll talk about that somewhat when we get to *Waterscape*.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: But that even happened in Tucson that we were—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Indeed, yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —: —there was a—I think they interviewed four—four or five people. And we all had to do a public presentation like in a theater. And there were actually lots of people there. And then the next day we had an interview with a smaller group.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: So already there was public interaction right from the very beginning.

MIJA RIEDEL: And was it fairly supportive, or was it more contentious?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It was mixed. I would say—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Mostly good.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I'd say it was primarily good. The part that was a little annoying, there were these we called them hysterical preservationists—[they laugh]—that were really concerned about silly things like WPA concrete walks.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Broken concrete walks—they wanted to preserve them.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: As broken concrete walks?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yeah, because they were the original WPA concrete.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: So it was extreme. It was extreme.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: But it was really interesting because even though we came up with a solution to those desires within the context of these public events, it was actually other members of the public that sort of talked these people down a little bit. And that was great.

I love that when that happens because then you're getting this kind of buy-in right from the conceptual beginning of the project, and people feel like they're being brought along with the thinking process so that they're part of the project. So if we had been able to continue it through and actually built the project, I think it would have been embraced because people would have had a sense of ownership already.

MIJA RIEDEL: That is interesting.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And the other part of it that was very important to us was that we really wanted to do something that was sustainable. And we had a chance—how did we meet—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Somebody suggested Martin, Martin Yoklic. He's a landscape architect, but he was working with a research group called the Environmental Research—what was it called? Environmental Research—something [Environmental Research Center -DH]. It was kind of an offshoot of the university, but they had this sort of research facility out near the airport, and they were doing all kinds of really cool stuff with sustainable agriculture and hydroponics and climate modification things with evaporative cooling towers and things like that. And so we got—

MIJA RIEDEL: And this was about 1990?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Something like that, yes. That's probably on the—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —: —resumé somewhere. But—

MIJA RIEDEL: '92, I think.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Finished, yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It went on for a while.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Quite a while.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: But that was great to have him as a member of the team, too, because that added—you know, he was—it's interesting. I hadn't thought of it, but talking the other day about this sort of cross-fertilization between scientists, designers, artists and so forth.

And he added a kind of component that for us was thrilling and educational. And even though George probably wouldn't admit it, it actually started to transform his thinking from being a kind of, you know—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Sculptor.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —: —sculptor, formalist, designer, to thinking about environmental issues and sustainability and so forth, which he—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Now very interested in it, yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —: —very much incorporates into his work.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. At the time, he wasn't.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. And I know that's been of interest to you, certainly from the start.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, right.

MIJA RIEDEL: And is that something that you've seen a lot of change?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Finally, it's beginning. Finally, only just. It's taken an awful long time to kind of begin to catch up. Now I think people are actually interested in doing it.

MIJA RIEDEL: And is it something that you've really tried to advocate repeatedly?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Absolutely.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you as well?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MIJA RIEDEL: I don't think we talked about that as directly as came up in our conversation yesterday.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Well, you'll see, again when we get to *Waterscape* that it kind of really manifests itself in a fairly major way there. But this part of the Tucson project, not to talk too much about this, but it was kind of the crown jewel of the project for us because this was our—they wanted a kind of—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Stage.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —: —outdoor performance area, but they didn't want it to necessarily be a formal kind of amphitheater. But one of the main components of this neighborhood is that there's a lot of theater activity there. So there was a good chunk of the community that was involved in these planning sessions.

And so not on the block with the library, but on the other—across the street by the senior center, we developed this sort of grading plan that came from being flush at the street here, and it graded down into the site so that we're about four or five feet lower at the front of the stage here.

And then we've got a rainwater harvest off the senior center roof, catch it in this cistern underneath the stage, and then use some solar-powered fans to pull warm air in from the back, let it travel across that water surface, which would then cool the air down a little, and it would issue out through grills in the front edge of the stage area. So people sitting, watching a performance, would find themselves in a sort of pool of cool air.

MIJA RIEDEL: How lovely.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And then the roof structure—here's the model of it—was done in a way so that it's a slatted structure that would have given full shade in the summertime because of the angle of the slats would have given full shade in the summer, but let winter light through. This being desert, it can get quite cool there in the winter.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: So really, in this project, we really took on the role of making it a place.

The other thing that people were surprised at is that we wanted to do something with both areas. And the seniors actually loved it because at the moment, their whole space was often used by homeless people, and they were afraid to go outside.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: They kind of felt held hostage inside there.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. And they loved the idea that young people will be there, there will be performances there. And so they were all—and so there was this real connection between the young and the old.

So often, I think with projects like that, we take on the role of being a kind of thinker about almost the bigger systems of how things can operate and how people can interact as well as the formal aspects of how it happens.

First of all, think about the—when it comes—it was the philosophical priorities of what we want the space to be before we think about how it actually looks. And in the same way that the environmental aspect becomes key that we want to find a way of doing it in the most sustainable way, rather than, "We've got to use this kind of system." And then we find whatever is the best way of being able to do it in that situation.

MIJA RIEDEL: And it also strikes me as another almost iteration of your interest in taking transient spaces or spaces that are dead or somehow threatening and transforming them, in the case of the senior area, into a space that really can be enjoyed by a wide variety of people.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. That's right.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. For a variety of reasons.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Because so much of what happens now is old or young. College students, they're all "ghetto-ized," none of them meet and mix. And I think that there would be so much more exchange of information if they could all kind of appreciate and learn from each other. So that was one of the reasons that we wanted to do it, really.

MIJA RIEDEL: And bookending that day care center or children's center with a senior—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: With a senior center, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —: —center is lovely. Yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, and opening them up to each other.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It's what Bob Irwin calls a freebie. [They laugh.] It's like one of those wonderful free gives.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, that's just found in—[inaudible]—actual situations. Yeah. And it comes from really paying attention to the content of the site.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Exactly. And rather than ignoring it and making it something else, we're actually working with making it even better than what—using the potential of what it could be.

MIJA RIEDEL: And it also beautifully embodies your description probably of the bigger perspective, the larger perspective and then all the important details. Yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. No, that was a great project. It went on over—we kept on having to do more and more, but they never got the funding. They never got the funding to do it.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: To actually do the construction.

MIJA RIEDEL: So it never happened.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: It never happened.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: How frustrating.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It could.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: It still could.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It still could.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, exactly.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: There's still nothing there. They still could.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. They never did anything there.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: No. We were there about two years ago.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, nothing.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: That's just the way it was.

MIJA RIEDEL: Funding is often the major reason that projects don't happen?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. Political will and funding, I think. Mostly money, really. That's what it comes down to.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did Tucson then lead in any way to another project?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Not really. We were doing Albuquerque about the same time, but that was just both of us. That was a great project, but that never ended up happening, either. That was very interesting because it was in Albuquerque, and it was an area of ground that was on the West Mesa.

And we began. And they wanted a community park. And then the national—it was the national monument people said, "No, this area is also going to become part of our national monument master plan."

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: There's a major petroglyph site essentially bordering the area we were being asked to work on. But it was certainly there. But when they kind of drew their boundary for the monument, we suddenly got captured by that. So then the project dragged out about another three years because they had to do their master plan and so forth.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: But we helped with their master plan. Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Which was—because they had—so again, it's something that ended up by not happening because by the time the master plan was completely finished and everything, it was almost 10 years later. By that time, the art commission had spent the money for that site. And so we ended up not doing it. But we worked with an ethno—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Ethnobotanist, Donna House.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —: —botanist. Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: She's Navajo.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sorry, what was the name?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Donna House.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Navajo ethno—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Ethnobotanist.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —: —botanist. Because we wanted to make the walkway along the edge of the park an area that would be with native plants. It was a kind of a wall, a kind of serpentine wall almost like a snake that ran across it. There were always areas in the sun or in the shade so people could sit. And again, that was going from the community to a school. Before they had to walk on the street. And we wanted to have all the native plantings there.

We also brought in that Hopi architect.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Oh, yes, David—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: I'll have to try and remember his name [David Simpson -DH]. But what was great was we'd come up with a plan and we wanted to talk to him about it. And he said, "No, you shouldn't do anything about the old, you should do something about the new. It's fine what you're doing." So because, you know, we felt—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: He said the site's already desecrated. [Laughs.]

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. "Don't worry about it. It's great that you're doing something there." So because we were very sensitive to the fact that we're not Native American, we don't live there, but all the support we had from the community and from the native people that we met was really wonderful.

The other thing the national monument wanted to do was take away—there had been a lot of rubble in areas on the site. But where it had been disturbed were the best plant materials that take actually—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: They reestablished themselves.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: They really reestablished. And sometimes, they take 100 years to really get going like that. And they wanted to flatten it so it was back to how it was. And we managed to—I think that probably happened—persuade them to leave it so that the vegetation could stay in place. But make pathways through it and be able to get to areas of the petroglyphs.

There's the petroglyph park there in another part of Albuquerque, which is really awful, because there's kind of this tarmac road that runs right around it. And we wanted this site to be something that was accessible, but maybe not as handicap accessible for some people because there was the other site that was handicap accessible, so maybe this could be more like the feeling of what it would actually be like to be on that site in older times as well.

So it was a great project to work on. We spent a lot of time in the Southwest going to a lot of different ancient sites. And every year we'd make a phone call on, "Is it happening or isn't it?" And it ended up by not happening at all, which is really disappointing. I think Tucson and Albuquerque actually were conceptually very important projects.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Which happened, what, 20 years ago now? Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Almost, right.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: But I think Tucson started with working with Martin and we got so excited about all those ideas. I mean, they were so resonant with our aesthetic and our philosophy that we kept really, from that time on, have thought about those things and tried to reintroduce those ideas in almost every project we've done.

MIJA RIEDEL: And when you say those ideas, you're talking about the sustainability and the increased attention, really, to the environment and all the botanical varieties of the site.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Exactly, right.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And being—paying attention to the context, the—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And the history.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —history, but not recreating history like a Disneyland, but actually taking those fundamental elements and doing it in a kind of contemporary light.

MIJA RIEDEL: Uh-huh, uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And I think that that thinking has continued through in our work.

MIJA RIEDEL: That does make sense when you think about the San José project that we'll talk about, and, you know, I think about the Miami project. That does seem to be something that has come. And your increasing interest, it seems, in ecological design at the time, it does seem to me—so it's interesting that, that was the catalyst for both of you to continue on.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: It was the first real opportunity we had, I think—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —to meet with professionals that were doing that and having a real situation to look at it back and forth.

MIJA RIEDEL: And really spend some time exploring the possibilities and how exactly it could work.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Exactly, exactly. Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And the great thing about both those projects, us working together, what we would do—often in Tucson, Mary Margaret and George usually went back. But we usually did it—we did meetings on the Thursday and Friday, and then we'd stay over the weekend, and so we could really spend some more time in the place.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And I think that was very, very important at that point, and especially with Albuquerque as well. We'd always stay the weekend to be able to do more exploring because we felt that we needed to have—just really saturate ourselves with the context of the place. And I think if only one of us had been doing it, we would have gone home. And so it was much easier for us to stay and be able to continue the conversations together in this, actually, which happened to be a most beautiful environment as well.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely, absolutely. And it's an interesting idea, too, that it was a conversation, that this whole project then developed as this conversation between the two of you and then that larger group over time. But that sense of really evolving and bouncing ideas back and forth.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right. And then—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: So I think it was—that was kind of the—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Those are the catalyst projects.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I mean, then we either went in for projects or competitions, as might be the case, some of which we got, some of which we didn't. We did one for Liverpool, which are those images over on the boards there. This is a maritime—it was on the Mersey River, and it's—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: In England.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It's an historic cut. There used to be a floating sort of ramp out and a lot of immigration happened from this location. They wanted to—they were redoing the whole front, and so they invited several people to do proposals for public artwork.

MIJA RIEDEL: It has a little bit of the quality of the NOAA project [*A Sound Garden*].

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Some aspects of it, yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes. Of course, the Beatles were from there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, of course.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Now, there's a big lighthouse that was really important that was just about that cut.

MIJA RIEDEL: And did that project come to fruition?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Well, it was kind of—it didn't, but they actually wound up never doing anything. But Vito Acconci was one of the other competitors, I guess you'd say. Buster Simpson also was.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Jaume Plensa. Plensa? He did the Chicago fountain.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: First of all, actually, Vito won the project. And then they looked at it and said, "No, we can't do it, it's too crooked, it can't work."

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Well, they spent about a year-and-a-half or almost two years trying to figure out how to build it for the budget, which turned out just not to be possible. Kind of typical Vito. And so they called us up again and said, "Well, we tried to work it out, but it's not going to happen, but would you guys consider coming back to do your project?"

So I immediately called Vito and said, "What do you—how do you feel about this? I'm not going to go there if this is going to throw a monkey wrench in our friendship," since there was no love lost with the client by that time." [They laugh.] And he said, "No, go for it."

MIJA RIEDEL: "Good luck." [Laughs.]

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: "Good luck." So we kind of hit our head against the wall for another year or so and then it just would up kind of evaporating on us.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I don't exactly know what happened.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Well, I think they made the mistake of, rather than getting us involved, they got an external team of people who were—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Basically value engineering.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —yes, to figure out how to do it and how much it was going to cost. But they never spoke to us.

MIJA RIEDEL: How odd.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Is it your experience that about half the projects that are accepted then never actually are funded, or is it less than that?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: In competitions, it seems as if very few of them happen.

MIJA RIEDEL: Even ones that are accepted?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, yes. Mostly competition—I mean, we don't like doing them, and we—I mean, we did it because I really wanted to do something in England—

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —and therefore, "Okay, we'll do it." But mostly, they use a competition because they're wanting to raise money or raise publicity for it. So everything isn't completely in place. And often, they don't happen. And so it's—it's an awful lot of work that often mostly people don't get—we don't get very well-reimbursed for all the time and energy we put into it. No, it's become a real problem actually.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Sometimes we do. I mean, I have more of a tendency to go with it than Anna does. But if it's enough money to do the proposal so that you don't feel ripped off, so you feel like you're kind of being paid for your time, even though you never really are—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —but the real projects are like that, too. [They laugh.] You know, I just did a proposal for a project for the new Miami Marlins baseball stadium, which I have no interest in whatsoever, but—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: You were in the end. You got interested.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I kind of got into it, yes. [Laughs.] But I had a lot of fun doing it. They paid a fairly good fee to do the proposal. And we're going to go to St. Bart's for two weeks on a Christmas vacation as a result of it. I didn't feel ripped off on that one at all. And you know, even Brea [California] was at least fairly decent pay.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And those, I imagine, could be interesting exercises.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Exactly, yes. If—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: If we're treated well—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: If it's an interesting research possibility and there's a level of respect for your time—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. Then you feel okay about it.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —then it's okay. Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: So competition-wise, would you say 25 percent come to fruition, 10 percent, in your experience?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Oh, God. We do a lot better when the selection is done by interview, based on past work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: That seems to be a much higher percentage for us than—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: For me, completely. I don't seem to—I don't do that many. And somehow, what I want to do doesn't seem to work. I mean, maybe I don't do enough super graphics, but a lot of the things I'm trying to do are more atmospheric, and they're difficult to show in a board as an image. People are looking for image, and I'm interested in experience.

So not that there isn't image or objects in it, but somehow they don't come across as well. I think that's what happened to us in Sacramento. We didn't get that project for the new capitol gardens. And I think that's because the proposal that we did—I mean, I think Lita Albuquerque got it, and she did a really great proposal. But I think that it was easier to see where the art was as objects as opposed to making a place that was more experiential.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: So it was a very different kind of approach. I think, conceptually, her piece was very interesting. But it—I think it's—I usually find that I don't get competitions.

MIJA RIEDEL: It's hard for people to imagine, I would imagine, what the proposal is.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. And I quite honestly—even the ones that I think now are very successful, I think if I presented them as a proposal, I probably wouldn't have got them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, it must be wonderful to have something like San José to be able to show as an example—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right, right.

MIJA RIEDEL: —of what you might be referring to for a future project.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: It must be helpful to actually have one or more built. Miami, too, comes to mind.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. I think so. And I think the other thing that's really good is the fact that we can show them a lot of different projects. And there is an aesthetic or a similarity in some ways, but each project is completely different. You don't look at one and know what we're going to do next.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And for some people, that's intimidating. And for other people, they find that exciting, and that's why we get the project. For potential clients that want something you've done before, we're not the ones that will get it. I think that's what it is.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: The other thing about these "competitions"—I'll call them that ugly word—is I think both Anna and I find it sort of antithetical to a way of working that we've developed, because we have collaborated with other people, and almost all of these projects would have had a level of collaboration or at least cooperation involved with them.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And so to come up with an idea without going through that way of working that we've developed, you know, it's kind of ass-backwards.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, right.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, you don't—even though you're sometimes allowed to write questions and get written answers, it's not the same. I mean, the people obviously that are meant to give you the information, are having to do that with five or six other people.

Even though everything is shared and everyone wants everything to be so democratic, but the reality is that nobody really invests in really letting the artist know what the potential is or what the interaction can be.

And it's often those competitions of wanting someone to come in after the fact so you're not really having—even though they say, "Oh, we might be able to change," they really mostly don't. They don't want that. They want something that can be added in, plopped down, which, again, is not part of what we are best at doing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. And I would imagine, too, with the more installations you have in place, the less you have to do those commissions. And certainly with your teaching schedule, I imagine there's really not that much time for that sort of thing these days.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right. Yes. But I think it's happening—well, it's a combination of things. I mean, I'm saying it's happening more and more, but unfortunately one of the things that I fault in America for the Arts, I think that they're always—they have this kind of formula of making everyone do proposals. And yet, they wonder why they don't get very good projects. It's because they set it up in that way.

So most of those kind of calls, one gets asked to kind of go in for a lot of things, and so do millions of other people, but they're not that interesting because of the way they've set them up.

MIJA RIEDEL: Are you aware of other setups in other countries that you think work more successfully?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Well, no, not necessarily in other countries, but even—I mean, what's been happening to us recently is that people have been just calling us directly and saying, "We want you to do this."

And often with those situations, sometimes they interview three or four people. And that is, I think, much more acceptable. Then they have a sense of who they can work with. They see the work before, so all the people that they're going to interview they could work with, and they like all of their aesthetics.

In most of the competitions, they can pick people that are doing such diverse things, you can't believe that they would want any of them or all of them because, "How could you put me next to this person," someone that does a real one-liner? It's like, surely, you know already that you want this or that. So they're just covering all their bases, which is really a waste of everyone's time, I think.

Whereas when people have done more research, they've looked through, they've narrowed it down to a smaller group, they feel comfortable with any of those, and they interview them, then it's often about not just the work,

because they've already bought off on the work, it's about how they present themselves and whether they can work with them as well, and maybe understanding all that the work is. So that might be the turning point of having a greater understanding of the work.

And I think for big projects, especially if there's going to be any collaboration or interaction, it's the only way to go.

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you think it's one of the hazards of public space, is that they have to consider such a wide array of possibilities, or the sometimes politically—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Well, I mean, there's quite a spread really.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: But you know, there is a sort of lack of political spine in a lot of these situations. There's a kind of powerlessness, and people get manipulated. And in a worst-case scenario, unfortunately, they don't have any passion. Or if they used to have it, it got burned out. [Laughs.] And a lot of these public art administrators don't know shit about art anymore. They know about administration.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: They don't go to museums. They don't go to galleries.

MIJA RIEDEL: So they have no idea of how things have evolved.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: They don't have a bigger picture to even draw from to support a kind of stronger philosophy.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: They can't read plans. No, it's shocking, actually.

MIJA RIEDEL: It sort of sounds like there's been a real degeneration in the years that you've been working.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's interesting. So when was—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes, afraid so.

MIJA RIEDEL: When was the strongest, most successful period, do you think, for public art? And when did the decline begin?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I think for us it was probably the '80s.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: '80s, early '90s—early '90s. Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Early '90s.

MIJA RIEDEL: So that means that San José and Fresno came in right around that time.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right at the end, yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And now I think it's gotten—I will say, there are still some good people left. And a lot of it is about—it's going to be very interesting to see what happens now because of financially what's happening to a lot of cities. They're all afraid of losing their programs. They've got enough to keep them going now because there's a kind of lag time, but they're concerned about the future.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And they're wanting to please everybody. And by trying to please everybody, you please nobody. And then dividing things up into lots of little bits plopped everywhere, because everyone wants a little bit—which I think some of that works. I don't think there should be just one method of having a big art. But they're not looking at occasionally making a bigger statement or getting artists to work together and potentially looking at how things interrelate.

They're looking at lots of little pieces dotted around. Which is fine, it's just not something that I'm particularly

interested in.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And during the sort of that high point of the wave, there was a lot more interest in the idea of integration—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —of artists really getting embedded in a project and really making it part of the place. Kind of really integrated with the architecture and the landscape, so that this whole notion of, "where is the art" was really less important. And for some reason, "where is the art" has come back as a kind of priority.

MIJA RIEDEL: So you see it coming back?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Oh, yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I do, yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And even art administrators have said that. They've said, "No, no. Oh, that was so '90s, no, now we want to know exactly where the art is. We want to have the art defined separately."

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting. But they have no funding. [Laughs.]

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: So again, it's an antithesis for us. So we've spent the last 20 years trying to promote design team collaborative integration.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right. And I think the other thing that has happened is that landscape architects that were the poor relations of architects have been empowered, and they now feel that they are artists, and they do not need artists to worry them.

So on that other level, that actually happens, and they actually often prefer having a sculpture put down, because the artist doesn't interfere with their design. So it's interesting that both things have happened, in a way.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: At the same time, architects are, to a large extent, a much larger extent, much more concerned with the kind of Gestalt of a site, the kind of conditions rather than the Oedipus complex that they used to have.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It's really about, again, issues of sustainability, of how the surrounding landscape, whatever it is—how it interacts with the building and how the systems are—just that they're thinking a lot more about that kind of surrounding bigger picture than they used to.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, let's talk—let's start either with San José or Fresno, because both of those I think really illustrate—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Well, frankly, that's a really good segue into Fresno, in particular—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Fresno, yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —because—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, please.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: So, I guess we should—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Tell a little story. [Laughs.]

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —begin at the beginning, yes. So, who was it? Was it Susan that called us?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No, no. I got a call—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: No, Don.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No, it wasn't Don. It was Greg.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Oh, Greg.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Greg. He was the project manager at the time.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: That's right. Greg Sweeney.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Greg Sweeney.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: The thief.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Oh! [Laughs.]

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: He was.

MIJA RIEDEL: Greg Sweeney was?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yeah, he was in bed with one of the contractors, he was getting kickbacks.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: That's why he disappeared. Didn't you know that?

MIJA RIEDEL: No.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Oh.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Anyway, he was a very nice guy. [They laugh.] I thought, first of all. No, he called me and said, "Congratulations, you've been chosen to be one of the artists for the Fresno courthouse, and can you come out to Washington next week?"

MIJA RIEDEL: And this would have been 1990, 1980s, early '90s?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Oh, no, no. About '92.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Two ('92) or three ('93).

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Two ('92) or three ('93).

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Because we finished it in '95.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, right.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And I said, "Great, yes." And I said, "Well, who's the other artist?" And he said, "Doug Hollis." And I said, "Oh, great." And I said, "I know him." I said, "Oh, we can share a hotel room." And he said, "Oh, no." He said, "That's quite all right. We can afford for you both to be separate." And I said, "No, no, it's fine. We really do—you know, we know each other." And he said, "Well, we would prefer you to have separate rooms."

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: To have separate rooms. [Laughs.]

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And I said, "Oh, okay, but," I said, "We are married." And he said, "Oh! Oh, well, in that case."

MIJA RIEDEL: That's wonderful. [They laugh.]

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Because obviously, Susan knew we were married, but he didn't, so it was just kind of interesting.

MIJA RIEDEL: Was this Susan Harrison?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes, so it was kind of interesting.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's wonderful.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: So it was great. So we went out to—

MIJA RIEDEL: Had you both been in—so there was no invitation before these phone calls?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No, no.

MIJA RIEDEL: You had both been selected completely independent of each other?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, yes, which is fantastic.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No, it was great. And when they found out that we were married, we had the choice of either working separately or together. And so not only did we want to work together, but we also wanted to work with the architect and landscape architect.

And when we first went out, we went out to Washington and met John—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: John Ruble was there. Pamela wasn't.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No. But he was absolutely wonderful.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: John is the sweetest guy.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Wonderful, wonderful.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Moore Ruble Yudell is the firm, and it was Charles Moore's last partnership. So now it's just John and—what's [Buzz] Yudell's first name?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: I don't remember.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Don't remember. We didn't really work with him on the project.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: But it was really kind of wonderful because he was so thrilled that we were going to be working on it. And it was, like, right away, we started talking about ideas.

MIJA RIEDEL: With the architect.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And showing images and—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: He was very, very excited about it. And it wasn't that long after that we went down to Los Angeles—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: No, it wasn't.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —to his office.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Their offices are in Santa Monica. And so we went there for—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Oh, what a good time to stop.

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MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Douglas Hollis and Anna Valentina Murch on May 22nd, 2010 for the GSA Archives of American Art oral history project at their home in San Francisco, California, disc number two.

We just started to talk about your first trip down to LA to meet with—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: To begin working on the Fresno courthouse project.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And yes, I guess that was an occasion where—I mean, it was kind of interesting because it was an okay crew. The clients were pretty good. And the judge in particular was kind of a character, and he was very, very involved in—

MIJA RIEDEL: It sounds like he was quite an influence.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: A major influence on the project.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Oh, he had a lot of clout. To get the money for the project, to move it along—no, it was really—

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you remember his name?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Coyle—John, was it?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: I think it is John Coyle.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: John.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: We always called him Judge Coyle.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Judge, yes. The Judge.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And actually, I think that we—before we went down to L.A., what we did was go up to Fresno. Remember we went up on our own to Fresno? We stayed one night in Fresno and looked at where the site was.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: That's right, and Susan was out for that one.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. And then we went to see the Three Rivers, all the area around Fresno. We went to Kings Canyon—Kings Canyon, Three Rivers. So we went to all the areas that were like—[inaudible] [Modesto - DH]—and Merced, because they had an old courthouse. We wanted to see the area that the courthouse was going to serve.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Because it wasn't just Fresno, by any means—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right, right.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It was in a larger area, so we wanted to get a really good sense of both the physical terrain and as well as the history.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right. And we took lots of photographs, lots of photographs. And then when we went—we actually took those down—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: That's right. That's right.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —and we put together boards of all the things that we had experienced up there to begin the conversation with the architect, landscaper. Pamela Burton was—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Pamela Burton was the landscape architect.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —the landscape architect. She was there and the judge.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And that was a—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: It was a good meeting.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It was. And it's actually proven to be a fairly interesting way of beginning to present ideas to try to sort of do it very abstractly by kind of unfolding your understanding of what the place already is, to know what its history is, what its natural history and geology and all those components that inform our thinking, but not to come in with proposed projects yet, but just to kind of pull people into the way we're kind of thinking about trying to understand the place.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And what we have seen.

MIJA RIEDEL: So the overall sense of place and then the details that struck you as somehow significant—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right, right, and that we can draw from.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. And did you find that there was some degree of consensus with Pamela Burton and with the judge about what mattered? Or were they seeing it a little differently?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Well, it's quite interesting because Pamela had obviously been involved a bit earlier than—we came in, well, I'd say significantly later.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: They had done at least 30 percent. So she had already done a kind of layout.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And she was actually having—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Difficulties.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —some difficulties, to say the least, with the judge. He didn't like the direction she seemed to be trying to go with it.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And when he didn't like something, he was very verbal about it.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And his clerk, Jack, was—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Jack was even more verbal about it. [They laugh.] He's psychic. So he could be quite —

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Challenging.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Was he clear about—did he have a particular vision that he wanted actualized?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: No, no, it wasn't that.

MIJA RIEDEL: He was just clear on what he didn't like?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No. Yes, he just knew what he didn't like.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: So it was an interesting process. What happened—I think it was the first time we went down to L.A., we went to Pamela's office.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, that was the second time, I think.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: But we had to kind of—we were trying to do some crowd control on that one, because the judge and company were all there as well, but we didn't want them to be in the room while we were actually trying to sit down and work with each other.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And because her current concept was being so badly received and she got really excited about these images and sort of thoughts that we were bringing into the project, she basically kind of took her drawings and wadded them up and threw them in the corner and said, okay, let's just start over. And so we did.

And so that was a very nice event, actually.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, absolutely.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And she was great to work with, very supportive. And we had a good dialogue. And John as well. I mean, the important thing about this project is how proactive the other design people were. And so we had a sense—

MIJA RIEDEL: And when you say "proactive"—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Supportive of our ideas, accommodating to changes that might need to be thought through, certainly in the landscape, but also the lobby.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And how we began the project was we kind of worked out a kind of, I'm going to say, conceptual framework about how we were thinking about it, in the fact that we were thinking about this area as being not just a courthouse. And this actually came from the judge. He didn't want it to be just about the courthouse. He wanted it to be a community center. That was very important to him.

And so therefore, we thought, too, and after going to all these places, "Okay, so how can we address something in what we do?" And everyone was interested, too, from the first meeting. We were interested in breaking the barrier between inside and outside. So there was a connection between the inside and outside. Okay, the glass had to be really thick, all the rest of it. But how can we make this place appear open, even though there are security issues, right?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And conceptually, we wanted to kind of address the fact of how Fresno had been made, and what were the resources around the Fresno area that have allowed it to develop? And so first of all, it was water.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And it was the wells and the rivers. And so what we wanted to do really—and this is what we did when we came in to talk to Pamela first of all. And we wanted to talk to John, but because so much of it was about more changing the landscape than changing the architecture, we wanted to talk to her first.

And what we did is just discuss the overall idea of, is there a way of us doing the kind of—I mean, we call it *Once Upon a Time in Fresno*. Is there a way of dealing with doing the kind of layering and sequencing in the landscape, which goes from the river, well, maybe I should say the wells internally, the river externally, then the lower piece—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: The lowered—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —the vernal pools—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Vernal pools, that's right.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —and then the hills and then the pines. So one's getting a sense of looking at kind of a cross-section of what's happening in that region.

And from that beginning, really, we came just with an idea, we started talking about it. And we started doing drawings and things together. And we kind of came up with some ideas. But she was able to carry it through the whole landscape. And so the whole—I'm going to say the whole ground plane worked collectively together to enforce those first conceptual ideas we had, which I think was great.

And when John arrived, we talked to him about the inside of the lobby. And we said, well, what, you know, what we would like to do here—you know, we were talking about the wells and the agricultural past. But you know, was there a way of us having just one orange tree as the reminder of the fact that now all the orchards are being cut down for housing, or were being cut down for housing, and just to have this reminder of what was there. And then have it replaced every three months, you have it in rotation, which he really liked the idea.

He changed the grid of the floor to be the angled grid of the tree grid of a—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: They orient orchards in this particular orientation.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah, in terms of light?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: In terms of light.

MIJA RIEDEL: I didn't know that.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And obviously, there's a particular space then that they use. So we've kind of transposed that geometry onto the floor of the lobby, so at each of the intersections of those thinner highlight strips, we had a little bronze embed which is a tree stump.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, I do remember reading about that.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And what's interesting, has always been interesting to me, is that it's the most subversive thing in the whole project, and it never kind of drew any attention. The living orange tree was the one that caught all the—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: All the flack. [They laugh.]

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —all the flack.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: We had to give it up.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: The judge couldn't stand it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: We couldn't have—"No orange tree, it'll die." I said, look, they've been living in—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: In orangeries.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —in orangeries in Europe, where the weather is far worse than Fresno, for hundreds of years. "No, no, no, no orange tree," because we were going to have this big seat around the orange tree. But no, it went. It went.

MIJA RIEDEL: So these are little brass discs in the floor?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: We've got one, haven't we?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, or bronze discs that represent the individual trees in an orchard.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, yes. There's actually six different ones that we had cast, and then they're scattered in different places.

MIJA RIEDEL: And are they just—they're different in terms of texture and size?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, because they're different stumps that we cast.

MIJA RIEDEL: And they're figuratively, literally stump forms.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, that is interesting. It looks very much like a cut tree.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Tree rings. Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that just sailed right by everyone?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. No problem at all.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did they understand what it represented, because it's also a lovely just circular pattern.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. Well, first of all, we tried one because it was going to be easier for them to do and more reasonable where it was going to be a kind of photo etch onto the tile, stone tile. But they didn't. And we said, well, you know, we'd do that or in bronze. And they said—you know, the judge couldn't stand the etching.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It didn't look that good, actually.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: It didn't look that good. Yes. And so he said, "Oh, no, it has to be bronze." And we said, "Okay, fine, that was what we wanted anyway." [Laughs.]

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I think what's interesting is, somehow, the idea of referencing the fact that they're cutting down all their orchards didn't seem like a negative to them. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: That is interesting. That is interesting. Just visually, it's a beautiful object, it's a lovely piece. But you're right, the content behind that is interesting that that just went through without any comment whatsoever.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No problems whatsoever.

MIJA RIEDEL: That is very interesting.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And then we—

MIJA RIEDEL: Were there particular constraints or formal concerns that you had to adhere to from the judge or from the architect?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No. At one point we—I think, probably the first—one of the first times, I was kind of interested in maybe looking at having something hanging from the ceiling. And when I realized how complex the ceiling was, I thought it definitely wouldn't work.

And what was really great was actually changing the wall to accept this sonic dish. And they were very willing to do that. And that all became part of the architecture. And all the score patterns around the well, everything like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: And is the sound that one hears from the well, is it the sound of water dropping, dripping? What is the sound?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes. It's doing two things. It's emanating from this slot you can see here. And there's a kind of a depressed—

MIJA RIEDEL: At the top of the—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —channel at the top. And so part of the water comes over the outside and just kind of crawls over this planed surface. So it's just kind of alive, but it doesn't make sound. And then on the inside, the water actually falls off into the well, so it's the sound of water falling in water. And then that's what the dish behind captures and projects out into the lobby.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: So it really is a lovely sound. And because you can't hear the river outside inside, because of the thickness—

MIJA RIEDEL: Because of how thick it is, right?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —of the glass. But you can sit out, and it's the same Academy Black boulders that are the seats by the windows. And you can sit there and see the boulders outside in the water. So you can sit there and see the river. And so that the whole idea was to kind of connect the inside and the outside.

MIJA RIEDEL: And again, the material is from the area.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes, it's about 10 miles away.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, right.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: The Academy.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And they were thrilled to make it. We went up to the quarry and picked out the boulders.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It's actually a very interesting quarry, because unlike most quarries where you just see them kind of slabbing out these big blocks, this is a boulder quarry. And some of these boulders are, you know, 20 feet in diameter. So they're in all sizes, and they're kind of buried in this very interesting kind of—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Rocky kind of rows.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —geological formation. So they excavate these boulders and then cut them off.

MIJA RIEDEL: Depending on what you need, what shape and size and—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes, what size and so forth. It's a very, very dense black granite. So we had a great time, because we got to go up to the quarry and go boulder-hunting for all these. Both the boulders in Fresno and the ones in Waterscape were from there.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: We got all the rusty kind of golden ones for San José, and we got all the blacker ones for Fresno.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, so you used the same quarry.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Same quarry.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting. And were San José and Fresno happening simultaneously?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Pretty much. Pretty much.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. In a way, yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I mean, I think Fresno started earlier.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Earlier, yes, it did.

MIJA RIEDEL: And how did the plan for Fresno evolve? Once you began, did it develop pretty much according to your initial plans for it? Or were there significant changes based on input from the judge?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I'd say we kind of moved right along with it.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right. I think what—some of the things that changed were, we wanted—you know, there was the stone that we could use. And the other thing that was kind of complicated with Fresno was that first of all we did the design, and that got approved. And then there was this kind of waiting. And a lot of the things actually didn't end up by getting in the drawings, all the plumbing system and everything that they were going to do.

And so when it came back and then—and we had a meeting here. A lot of the GSA offices that were based in San Francisco came over, and we talked to them. And we said, okay, we're taking on more than what our combined art budgets can be. Is this okay, and can you manage that? And they all agreed, they all loved the idea, and they wanted to go forward.

But there was kind of an administrative, you know, what the hiccup was, but it's what happened between doing the construction documents, and it was another company that did that, and one thing and another.

Anyway, when it came back, a lot of those things weren't in. And then there was this whole—the main problem with Fresno was then, how on earth can we afford to do it? And so what we ended up by doing was in fact not taking all the money that we had been given for the project, but saying, okay, we'll give you back this money, and you build it as part of the GSA build—because we think they thought they could do it for 200,000 [dollars], and we said we cannot do this water piece for 200,000 [dollars].

And actually, the budget—when we found out how much it ended up costing, it was way over what we even thought it was going to be. And they thought they were doing it cheaply. So we were right, it cost—it was actually, to do it right, it cost a lot.

Then the whole thing happened about what we were going to make it out of. We couldn't use stone. Okay. Then there was—

MIJA RIEDEL: Why was that?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Because of expense. So then it was going to be made of this—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It was kind of like fake rock concrete.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —fake rock concrete. And we went down to a place near San Luis Obispo to see the samples. And then what was so interesting is, we looked at the fake concrete and then the boulders on top, these boulders on top and realized that they didn't look right together. And then they said, okay, then maybe we'll use—they were going to use Chinese slate tiles. And at one point, I said, oh, it's such a shame it's going to look like a bathroom.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: [Laughs.]

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And the judge, it got to him. And then we got—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It kind of turned at that point.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: It turned at that point. And the hard thing about Fresno was, it took—the beginning was absolutely fantastic, everyone working together. And all the way through, the architects and the landscape architects were all very supportive. It wasn't about that at all. But when it got to the construction happening, everyone thought they could do it. Oh, it's all so expensive, you can't do this, can't do that. And what ended up by happening was, in the final hour, we managed to get Cold Springs to say, okay, we can't have them cutting big chunks. There can be a concrete kind of slab underneath it in the form. But they were cutting pieces to go on, not as tiles, but as big pieces that were cut on-site.

MIJA RIEDEL: You're talking about the elements for the waterfall.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: For the flat work.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, the flat pieces. And Cold Springs really wanted to do it. And they were absolutely great. And the judge, I think, finally realized it works perfectly with the—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: First, we wanted to have it as white—he wanted it to look like Yosemite.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It was his idea of Sierra—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Sierra.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —granite is—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: White.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —a Sierra White, not Academy Black.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And we were saying, it doesn't go with the lobby floor. It should be dark. And the boulders are—and this is local. And he said, but it's got to look like the Sierras. And he said, well—because he said, it's not big enough. And we said, well, you've only got three feet. You know, it's like—[laughs]—

MIJA RIEDEL: There's no way it's going to look like Yosemite. It's three feet, right.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: But in the end, I think he—I think actually him seeing that mock-up, even though—I think what happened—I don't know what happened to those people. They went belly up or something.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Something happened, they just kind of disappeared.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: They disappeared. But it actually helped him visualize it and realize the importance of the material. So that's when it went to at least slate tile. But then after me saying about the tile, he ended up by realizing it could be concrete. And I think he was very pleased with it in the end, as we all were.

MIJA RIEDEL: And how was he able to facilitate—how was he able to either—how was he able to facilitate you getting the materials you wanted, because it sounds like it was a budgetary constraint?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: I have no idea. But he got—he always got what he wanted.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: He twisted some arms somewhere.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, he always got what he wanted, and I don't know how. And after that—and they brought in a contractor to do the water. It wasn't someone that we recommended, it was someone they found. But he was so involved with this project. I think he must have been on site every day.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Oh, yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: He was like it was his baby, it was absolutely the most important thing for him. And that's why eventually I think it got called after him; they changed the name and gave it his name.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes, they named it after him.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Which is absolutely right; they should have done that. And quite honestly, his passion for it—yes, he was the most—we all kind of bonded to deal with the judge because he was really difficult. [Laughs.] But I think he really appreciated that we really cared about it.

We went up—of course, ironically, everything always happens at the last minute. The time that they could bring in the boulders was the day after I had finished my final reviews at school. So they actually—they wanted us to do it on the Friday, but I had reviews all that week, so we drove up on Thursday night and began at 6 o'clock on Friday morning.

We drove up on Friday night and we—they started—they got the cranes, and they started bringing them in on Saturday morning about 6 or 7 o'clock. But we did it, and they made the change. They let it—and they said we can't do it without us.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And I couldn't change the school thing, and so they did it on a Saturday rather than a Friday, which I am greatly appreciative of.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. And so you were there to help sight the boulders.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Well, we had them all numbered and laid out. But we did move some of them, didn't

we?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: We did some fine tuning.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: We did some fine tuning in moving things around.

MIJA RIEDEL: Now, I know the water is certainly a huge element here, and you design projects where the water can be both on and off. Is this water meant to run full time, 24/7, or is it—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Pretty much, yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: I think it goes off—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Doesn't it just go—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: I think they turn it off in the evenings.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: They turn it off or down? I can't remember what the final program was on this one.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: I think they turn it right off, but it kind of holds some water at the top, and that was more for electrical and hardly anyone is there at night in Fresno.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. And so lighting in the evening was not much of an issue then, either.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Well, there was good light in the lobby, so we just kind of utilized the ambient light coming up from the lobby. And it's fine.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And I think there's some up lights on the trees, so it's quite soft lighting. It's not as dramatic as San José. But the use is very different.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: So one important thing to kind of underline again, I mean, we had this concept of a sort of cross-section of the territory. But functionally, it also really worked for us if you think of both *Water Songs* and those things we talked about the other day in terms of evaporative cooling and the Tucson project as well, a similar section with this, that's lowered area along the edge of the water. So that as that activated water is splashing and moving, it's cooling the air and making it more pleasant in that part of the garden.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And it's lower there, and then it goes up in the hill so that you see the hill as a higher kind of vantage point, and the low part was kind of reminiscent of the vernal pools where they collect water.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: We wanted to actually go lower and higher, but we couldn't go lower because there was a storm drain elevation that couldn't be—we couldn't go lower than that was. So we were stuck with that one. But it still works.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: So I mean, again, it looks really simple. And actually, I think with this project it wasn't so much about the design, it was about how to get it really implemented properly. And that was the "struggle," I'll say, rather than "fight." But I mean, ironically after all that and the hours and, I mean, that was—it wasn't e-mails in those days, it was hours on the telephone with all these people being on the phone at the same time.

But miraculously, it ended up really well. And we got the materials we wanted. And I think everyone was very pleased with it. But holding onto it was really—and we kept—and we could have given up, because it was out of our budget. And I think that's what the judge really in the end appreciated, the fact that we weren't artists that were going to just do this and then run away. That even though it wasn't our responsibility to put the water feature in, it was really important to us that it was done well. So we stayed with it all the way through.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. And this project seems to really be especially successful. With the exception of the single orange tree, it seems that you—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: We pretty much got everything else we wanted.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right, yes, right. I still think it would be great with one orange tree. [They laugh.]

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Well, Coyle won't be around forever. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Sneak that orange tree in later. How often were you on site supervising? Were you there frequently?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: We went up when the well was done. And we went up when the well was delivered.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And then when it was set, which was later.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: When it was set. And we weren't there when the—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Obviously, we were there when the boulders—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: When the boulders went in.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —for the outside were delivered.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And we went up once when they were putting in the stone or when the water was adjusted. We went up several times, actually. And I think—wasn't there a—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: There wasn't a kind of inordinate number of hours that we—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No, no.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I mean, we'd go up for a day or maybe two.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, that was it.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Periodically.

MIJA RIEDEL: It sounds like it ran really fairly quickly if it started around '92 and was completed by '95.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Uh-huh, uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: It ran fairly on schedule.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Was there any community response or conversation during the process?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: No.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Just the judge.

MIJA RIEDEL: The judge.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: The judge was the community. [They laugh.] The judge.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: GSA doesn't normally get themselves involved in those sort of community buy-in things. This is sort of a holdover from Don Thalacker's days, actually. He never inquired as to whether anybody wanted it or not. He just took that Calder into Grand Rapids and set it down. [They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: In some ways, that sounds like it's wonderful, though, given, Anna, your point about things being diluted by just too many people with too many opinions. The fact that there was only the judge really to one opinion.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right. And the GSA and the design team. I mean, that we all worked together and everybody—so no one was in conflict there. Everybody felt good about everything that everyone was doing.

MIJA RIEDEL: And so you have really what feels like an extremely integrated final installation, both inside and out.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It is. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And would you both agree that of all the projects you've worked on, that this is one of the most integrated?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes, I would.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. I think what was so great about this is something that we've been interested in

for a long time, is this dissolving the barrier between inside and out. And I think we were able to do that in a building that is high security. It's pretty amazing. So that part of it I feel—and I don't—I'm trying to think. I don't think—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I mean, it's a little bit problematic in that regard. I mean, people can and do come to the courthouse, obviously. So it is a public space. But at the same time, it has the security issues that these kinds of facilities have. So it's—

MIJA RIEDEL: It doesn't feel like a high-security space, though, from—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: No, it doesn't. You can't see the metal detectors from these shots. [Laughs.]

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: They're on the other side.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: They are there.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: But they're on the side, so they don't really interfere. Once you've gone through them, they you're into the lobby and it's a completely different experience. No, I feel very pleased that we did it. But it was challenging to get it done right. [Laughs.]

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I mean, we didn't spend that much time on site, but we just did—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Hours and hours on the phone.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —so many hours on the phone. I'm surprised our ears didn't just drop off.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: It was continual.

MIJA RIEDEL: And the main problem there was budgetary?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Budget, yes. They thought we could do all of it with the budget we had. And we had proposed it, and we were continually reminding them that we had only said that we'd take this on because everyone had agreed that they would help facilitate it. So that became a kind of battle back and forth. But in the end, it worked. And I think that's the important thing.

I mean, nobody gave up on it. We didn't, John Ruble didn't, Pamela Burton didn't. We had less to do with them or Pamela after the initial design really, but it felt good that we all supported each other. That felt really good.

And the judge really—even if he was cantankerous and even if he didn't agree with us, we always knew that he really deeply cared about the project and wanted the best. And it was trying to make him visualize what that meant in, I mean, not just doing—you know, you can see a photograph of the fake rock, and it almost doesn't look too bad. But when you see a fake rock, you see it. And he needed to do that. And I think in the end he was very pleased with it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, it's interesting, too, that you mentioned that at one point, when he had the opportunity to see a model, he was then able to imagine or envision what you were talking about. But up until that point, he just visually couldn't understand exactly what you had in mind.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Are there any particular maintenance issues with this project over time? Any particular—does it require anything in particular?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: The water does require maintenance. And they put in a system—we went up actually later, didn't we, to see it again. We were going—we went up to photograph it, and we wanted to—oh, there was a chance of them—they were going to do some more to the landscaping right in front.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes. They fixed some things that were—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right, fixed them and had some stones put in there. And we got them to—we went and picked out some more boulders for them. And they were having maintenance problems because they put in a cheap system. But we had no control over that.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: The other interesting thing is that they tried salt—it's a kind of a new thing. It's a salt system for treatment, water treatment, where the salt, you just throw the rock salt in, and it runs through this, it gets

zapped by some kind of a death ray or something. [Laughs.] I don't know what it is, ultraviolet, or I can't remember precisely what the component is. But it breaks the chlorine out of the sodium chloride. So it's a more natural kind of chlorination. And then as it dissipates, then it just kind of turns back into salt again. So periodically, they just have to add salt to the system to keep it clean. And since it wasn't an interactive water feature, we didn't have to particularly treat it to a swimming pool standard just to have it be healthy.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: But I think they used some of the wrong hardware.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes, they did. They used some components that were not—that were subject to corrosion. In other words, steel, or galvanized steel or something rather than bronze or stainless.

MIJA RIEDEL: And is that fairly easily remedied?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I don't think it was a huge deal. I think it was mainly some valves that they had to replace.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And I know you've both designed so many projects with water. I'm thinking of Miami, which you designed specifically to be effective both with and without water running.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right, right.

MIJA RIEDEL: That was an intention in your design, is that it would be visually powerful one way or the other. And then we were talking about *Water Songs* and the fact that that really did need the water to be running, that it wasn't something designed to function without the water. Was this, Fresno, designed one way or the other? Was it meant to always have water running? Or was it meant to stand alone without water?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Well, wanted it to have—I think it does stand alone without water. And I think it also looks really beautiful when they turn the water off, and the pool at the front of the top. And they all just have a little skim of water on them. Do we have any of those pictures? I've got some somewhere I can show you. But it looks beautiful that way as well. I think it looks better running. But I think it's not like an empty pool that looks really weird.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And the base, that was the other thing that we wanted, was that the bottom of the pool, which they said, "Oh, it doesn't matter," and we said, "Yes, it does matter," because it could be turned off. And we used that Pebble Tec. And there's also some pebbles on it as well, so that if it is turned off, it looks like a dry riverbed.

MIJA RIEDEL: Perfect.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: So I think it does work when it's off. I mean, it doesn't look as if it's really awful when it's off.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, right. Let's talk about San José.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Okay.

MIJA RIEDEL: And how did the San José project come about? Were you invited to do that as well?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: We were.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: We were asked to go in for it as a team.

MIJA RIEDEL: Had that happened before?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Have you had a chance to see it?

MIJA RIEDEL: No, I haven't.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Do you want to take a break and just—

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure. Do you want to do that?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes, we can just take a quick break from the recording.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

[END OF TRACK holmur10_2of3_track01_m.]

MIJA RIEDEL: So we were talking about how this commission came about.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes, they had a very short list. I think there was Vito Acconci—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Well, they asked about—I think they asked about 12 people, groups, to apply, and then they picked—was it four?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Four, I think, yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: To be interviewed.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Don Lipski was one.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Don Lipski, Vito Acconci—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And Mel Ziegler.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —Mel Ziegler and us. Three from New York—[laughs]—and one from San Francisco. And we had the—again, we showed—we didn't actually just show our work, we also showed things that we were interested in, experiences, details of things that we were interested in, the kind of qualities that we thought would be there.

And much to our surprise, we got it, which was amazing. And then we did the—oh, and every—oh, the other thing is that Richard Meier Associates were the architects. And we worked with Michael Palladino in the LA office. But I mean, it was Richard Meier that worked with Robert Irwin on the Getty, which is the kind of the horror stories of that collaboration of—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: "Clobber-ation." [Laughs.]

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Well, no, no. And so we thought—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Thermonuclear.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —oh, this is going to be difficult. It's like congratulations, and now we have to work with the same architects. And it was completely different.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: One, we never had to deal with Richard Meier at all.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No. We didn't meet him until the opening, the grand opening, in which he said hello to us and that was it. But we worked with Michael Palladino, and he was fantastic. And the first meeting with him was in fact—not only—everyone was very nervous about this. There was us, him, and then there was about, I don't know, 10 other people there. Do you remember? All hovering around, watching.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Oh, down in San José.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Down in San José.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes, right.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Like, is this going to work? What's going to happen? And we basically just talked to him. We didn't show him any drawings, nothing. We just talked to him about our ideas.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And they had sort of trace, and pencils, and stuff there, thinking we were going to start drawing stuff. And we just talked. We just talked ideas. And Michael is so smart that he could actually see in his head what we were going for, even though the rest of them didn't have a clue. [They laugh.] It was pretty funny.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: But what they did realize is that we actually had kind of mutual respect for each other, we could talk in the same language, and we were actually getting on quite well, which was really good.

MIJA RIEDEL: Fortunately.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: So it just began again as a conversation.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Exactly.

MIJA RIEDEL: It seems like some of the best work has begun as conversations and ideas.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right, right.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And not only was there a relief to realize that Michael was a really nice guy, but they were completely proactive and supportive, but in no way tried to influence our direction. They just wanted us to just do something fantastic and trusted us enough without—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And in fact, became advocates for us.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Very much advocates for us, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: There were certain constraints on the space, though?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Absolutely.

MIJA RIEDEL: And what were they, and who did they come from?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Well, the city, really.

MIJA RIEDEL: For example, there were no trees.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Well, that came from Richard Meier.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes, that was—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And that was the one given that we were told, don't go there, absolutely not. It's already been determined.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And it was just, it was stupid, but it was ultimately a battle we decided not to try to fight. We thought we could just take that as a given and develop the work that maybe made a significant, similar kind of—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Contribution.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —contribution to the environment there.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: The other thing is, they initially had wanted to have it on the corner so that you could see it as you drove past. And we determined that we wanted to move it in front of the rotunda. And it became a kind of splayed—in this project, there was no landscape architect involved in this area at all. So it was only really working with Michael.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Well, Cheryl Barton was involved with some of the streetscape stuff.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Streetscape, but not with us at all, no.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: But not really the project, no.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No. She worked more with—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: With Andy Lister.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —Andy Lister did the pieces on the other side of the street, kind of figurative, you know, carnival pieces. And I think that early on we wanted to do something that scattered and began to kind of fill the plaza. And conceptually, it began with, again, we spent a lot of time—even though we had been down to San José before, we spent a lot of time going to all the areas around there. We went to New Almaden. We went to, again, all the rivers around there were capped.

And actually, maybe I backtrack a bit. Before we began doing the design, we met, and the art commission were very good at doing this, they arranged—was it three community meetings?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It was three or four.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Three or four community meetings in different areas. And what we did is, we gave a presentation of our work, and then we—and we had some questions that we were asking them. And then there was boards, you know, paper put up, and they would write underneath it what some of their experiences were. And then we'd go around, and then we'd have a conversation about it.

And so the whole idea was not them telling us what they wanted, but more what their experience was of what water elements had they seen that had inspired them, what was their context of the history of San José, what was important to them about how they would use this space. So it was all information around it rather than specifically "what is it going to be."

And those meetings were actually great.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: They were fascinating.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Wonderful. And the diversity of people that came, often there were quite a few public officials that came as well as people that lived in the areas. I think the last one was the most hilarious where, first of all, nobody turned up at all. And we thought, oh, we're going to go home. And then finally some people turned up. And I'm afraid I can't remember their names, but we do have them.

There was one—there was a woman that was of Japanese descent. And her family had farmed in the area. There was a Chicano man and his mother that continually wanted us to make—they said, "Look, it doesn't matter what you do, but you've got to have a plaque, something, commemorating the Mexican Americans that were here." [They laugh.] And the Japanese and the Chinese people were there saying, "No you don't. Why should you have the Mexican and not us? We don't need any of us mentioned. We need to have something that brings us all together."

I mean, it was really fantastic. It really was. [Laughs.] Because when we were talking to them about having something that responded to the area or water that was something universal than about one of the specific groups, and most—and even the son and the mother in the end were like, "Oh, we're so pleased we met you, and we can't wait to see what you're going to do."

And so it was a really wonderful way of bringing that community together as well as giving us input and in fact giving us permission for not having to kind of do a little bit for every kind of person.

I think one of the wonderful things about seeing what happens here is, if you go down there at a weekend, there are people of every ethnic background that are there—women in saris, there's a group of quite elderly Chinese people that go there and do tai chi and things. It's just every kind of group of people are all promenading and walking by. And that's—because everyone has had an experience of a river at some point.

MIJA RIEDEL: And it must be so hugely gratifying for you, because that's exactly one of your primary concerns.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, yes. Remember—we could go back—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: We had a little bit of a setback. Because we got this project in August of 2001. And then 9/11 happened, and things got sort of slowed down for a while. And we wound up going to Virgin Gorda for Christmas.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Just before Christmas.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Before Christmas that year, and there was nobody at the airports, there was nobody on the plane. We were kind of the only ones staying at the place we stayed.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. And we made all these models in the sand. [Laughs.]

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes, we went to the beach every day and worked in the sand to think about different kinds of configurations.

And we also went—there's a designer whose name is Herbert Dreiseitl. He's a German designer that has done a lot of interesting water features and sustainable biofiltration projects and things like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sorry, what was the name again?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Dreiseitl. That's a hard one. [Laughs.] But he had come over. I guess I had heard him give a lecture somewhere. Was he at San José State or someplace?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Something. We had wanted to do something which was, if you can think about all our

other projects, that we wanted to do something where the water was recycled or some kind of system of collecting rainwater or some kind of system like that. And they weren't particularly interested in it.

And then he came and gave a lecture, and the art commission actually then thought it was a good idea that we go out there.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: So they encouraged us—well, Herbert invited us to come over to his studio which was in Überlingen, Lake Constance, and spend a week and sort of do a workshop, which we did.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: It was great. And he worked out exactly the size of system. We were going to use the roof to kind of have a—the roof of not the rotunda, but part of the building—to collect water, to have it all, the biological cleaning system.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: As part of a roof garden, actually.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Roof garden. Had all that kind of hard—the mechanics of it all worked out. We came back, and they wouldn't do it. They wouldn't do it.

MIJA RIEDEL: What was the reasoning?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Because it hadn't been done here, and they couldn't prove that it actually worked. The fact that it was being—there was a system in place in Berlin right in front of their town hall. Didn't matter. There was no precedent in America.

MIJA RIEDEL: They didn't want to be first.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: That's right.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: So once again, you have to keep pushing on it. And at some point, you realize it's not going, so you have to transition. But we did get some things. Like in terms of assistance on the infrastructure, we did get them to depress the slab. There's actually a parking garage underneath, which is a good thing for us, because we had space to do our mechanical room right underneath this project.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: But they had to—they moved that for us. They moved where that mechanical room was going to be.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And they moved—so they moved the mechanical room. They made a reservoir straight underneath so we could recycle the water much more easily. Because the overall idea was that as if the land was kind of rising up from underneath the ground, so the rock was emerging itself. Because there's a lot of rock around San José, which has that gold color.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: We could—it's far too soft, and even if you could—you couldn't take it out of the ground because of environmental issues. So this is a gold granite, which is much heartier.

And the other thing that we were responding to was the fact that on the site there were—San José had a lot of water and it had a lot of artesian wells. And so again, we were kind of—and there was a very high water table.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: There was, yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: There was.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: But there's been probably 10 feet of subsidence since the original sort of settlement.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Because they've just pumped the aquifers out, so it's—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, right.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: So a part of it is sort of a suggestion about that history.

MIJA RIEDEL: And there are such parallels between this piece and the Fresno piece.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: The outdoor piece. Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And then, of course, the idea of doing this whole fog arbor component—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, let's talk about that a little bit.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —to it, which, again, because we weren't really allowed to think about using trees, we came up with this idea as kind of a way of achieving evaporative cooling on the plaza, which it does very effectively, probably drops the temperature 10 to 15 degrees, as well as—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Inaudible]—the heat and the dryness of the air—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yeah, there's a kind of a weather station that monitors what's going on, the temperature, the wind direction and speed, the humidity level and so forth. So they were kind of concerned about the fog not going off into the street and creating a nuisance for drivers, which they had had some problems with at Plaza de César Chávez with George's [Hargreaves] park.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: So it was kind of—it wasn't a hard sell, but it was something they were concerned about, rightfully. But the fact that these are sort of 25 to 28 feet high and the fact that we had this weather station so that if the wind was—it would have been unusual for the wind to be blowing towards the street. It comes the other way. And we did these wind studies, very careful wind studies to kind of inform where these fog masts were placed.

MIJA RIEDEL: So what's the overall scale of the piece?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: The flow field is about 4,000 square feet.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: But the whole site is at least twice that long, because kind of the way the masts scatter. They begin before it gets to the field, they go into the field and then through the field.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And the boulders do the same thing.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And the boulders do the same thing. What do we have, about 85 boulders [and forms ?] there?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: I think about that, yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Something like that.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: The other thing was, this was something we wanted to look good when it was wet or dry. And you know, it—California is, even with all the rivers or whatever, it's a desert.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And therefore, to—because if it does have to be turned off, to be reminded of the fact that it is a desert.

[END OF TRACK holmur10_2of3_sd_track02_m.]

MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Douglas Hollis and Anna Valentina Murch at the artists' home in San Francisco, California, on May 22nd, 2010, for the GSA Archives of American Art oral history project, disc number three.

And we were going to talk about the lighting and the sound.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: The lighting and the sound.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, the San José project, *Waterscape*.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: I think one of the most—it has a—the visual effect of the terracing and the mist and the boulders, but because we had gaps in between the stone, the water also fell back. So you've got—it became a kind of resonant—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It was like a resonator really. We have that depressed slab. It goes down about 18 inches

below the final paving, directly underneath the flow field. And then obviously the field comes up to about three and a half feet at the back edge. And there's something like, I don't know, how many pedestals are in there?

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Oh, I don't know.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: There were hundreds. [Laughs.] But there's essentially a lot of space underneath there, so it's a big sound box, basically. So some of the water—so the terraces are set so that there's a half-an-inch gap between the bottom of one and the top of the other. And some of the water goes back down. It falls back into the reservoir, so you get a kind of an amplified sound of falling water as well as the sound of the flow as well as the sound of the various nozzle configurations, the bubblers and the misters and so forth.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And the other thing we did is, there's a 24-hour sequence. So the water is always changing. So it goes from just the water going quite fast, to 100 percent, to then almost going down to 5 percent. So it just literally is like the finest amount of water skimming the surface and falling, to then the misters coming on and then coming on gradually, to the bubblers being very low and then coming up high.

So that it's always in a state of change. And in the evening, too. Because potentially, there was a lot of people that could be there at night, we have it lit internally from—is that the only picture you have?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: No.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: From around each where all the bubblers are and the sprinklers, so that they're lit from underneath, so you're illuminating all the mist and the bubblers.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I don't think I have that picture.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And as well, it was lit from the top. And this was something that we worked on with the architect. From the top of the tower, there was actually meant to be a moving light which is up there, but they have never paid for someone to program it. So it was like the moon moving across the park.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It's almost like it had the quality of moonlight.

MIJA RIEDEL: How beautiful.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. There's still some down light that comes down so that it's kind of bathed with some down light, and you'll get this light coming out of the rotunda. And I think what was very interesting about the piece is, some people wondered why we had it facing that way, we didn't have it facing the street. And that's because we wanted people to actually be a place. And even though it's only three feet high, there's the fact that it actually makes it an enclosure so you're not right on the road.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: It creates a kind of fourth edge to the plaza—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —so that when you walk in, you're in. You feel like you've entered a space, you're not on the street anymore.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that's something that's been important to you from the start.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And also, again, this was an example of almost that early idea we had with Alexandria, where we were using the sound of the water as a modifier to the traffic sounds. So then again, one of the—it's kind of amusing. One of the electrical contractors, he was in one of the trailers most of the time. And he said whenever he used to get really frustrated, which was frequently on this job—he's a fly fisherman—he said, I just used to come over and stand in front of your piece and close my eyes, and it was completely tranquilizing for me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting. Isn't that a wonderful story? And I love that description, too, of why it's facing the plaza and creating that experiential space within a space through the sight and through the sound and through really, in this case, the feeling as well, because there must be sense of spray and the coolness of air that comes from—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Absolutely, sure.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And there was one thing that one of the community members said, that really struck us. A mother said that when she had asked her daughter what she wanted for the civic center plaza, and did she want it to be like César Chávez, which is all the spray things—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Spray ground.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: —and she said, "No, no, I don't want it to be like that at all." She said, "But I just want to be able to go up and touch the water."

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And what's very curious is that really, with few exceptions, that is exactly how people react to it. They have kind of a reverence for it. They don't treat it as if it's a playground. Every once in a while you see a kid run up through it, but it's—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Mostly not.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —mostly not, yes.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: From the little ones touching the lower steps to the teenagers—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Running their hand along that back runnel.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Right, which is great.

MIJA RIEDEL: And I think that's another point you made, is by having the water, this stepped water falling, there's a height that appeals to everyone of every size.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: And even the security guards used to come out and sit out here, which was great. And when we were adjusting it and working on it and finishing it up, when all the workers were still there, every time we turned the fog on, there would be this kind of "Hurrah" that would come up from—

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: The fog was running into the rotunda, cooling it off. [They laugh.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Cooling them down, yes. Well, I have a question about the two of you collaborating together that we mentioned discussing. But have you noticed any specific differences in your working process or in the installations themselves when the two of you collaborate together as opposed to collaborating independently with other teams?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I seldom get my way. [They laugh.] After 22 years, I've learned my lessons. [They laugh.] Well, it's probably a lot more nuanced than that, because really we're working on each other's projects or helping each other on our individual projects all the time as well, not maybe with the intensity or commitment.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: We always talk about the projects at the time.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: But especially when we're developing our ideas, we're constantly having conversation about that and using each other as sounding boards and using each other's various skill sets to help with drawing or with model-making or with other aspects of writing and things like that that go into the development of these projects.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: I don't know if they look different from what we—I mean, I think we do look different from what we would do on our own, but I wouldn't know exactly how one would determine that. I think that the ones we've done together are mostly kind of quite complicated; and therefore, it's been really good to have someone, I mean, we don't have assistants. So you know, you don't have someone else to say, did they really say that? [Laughs.] You've got someone else that was there all the time and that you can really kind of discuss what really happened and be able to go through it all.

And as much as we do about the projects, where we're on our own, we discuss them. But we obviously, when we're working on something together, we discuss it much more. It's more a kind of continuing dialogue that happens. [Laughs.]

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And it's also it's great to travel together, too.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Exactly, yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Because Anna mentioned earlier, we tend to kind of try to extend our visits to either do research or at least enjoy the aspects of the place more than we might if we were there on our own. So it makes it a richer experience in that way.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes. But I think—I mean, we came together because we have a lot in common and we are interested in the same things. And one could say that Doug came out of sound and I came out of light, but

we both work with both now in a way. We're both sensitive to both, and maybe always were, so we've been able to learn from each other as well as share and develop ideas, I think.

MIJA RIEDEL: It's interesting. The one thing that comes to mind just off the top of my head as I'm reflecting on your independent bodies of work and then the joint one, is, where that sound and light so comes together is through the medium of water, which is so rich for both of those as a medium.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Yes, it is.

MIJA RIEDEL: And it seems like that is something that has really evolved in your work.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: It's a very difficult medium.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: I'm tired of plumbing. [They laugh.] But I've been able to delegate a lot more—

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes, I helped you with that.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: —since San José.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Yes.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Maybe you can show her the photograph of the pump station when you put your thing up because it's pretty—it's got two interesting shots. One is the mounted police that bring their horses there.

MIJA RIEDEL: I've seen that photo.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: And the horse drinks out of it, and loves it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, that's wonderful.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Likes to scratch his nose on the stone and then get a drink.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: No, you never can tell who's going to appreciate your work. And it was nice that the police come by, the Mounties come by, because the horses like it, but also children like it with the horses coming by. And it's become safer because there's more police coming by. So the combination of everything, I think, works quite well.

But no, I think it's been very good for us to work together. I think it's really important for us to do things on our own as well so that we've always got fresh ideas to bring to the pot, so it's very fluid, and I think that's what makes it work, really. We have our own vocabularies. Probably I put in more layers and textures than you would on your own? Structurally, you do more with structure than I do?

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Probably, yes. You tend to have more elements.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: I have more elements. And I'm more interested in sequencing, whereas Doug is much better, I think, at dealing with things that stand alone than I am.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Well, at least I do more of it, more of that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, that ends—I think we've done a good job of covering what needs to be covered together so we can finish the interviews individually.

ANNA VALENTINA MURCH: Okay.

DOUGLAS HOLLIS: Okay.

[END OF TRACK holmur10_3of3_sd_m.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]