Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Garth Clark, 2014 September 10

Funding for this interview was provided by the Artists' Legacy Foundation.

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Garth Clark on 2014 September 9-10. The interview took place at Clark's home in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and was conducted by Mija Riedel for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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: Let's try that again. This is Mija Riedel with Garth Clark at his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on September 9, 2014, for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. This is card number one. That looks better. So we'll pick up where John Pagliaro's 2009 interview left off and discuss what's happened since then, and maybe we'll just dive in and start with what seems like the big event is the CFile Foundation and how that got started, what the inspiration for it was—

GARTH CLARK: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MIJA RIEDEL: —and why it was essential to start a new foundation and not involve the Ceramic Arts Foundation.

GARTH CLARK: The reason we started a new foundation is sort of simple but technical, and that is that the Ceramic Arts Foundation had been dormant for a period of years, and what the IRS does is if you don't show activity, they just cancel.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: And so the attorney said it was going to be as big a job to get it reinstated—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —as simply founding a new nonprofit, so that's what we did.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: The reason for doing it, probably the primary reason is sort of ongoing insanity. You know, it's the same thing that has caused me to do all the other crazy things. It also has a lot to do with love for the medium, and also when we left New York, we told our friends that this was a third act for us.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: We didn't think we could have a third act in New York. It's too hard-wired a city for that, so we'd been here several years. Let's see. We would be four years by the time we started thinking of doing CFile, and I realized that I was just doing bits and pieces, but it wasn't really adding up to anything, and so I began to identify certain problems in the field. The one is that the field has largely worked outside the mainstream within margins.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Now, they have the un-mainstream, but it's the mainstream of the margin, not the mainstream of the mainstream. The second thing was that the field was very hermetic, so that if you were a studio potter, you didn't pay any attention to ceramic design.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: If you were a wood fire potter, you didn't even pay attention to other ceramics that wasn't wood fired.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So it seemed important for ceramics to realize that it's part of a huge, creative community, and as long as the community was going to burrow little holes into the ground and sort of stick their heads in it like ostriches, they were never going to join the big community, and that seemed like such as waste because, in CFile, we deal with it on several levels, and it's design, which is where we put grants, by the way.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: The art world, architecture, and, interestingly, architecture is the field that the studio potters enjoy most.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

GARTH CLARK: Because they're restricted by their kiln size, and to see a building 20 stories with the most extravagant ceramics on it, to them, is just such a kicker experience and so—and then there's technology, which is a creative field as well—

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely.

GARTH CLARK: —which is changing at this stage at an extraordinary rate. The other thing is that I was noticing that the field, which seemed like a kamikaze aircraft heading towards the ground, suddenly ceramics was coming back to life—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —more in Europe than America at that stage. It was coming back to life. There was new energy, but all the rules were changing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And so it seemed that it was important to have a knowledge center where the community can relate to each other across disciplines, same material, but across disciplines, and they don't have to be specialists of the material. There can be people that use the material occasionally.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: You know, it's not about that kind of porcelain membership card anymore. It's not about that. It's about sharing across different experiences, the material, different technical uses of the material, which now are flowing out of technology into art. That way the field can have an extraordinary rebirth—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —which is starting to happen.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I won't take the credit for it, but, you know, CFile is certainly helping.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And—

MIJA RIEDEL: Where was it—when was it officially launched?

GARTH CLARK: It was officially launched the first of November last year, 2013.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: So we're coming up to our first anniversary. We began building the whole thing at the beginning of 2013.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: But it went live, so to speak, November first.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: So—and there's a certain amount of selfishness in this. I—my background is several things: public relations, journalism, other things. The reason I liked journalism was each day you go into your office, and there's a whole bunch of new information, you know? I was explaining—I was recently the writer-in resident for the Penland School of Crafts, and I said to the audience, you know, there are two kinds of people in art writing. You've got the colonizers, and you've got the explorers, and what the explorer does is they beat their way through the jungle, pull open the vines, and think, "Oh my god, look at that temple. Nobody's seen it in 600 years." You spend some time; you write the first papers on it, and then you hand it over, and you head back into

the jungle because you've—the excitement is moving forward and finding the new things. Then the colonizers move in, and they write the next 50 books about it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I'm not one of those people.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Just about every book I've done has been innovative.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And so doing this with CFile is just such a trip.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Every week, it's like, oh my god, look at that; look at that; look at that. And also, the difference is that when I was running the gallery, it didn't affect my book writing as much. A lot of my books had nothing to do with the gallery, although they had to do with ceramics, and the gallery, we were restricted by our audience.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Everybody thinks the dealer just sets the tone, does whatever they like. No. It's a kind of arm wrestling between you and your audience. They want to stay in one place; you want to move them a little further. They give resistance; you push back. You give up; you try it again. So, even then, though, our gallery worked both in fine arts and crafts—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —in both areas, and it was sort of—it was kind of left up to people what to decide what was what.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: We quickly gave up on the idea of trying to turn craft into art because it wasn't. It's a different universe, different language, and what we just tried to do was sell the best of what it was, and that was it. So, in the gallery, there was a certain amount of restriction. There were some things we couldn't play with; there were some things we could play with. We never touched architecture, which is one of my great loves. We never touched design, which is one of my great loves. So, this has allowed me to become the whole ceramic impresario that I wanted to be. I can play the whole field now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And so, if I didn't have to do fundraising, I would have the best job in the entire world.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So now we've got—we're read in 125 countries. We get something like 30,000 unique visits a month. We—and that's growing, and it's going to grow much more in the next year.

MIJA RIEDEL: I imagine.

GARTH CLARK: And probably at least 50, if not more, universities and art schools use CFile now to keep their students informed about what's happening in the medium. So it's doing exactly what we wanted it to do.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Its role is twofold: it is to keep practitioners in the field updated with what is happening in their world—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —because again, that thing of retreating to your log cabin in the forest is fine for the people who did it when they did it when the crafts movement was running in full gear, and that kind of nostalgia was fueling them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: That nostalgia is disappearing now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Younger people are not that interested in ye-old pottery in the woods.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And so it's important for, particularly, younger people, and that's our primary market. Our main demographic is from 20 to 40—

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

GARTH CLARK: —because the older guys are having a tough time now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Their market is shrinking.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: They are often angry about it because they sort of expected that, because they did this out of great commitment and authenticity, that it should just last forever, but that's not life.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So when I go out and I talk and that audience is there, and recently, strangely, I keep going back to North Carolina, which is an unlikely match for me except that I love pots. And so over the last few years, and that's something maybe we can talk about is the whole North Carolina thing, that's done several things. It's brought me back to the roots why I got into ceramics in the beginning—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —but it also has shown me what needs to be done in a community like that to keep them alive. So, again, on one of my previous trips, I said to them, you don't have to change what you make, particularly, not if you're 40 years old, 50 years old, 60 years old. You—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: You've cast your mold. You know what you're going to do. If you're 20, think twice before you run into treacle glazes and cider jars and all the rest of it. But you can't sell it the same way you did before. If you don't change your marketing, you are going to go out of business.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, all of those things coalesce into CFile, and it sounds as though I'm tooting my horn, but I know this field very, very well. There's nothing this sophisticated in the field where you can go in, and you can find out what Renzo Piano is doing in clay, where you can go into design and find out what the top designers are doing, or go into studio pottery and see what the studio potters are doing, and so what we do is—there's no hierarchy in the site. There's categories.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Because again, some studio pottery falls into art, some doesn't, and that—people can make their own mind up, but they're all on a vertical platform——vertical?—no, horizontal platform.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And so, you're seeing the best of architecture next to the best of studio pottery. Suddenly, the context is different because, previously, you only saw the studio pottery in the sort of basement somewhere, and it never appeared alongside the greats and other fields. So in simplest terms, you know, that's what it does. Raising funds for it is the toughest part.

MIJA RIEDEL: I would imagine.

GARTH CLARK: Because, you know, there's a difficulty when you provide free information. Nobody wants—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And you have a staff as well, correct? Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Correct. Nobody wants to pay for it because it's free. And then, we go into the ceramics world that I'm part of, and nobody wants to fund it because they don't understand it because they've got such a traditional view—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —you know, like, where's the book? Where's the exhibition? That's not the way we do things.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Recently, we applied to a major fund, and they said, we don't get you. We don't understand what you're doing. And I said, well, can you understand this? You fund traditional things, an exhibition, and a book. Do you know that people under 40 aren't that involved in the book anymore, may not buy it? The book of the exhibition I know from some of your previous projects, you sell 400 books. The reach of that is practically nothing, and the book costs $200,000, and probably went to people over the age of 55.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, if you want to communicate to people under 40, you've got to use new media, and they sort of got that. We still didn't get the grant. For some reason, it's slightly difficult to catch the funding no this. I'm not—I'm exhausted, but I'm not—I'm not defeated, so this year, we will probably have a much more efficient fundraising thing going. And we're not a very expensive operation.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: We've got a small staff. None of us get paid big, nonprofit salaries.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: We don't have our own airplane, and we soon won't have an office. Now, the office is going, not because we can't afford it. The rent is not that much. We can afford the office. But it's because it turned out we don't use it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

GARTH CLARK: Everybody works from home.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And so, we would come to the office twice a week for meetings, and that would be it. So we can host those at our house, and twice a week, we get together. Some of the people we'll be working with are not even in town, so, relatively speaking, it's a cost-efficient operation except for one thing, and that is 80 percent of everything we pay for is content, and 95 percent of that is people. You know, things don't get written; they are written.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: So—and the more we can increase the funding, the more we can increase the writers, pray, to the amount of work. We've already done—in nine months, we've done close to 700 articles and reviews.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's staggering.

GARTH CLARK: We are really—you know, we're out there. We're working hard.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, it's all going very well.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I think the next year is going to be an easier one, and the third year, even more so.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: There are a lot of things we haven't been able to get done because—and to be critical of myself, if I was going back, I'd have spent the first year just raising the funds and then launch it, but I'm a content guy—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —so we wanted to get the content up as quickly as possible because we thought once the content was there, the fundraising would be easier.

MIJA RIEDEL: The content's exciting, and I would imagine that could draw funds as well.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And then because it's unique and fresh, it may—I can see how that could be argued either way as something that's going to draw funds or not.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sometimes the freshness and the uniqueness makes it harder.

GARTH CLARK: And we've had some very good breaks. Sara Morgan, absolutely wonderful person in my life who has, at various times, stepped into it and made extraordinary contributions to what has happened, gave us $100,000 challenge grant.

MIJA RIEDEL: Terrific.

GARTH CLARK: So we haven't starved. It's just that it's been tough, and it's not a job that I'm best suited for, and yet, to hire a development officer for such a small nonprofit is a little difficult because they would end up being like, you know, a third of the budget almost.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: So we have to find something that works for us. We don't want to grow into a large institution.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: In our sort of mission and philosophy, we want to stay lean, mobile, and not reach that stage where, eventually, we've got 45 employees, and we're existing, really, because we have 45 employees. At this stage, we exist because we've all got this sort of gung ho determination to keep the field as close to the edge as we can.

MIJA RIEDEL: It seems like there's been an extraordinary ability to include international exhibitions and focus on international artists. Do you have writers or contributors overseas? Is that the result of your board of directors? How is that possible?

GARTH CLARK: Well, that's an interesting point because we do a lot of what they call "aggregating."

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So there's several things now, which we can use, often almost in the form that it's sent to us.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: If we're dealing with a major gallery, and even a lot of the ceramic galleries—now not that they're not major, but they're certainly not major compared to David Zwirner—they now—their press releases, they commissioned serious writers to write the press release. The press release is often very erudite and can be used almost as it is sent to you. It's not a puff thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Sometimes you get those, but we don't use them. But it's an analysis of the work from a very intelligent point of view. So, a gallery contacts us from Paris. They've got this wonderful piece written. We take that. We edit it. We add some opinion. They provide us with extraordinary photography. It's—I would say, at this stage, 25 percent of the things come to us—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —and that's growing every day now. You can see that we've crossed a path, and now every other person now wants to get their stuff in. We had a writer, Jan Abrams, and that's A-B-R-A-M-S.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And she went to London for us to do a review of a big conference that was held there. And people came in from all over the world, and they knew that she was there to represent CFile.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: She said she walked in; she sat down, and within a minute, there were 20 people around who were saying, how can we get into CFile? You know? And so, yeah, it's working. It's doing its thing. There is an enormous amount of content out there—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —some of it good; some of it with excellent written material. We also, if we find a great commentary piece, then we do a post about it, and we discuss the piece; we quote from it, and then we give them a link, so they can go to the full piece, so it's—it's called "aggregation." Some people might call us parasites, but it's not that way. This is how—this is how the network works now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Now we do a lot of original material. We had a very controversial review that I did about the latest show at the Museum of Arts and Design. So, our piece then goes out and is reused everywhere. We take someone else's piece, and we use it. Sometimes, we'll take two pieces, discuss the two of them in relationship to each other, but again, always with that link back to the original.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, it's not like plagiarism because we're not claiming.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: We give full credit to everybody. And then that way, also, some people go into that site. That site's aware of us. They follow us. It's a wonderfully organic thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely.

GARTH CLARK: So, the thing is, when it comes to going overseas, we have to do this in two fields. We have to do it in all fields, but in two fields in particular. I won't say American design sucks, but it's sort of one step away [Laughs.]. Think of it: America does not have one, single celebrity designer that we can compare to the ones in Europe, like Philippe Starck—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —and a whole bunch of others. And even though some of them now are resident in New York, they're not Americans, and they didn't develop their career in America. Once they got to the top, they moved. So, it's not a field where we are—we're slowly catching up, and there's some exceptions, but think of it. We're this powerful country, and we cannot put on the table—in the past, we can. I mean, we can put Eames—

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely, sure.

GARTH CLARK: —but today, we can't.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And even if we have an American designer that you can point to and say, well, there's so-and-so, they mean nothing in Europe. They mean nothing in China.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Whereas, the celebrity, and I use the word "celebrity" loosely. I mean, I call them famous, well-known, whatever, but they're the ones who are at the top. You know, Marc Newson, for instance. They're known all over the world.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Right.

GARTH CLARK: So, the—it's not a field in which we lead.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Architecture, we do okay, although our architecture is dominantly very corporate.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And a lot of the truly exciting buildings are done elsewhere.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: You know? Plus, also, America has stopped giving money to major public projects—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Zaha Hadid will design some spectacular railroad station for some country or city. We won't do that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: We don't want to spend anything on our public anymore. We—you know, we're worried about the rich, and we worry that, even though they're the richest they've ever been in the history of time, if we don't keep feeding them money, they're going to take our jobs away, which is nonsense. They're trying to take our jobs away as we sit.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] That's right.

GARTH CLARK: Because businesses don't like spending money on labor. It's expensive.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So if they can get a machine to do it, or they can send it to China where somebody it does it for three cents an hour, they do it. They're not committed to developing the American workforce. So, all these spectacularly inventive pieces of architecture that come out of public funding are not happening in America.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: In Europe, they are happening everywhere. In Asia, it's unbelievable. I mean, we don't want to go to Qatar. I mean, that's a very bizarre situation, but there, too. So, if you want to see what's happening with architecture on a very evolved level, step one, and then, step two, take it into ceramics, that is 95 percent outside the United States.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Now, that puts an American student at a disadvantage. They're not seeing this kind of stuff. They have no idea what the possibilities are, what the creative horizons are, because they're not seeing it in their own country. Technology, we're doing fine, although the Europeans, I think, still have a bit of a lead on us in that. Art-wise, we're holding our own. Studio-pottery-wise, we're neck and neck in competition with a lot of other countries.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So our support base is mainly American. Greatest concentration of our readers and visitors are American. So, we do consider ourselves an American-based site, and we consciously try and serve a global community, but we're aware that we also exist by the—through the kindness of a—one national community.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And they have to grow. They have to learn. So, of course, these things are not very popular things to go out and say because America likes to believe that it's at the forefront of everything, and the difficulty is when you believe that, and you're not.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: You get into trouble down the line.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: So we—so there's a lot of overseas stuff, and it's also because, you know, I'm an internationalist, so I've spent my whole life traveling the world, meeting people in all kinds of places, making friends, and from my own experience, I know it's one of the most enriching things on earth as you encounter different cultures, different points of view, different palettes of color, for that matter.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: You know, all kinds of things that come with it. So, that's a very important part of what we do.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And if we ran this as an American site, it would just get more and more inward. But when it comes to art, Americans are not laggards. The art being done in this country is great. The ceramic work in art is great. The studio potters are picking up again.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: For a while, it got really boring, but now they're getting a little edgier again. Also, because traditional markets are failing, so the gallery that once sold pots doesn't exist anymore. Well, I won't say that they do exist, but they exist in regional markets, and they sell work for a very moderate sum. So, if you want to make the great art pot that's going to cost $30,000, you've got to get it into an art gallery, and if you're going to get it into an art gallery, you've got to be speaking a language as sophisticated as the other artists in the gallery.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, all of these things are driving and changing the field.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I think they're all good. I don't like the marketplace at the moment. It's sort of stuck in the one percent, and it's kind of, sort of, a little gross in some ways, but I think all these changes are great. Everything has been sort of torn apart and put back together again, including our economy.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, it means that, for younger people, it will be okay because they're entering the economy as it is.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: For the older people, they remember the economy up to 2008, before it fell off the cliff. Many of them also believe that it just takes one more bubble, and we're back there again. Well, bubbles got us into trouble in the first place.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: So, for them, it's difficult because they have to change, and so one of the things that I'm doing through CFile and through my lecturing work, because I also lecture a lot. It's my way of teaching, I suppose, without all the ugly parts of teaching like actually having to know your students and having to parent them and, all the other things that come with education. You know, I can be sort of like Cher. I can sort of fly in, wear a big hat, perform for a few hours, and leave the stage, and hopefully, you've given information, and you've inspired. Now, what I do do, by the way, is I also spend a day with the grad students and that, so that there is one-on-one contact—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I've done this my whole career.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. From the very start.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: In some ways, it seems like you've just really come full circle.

GARTH CLARK: Oh, you are so right.

MIJA RIEDEL: There are some things that are extraordinarily new and real changes, and we'll get to those, but it's the focuses on ceramics; it's on scholarship; it's on writing; it's on lecturing. It seems like there's a new, expanded emphasis on education and also on just the breadth of ceramic influence.

GARTH CLARK: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: We want people—it's sort of a kind of swimming hole analogy, which is, we want people to be able to dive deep into this, not play around in the shallows, not stay in the safe part, but dive deep and just feel the gigantic strength of this. And you're right, on another level, and I think you find this very often with the lifespan. We, very often, tend to come back to where we began.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I've seen this with artists. I saw this with Anthony Caro. Anthony Caro became an abstract artist and, in his last years, was doing figurative work—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Right.

GARTH CLARK: —which is where he started with Henry Moore.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: It was going to happen with Jackson Pollock. He was set to go back to figurative again. It seems like a natural arc. If you look at it one way, it's almost sort of like, oh my god, how sad, you know? I don't think so.

MIJA RIEDEL: No.

GARTH CLARK: I think there's something true in that first moment, and then you return to it with more experience, and you enrich it. And whatever the journey is between there and there adds to the wealth of it, but so, for me, I'm back to being a journalist. I'm really not writing academic papers anymore. I'm writing a news magazine.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I'm doing reviews, but I'm doing reviews as you would for a newspaper, and so, actually, one of my greatest honors ever in the field, because—aside from the Royal College of Art. I was made a fellow, and that was something about, and that was a big deal at the Hundredth Convocation at the Royal Albert Hall, the Queen's Royal Trumpeters, the whole thing. I mean—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: —you know the English do these things. So that was great, being honored as—by your alma mater. There's—something that feels very good about that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: The other thing, though, was I got the Mather Award from the College Art Association.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And the award is for distinguished achievement in art journalism.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And I thought, that's me, you know? I want to be a journalist with academic skills. I don't want to be an academic with journalistic skills.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And I have all kinds of issues with academia. I believe that until art can separate itself from the university, it's going to have a very rough and boring time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Why so?

GARTH CLARK: Because university is not an ideal place for an artist to live. My guess is that if, today, Vincent Van Gogh and Gauguin and a few others tried to get into university art school, they'd probably not make it—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —because it's based on all kinds of academic achievement levels, and this, that, and the other, which has nothing to do with an artist.

MIJA RIEDEL: But extraordinary artists have come out of programs. I mean, we've talked about Chouinard and

Davis and Berkeley. I think there—Otis, for a while.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah, but you're talking about them coming out 30, 40 years ago.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And the whole system was very different then.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

GARTH CLARK: The art department pretty much lived on its own.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Now, they are monitored every second of the day. The teachers are involved in meetings half the time they're there. The students have to do this. The students have to do that. I think independent art schools are really the only solution.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

GARTH CLARK: And so, if you have an art school in a university, the university should cut it loose and say, okay, we'll keep you within the umbrella, but you run your own rules.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: If you want to give an MFA to somebody who doesn't even have a BA, do so—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —if you can prove that they have the talent to do it because that's what it's about.

MIJA RIEDEL: It should be run more like a research program; it sounds like what you're describing.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah. And you know, for instance, in most cases now, they don't even teach them technique.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: So, what are they doing for them? They're also not telling them that they have less than a six percent chance of earning a living as an artist after they leave college.

MIJA RIEDEL: No.

GARTH CLARK: And that most of that six percent will also have a second job, usually teaching.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: So, if you were selling a degree and saying, well, you know, come and spend $250,000 with us to get your degree, maybe more, actually, and at the end of it, your degree will give you a six percent chance of earning some kind of a living. You won't necessarily get to the top. You may be at the bottom, but you'll sort of be living off your art work and other related things like teaching and working in art centers and the rest of it, and then 0.1 percent of you will earn a good living, and the other percent will scrape by.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: If that was presented to you before you signed for your quarter-million dollar education, would you still want to do it?

MIJA RIEDEL: I don't think so.

GARTH CLARK: No. And so, I was just in Madison, Wisconsin. Friends of ours and also clients of our gallery, Steve and Pamela Hootkin—that's H—you know the spelling?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And they had their exhibition shown there, nearly 200 pieces, spectacular exhibition. The Chazen Museum is part of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and so I was sitting down with Paul Sacaridiz and discussing this, and he said, you know, we really have a responsibility now to look at the total picture of what an art degree can end up being as a career decision. Art therapy—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —community art centers, teaching, of course, because if somebody comes out of that, and everybody just comes out wanting to be an artist, and they just kind of, good luck, even if there's six percent of them will get to that. But they've got this education, which is not worthless; it just has to find innovative ways, and, as he said, in things we haven't even listed yet—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —that we could come up with. He said, but I'm getting a feeling now that it is our responsibility as educators to begin to evolve the concept of what being a professional in the arts can constitute, so that's one thing. The other thing is, again, as I say, with the rules about who can get in and who can't, what if somebody turns up, doesn't have a high school diploma, writes very poorly, but is brilliant visually?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: They don't get in. So I know a lot of artists whose primary way of speaking is through their work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And they do that because they can't express themselves in other conventional ways. And this has so often been true of artists. It's only recently—it's only since the GI Bill that we've expected them to write papers, explain their work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And I was at Champaign-Urbana walking through the ceramics department when I first came to this country in '75, and there was this Chinese student making beautiful pots, and as we walked away, I turned around to the tutor, and I said, wow, that is beautiful work, and he sort of sneered and said, yes, but he can't explain them. And I thought, this fool made pots. How much is there to explain, you know? I don't want irony in my teapot. I want tea.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And so, those are university impulses—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —to write it down, to explain it, to justify it, to footnote it. Those are not artist responses. So—and yes, great artists came out of the early stage of it, but it was really very rough and ready in the '50s and '60s, and people misbehaved in ways they could not misbehave. I mean, the number of ceramic artists who are married to their students, and the—and the affairs became—started when the student arrived in school. That would never happen today.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, it was a whole different ballgame, and there were good and bad things about it. But, you are also working now in an institution that is very powerful, very corporate. I mean, it's as though universities don't have much to do with education anymore. They are corporate machines. They're there to suck that $40,000 or $50,000 a year out of you, or the government, or a loan, or your relatives, or whatever. And then, that overall umbrella of how corporate educational people think is what you grow up in as an artist, as you spend your three, four, seven years at school, and then it colors it. And so, that's why we have so much conceptual art because conceptual art, not the Duchampian conceptual art, but the post-1960s conceptual art, is the product of a university. Because they can, perhaps, teach you methods of thinking, they can't teach you to think, but they can teach you methods of thinking, and then they can teach you the right kind of copy to write down next to your artwork to make it seem profound when it's not.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Now again, already, there are changes. You can see that the art students and the artists themselves are starting to move against that now. They're finding that suffocating.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And so, the Whitney Biennial last year, 2013, the critics dubbed it the Crafts Biennial because

there was pots being thrown, weavings being done, wood being chiseled. They're getting back into the stuff of it. It would be even better if there could be now a further division between the art educational system and the art school. Again, sure, Columbia has an art school, but it should function independently of the main school—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —and be able to set rules for inclusion, which are not based on something which makes sense. You know, if you want to become a doctorate, get a doctorate in literature or something, you know. It's a whole different ball game.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, do you see CFile as an alternative educational source?

GARTH CLARK: Not as—the answer is yes and no. We are not the university, and we're never going to have one —

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —but we can prod—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: —and we can suggest, and we can show case studies of where this works better. An example, for instance, is we are going to be, in a few months, taking on the Ph.D for artists. Now, we don't have it in this country at the moment. I hope we never get it, and I'm sure it's coming very quickly because it's another cash cow for the universities. It's very prevalent now in Europe, so what happens is you write in, and you say, okay, I'm a potter. I want to research the funerary urn and get a doctorate. Well, you can—you can write a modest little doctoral thesis. It's nothing like a thesis you'd have to write if you were getting it in literature or business sciences or something else, and it's basically based on the work that you do and the research that you gather, but it doesn't have the same strict requirement. They go through the same things. I mean, you have to defend your thesis and the rest of it, but it's one of those rubber stamp things, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: You do a bit of research. You write a halfway decent paper that might be the same thing you would do for a master's degree, and you walk away with a PhD. as an artist. A wonderful teacher I know said, "It is defining qualifications downwards." So, we're going to take that on, and we're going to give it a hard time because we don't believe that it is —plus also, what serious artist really wants to go and get a Ph.D., you know? We represented Anthony Caro, and Caro, you know, was Sir Anthony Caro—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —and so I said to him, "Tony, how are we going to deal with this?" And he said, "Look, there's something vaguely embarrassing about an artist being called 'sir.'" He said, "It doesn't fit." He said, "But if it ever helps you sell a piece, by all means use it."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: So, it's the same thing about—you meet Dr. Koons. It doesn't make sense.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Do they really need it? Is it a qualification that matters? Now, if you are wanting to have an academic career in ceramics and write about it and stuff, yes. So, that's why I said we want to keep small and lean because the bigger that we get and the larger our overhead and the more people we employ, the more it pushes you into a status quo position.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Because, if you really take on the new universities and give them a black eye, but you also rely upon them for your funding— So, if we keep a small, diverse source of income, we can go and tackle any holy cow out there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: The moment we start becoming a bigger institution, we become more formal; we become more cautious, and then it changes our role.

MIJA RIEDEL: It seems that that's describing, in some ways, what the gallery world was more like—

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and it must be a bit of a relief to be able to do a lot of what you loved while you had the gallery, the research, the scholarship, even some of the online exhibitions, but without such a huge overhead, without the trials and tribulations of having to run a gallery and sell constantly.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah. You're absolutely right, and also, with the gallery, I mean, I opened the gallery because I wanted to write, and when I got $250 for a very, very long essay that took four weeks, it became quite clear that I could write and not eat, or I could write and eat, and so, I thought, well, the gallery will be perfect because it will give me some time off, and then, luckily, I got the best partner in the world who I married four weeks ago.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, congratulations.

GARTH CLARK: Thank you. Mark [Del Vecchio] has been with me for 35 years, and he would often take on extra labor at the gallery to allow me that two weeks off or, sometimes, three months off when I was doing a book, so —but at the same time, I couldn't do that all the time, and also, there were certain limitations as to what I could do, so a lot of my research was for my, first and foremost, for my artists because that was my job.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: That was paying the bills.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And everything else was lecturing. Now, I've got no restrictions, and also, I don't have to do it in an academic context either. I put up a sign in the office two years ago, and it said "no more footnotes."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: I got so sick and tired of the footnotes, mainly because of bad work habits. I would write and write, and I would pick up a footnote here and pick up a footnote there, but I wouldn't note it all down. Then it would take me two months of scrabbling to try and find them. So, that was my fault. That's not the footnote's problem, but I also, I didn't want to do that anymore. So, what I have done is I've gone full circle, and I've come back to journalism.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: But I can do that journalism now with the knowledge that I've built up in between the early phase and this phase that most journalists don't have.

MIJA RIEDEL: I also am struck by diversity and this idea of journalism. You were just saying how one of the most wonderful things about writing and being a journalist was coming in each day and having new topics to look at and address research, and I really am struck by the CFile news column, for example, that lists 10 different categories, from art to craft, to pottery, to technology, to video, and then my favorite is not clay.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Just the variety of—the diversity that you're bringing to the concept of ceramics—

GARTH CLARK: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MIJA RIEDEL: —I think puts it—also brings ceramics full circle to the concept and to the idea of that as one of the foundations of human culture from the very start.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And it brings in that breadth and that depth, which you rarely see addressed.

GARTH CLARK: And because they appear as what we call "tiles"—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —you know, that little thing, there's no hierarchy.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: It's not like this gets — in a newspaper, you can see one story is the size—the stories vary, but sometimes all of them end up being the same length, and sometimes it's shorter, and sometimes it's not. There's no particular policy to push things further than another. Some things need more information. Others, if they are pure news stories, need less because you're just saying, this happened.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Okay. Later, you might do another one and do a survey piece on what the consequences of that happening was, but when you look at it, the studio potter, you're sitting next to the famous architect, next to the famous designer, next to a scientist, next to this, next to that, and so it—our greatest interest is how we're affecting students—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —because they're now starting to see that as ball.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: You know, whereas previously there were independent departments, most of which never even entered their life.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And so, from that point of view, I think it has an ability to really change the field.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And it sounds hubristic, but it's not. I mean, we can do this only because the problems were so obvious, and nobody was doing anything about it. I mean, it's not as though we've invented the theory of relativity.

MIJA RIEDEL: The addition of science and technology strikes me as really—just the potential for that to influence, for example, something like studio pottery, I think, is profound.

GARTH CLARK: It is and—

MIJA RIEDEL: I mean, just the shear physical properties of clay and what you can learn about clay through technology and through scientific research could, conceivably, take it into a whole other conceptual level.

GARTH CLARK: Exactly, and it can produce new form.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly.

GARTH CLARK: Because in studio pottery, most of the time we're producing old form with a new twist on it, but once you have new technologies, you can create forms that never existed before. I think one of the exciting things is a concept in modernist architecture, and I'm talking about the, say, 1920 to 1960—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —where there's a discussion going on about rebuilding some of the earlier buildings or taking some unbuilt projects and building them today because the architects then did not have the technology to fully realize what they had put down on paper.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Then came all the adjustments because steel wouldn't do this, glass couldn't bend, you know, this, that, and the other, so you could take an amazing building from the past, redo it with contemporary technology, and it could be aesthetically twice what it was then.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, but I think the most important thing we do with technology, which is engineers, scientists, is that we count them in as creators.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: We don't say, you know, they're the creative people because your artists, and then there are these kind of mechanic guys here that do this thing. No. We see that as creative act.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely.

GARTH CLARK: And so—

MIJA RIEDEL: Research science has a lot in common with art.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah. And it's going to have more in common.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Because where it's going to happen is in the checkbook. We're not going to include economists as creators, but all art is driven by the reality of its economy.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: There has not been a great period of art in mankind ever that has existed without a period of affluence, so every area you go to, I mean, if you go to the Renaissance, of course, there were periods that were down and periods that were up, but it was a period of great wealth as well, and every sort of major point, the money is coming out, so we can spend it on—I don't think of art as a luxury, but it is pretty much seen that way, so we can spend it on art.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: For instance, in a small community, you can't have an artist—like the potters were also the housewives, and they took in the crops, and they cared for the children and the animals and did everything. Then, when their village got big enough, one or two of those potters, who were more skilled than the others, could now afford to just make pots. The other people could then focus more on their farming, and they could give them food in return for the pots.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, it's all about affluence that allows you to do that thing. So, now that we're in a period where the economy seems pretty rough and where it is unlikely to suddenly go back to the Halcyon days, we're going to have to learn to survive differently. So, the other thing which CFile is pushing is that we now see craft as part of design.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: If you make a coffee mug, you throw it by hand, fine; somebody else designs a coffee mug, and it comes out of a machine, no difference, except the difference that comes from something being handmade, which is just another form of manufacture.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So yes, they'll be sensitivities in a clay piece that's hand-thrown that won't be in another piece—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —but that's not an act of art. Somebody is making a coffee mug that they're going to put coffee in that you're going to use. If you look at the coffee mug that comes from industry, and it's very beautifully done, it's beautiful because a designer with an aesthetic sense created the concept.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: The one chooses to produce it through industry, and the other chooses to produce it through it being handmade. So, most craft is decorative art. Decorative art, basically, falls into design. The Dutch call it "free design." They call it "free design" because it means you don't have to work through a factory. You don't have a marketing director saying, no, you can't use red. Red is a bad color for the season. So, you're free, and if you want to change the shape of that mug, in a second, you can do it. You can't do that on an assembly line.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, I think that sort of really puts it in its context.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Now, if you purpose and working by hand, and you make things which are art, that's fine; then they'll be considered art, but we don't really need that between stage anymore, and also, I don't think—the craft

market is falling apart.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Everywhere, just falling apart. What we see in Europe evolving again, the lead there is in Europe, although you can go to Brooklyn and find very similar things starting to happen, is, you know, you get somebody, and they're a designer. And they design for industry. They make a series of, sometimes, very expensive, limited editions of one aspect of their work, which they have produced and sell at a fairly high level. They also have a craft department within their studio—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —that produces things, either fabric or ceramic or glass or whatever, so they're playing the role of a craftsman there, even though they might be trying for less individuality between pieces, but they're still doing exactly the same thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And then, because, in Europe, designers are looked upon so much more kindly than they are here, because we think of it as some poor, old man, you know, getting a really lousy salary, working in a grimy office, making a screwdriver for Stanley tools, you know. That's our concept of an industrial designer. These guys have beautiful studios. They have production facilities. So, some of their money comes from getting paid by industry—

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—to do things, and they get royalties coming in from that. They do sort of special works, which appear in museums, and they sell those. They also produce their own one of a kind.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: They produce their own editions. And when they put all of those streams of income together, they now are starting to get something viable that they can live off of. Plus—and here's the biggest difference—they work in a contemporary esthetic. So, somebody living in a city looks at it and thinks, "Yes, that will go very well with my Jean Nouvel table and the Frank Gehry apartment building that I'm living in." The craft world has been so damn rustic. That's so much of their shtick. And that's fine, and some of those people who live in the Gehry apartment building also have a nice little country home, and they'll buy a few crafty, rustic-y things to fit into that home. But you also want your stuff sitting in this glamorous apartment.

MIJA RIEDEL: It sounds as if you're describing what used to happen here 40 or 50 years ago when you had a lot of the GI Bill guys coming back and you had people like Paul Marioni or John Marshall or Harrison McIntosh doing their own work, but then also designing for—

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —at least some limited edition pieces, but some more traditional—

[Cross talk.]

MIJA RIEDEL: —pieces. But it's more in teaching as well. I think it was more of a balance than—

GARTH CLARK: John Mason did a lot of design work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Jerry Rothman.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, absolutely.

GARTH CLARK: I mean, they designed packages for the cosmetics house, Max Factor.

MIJA RIEDEL: Max Factor, yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah. And he worked for Interpace. So, yeah, it was much more that way. Except Jerry said that he would be looked down upon by a lot of the other makers—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —for going into the dirty world of corporate.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

GARTH CLARK: Now, nothing is more corporate than Jeff Koons.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: You know? And half the successful artists, they run corporations as well. And they are, you know, completely caught up in that sort of thing. The fact of the matter is you have to do a little bit of everything now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: You can't just, again, sit in your log cabin in the woods, and people can buy, and they buy your stuff, and it's all very nice, and you get so turned on because you've got your cotton smock on.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] It's gotten very multidisciplinary, very multimedia.

GARTH CLARK: And the market, the primary market, is open. You know? There is a rural market, but that rural market is where a lot of the poverty is based. So—and again, more importantly, the nostalgia of the old—the old part is gone. The nostalgia, now, is for factories.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yes.

GARTH CLARK: And you can see this across the board. Everybody's playing with the 1930s factory because that's where grandpa worked. Or great-grandpa worked. And so, that's far enough back now, but not too far because they can't remember their great-great-great grandfather who worked in Cornwall and made pottery in 1870. But they do know that they had, you know, somebody who worked in or maybe a family member who owned a factory that was all gears and bolts and—so I think, yeah, I feel it became too hermetic. It got to believe its own mythology, and the educational system kept selling that to younger people to whom it didn't make sense, but they drank the Kool Aid anyway.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: So now, we've got a big job out there. As Paul said, we've got to investigate what makes an arts degree worthwhile and what are the 50 different things you can use it for to build a career if that's really what you want.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And I don't believe that nonsense anymore about the humanities. "Oh, well, you know, you'll come out, and you'll have this rounded sense of art and history," and that was sort of done primarily for the sons of nobility and the super-wealthy because they didn't want them to go into something tawdry like a trade, and so they wanted to produce gentlemen. It's a very sort of Victorian, Edwardian concept. Because, at that stage, a very small percentage of people went to universities anyway, and a greater number of them came from affluence, so, yeah, there was a lovely idea if you've got Daddy Warbucks behind you. But if you have scraped together every penny and your family has scraped together every penny, and you've taken out $200,000 in loans, and you're going to exit—because most people don't go back. They don't take a second bite at education, higher education. They take one bite. So now, it's even worse, in a way, because—and this is not just art students; this is all students because, you know, students getting law degrees can't get jobs; students with architecture degrees can't get jobs.

What they're discovering now is if you want a home at an early stage in your life, it's best not to go to school for higher education unless you can—you don't have to take a loan. Because when you come out—now, you come out, and you marry your university sweetheart, Jane, and she's got her loans, and you've got your loans, and now you plan to buy a house. Your debt load is too high for you to get a mortgage.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: So, the fact that you've invested in your education now makes it impossible—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —for you to own a home.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] I was struck by one of the comments that you made that I think ties into this idea of innovation. You said, "I'm surfing a new wave [unintelligible] the mainstream and building

innovation." And it does seem like that is a foundational element of the CFile. It seems like a lot of what's highlighted is innovation in its various forms and its many, multiple—

GARTH CLARK: It is multiple forms.

MIJA RIEDEL: —multitudinous forms.

GARTH CLARK: But the thing is, too, we try to be careful not to make it seem too semantic.

MIJA RIEDEL: No.

GARTH CLARK: And we also try not to make it seem esoteric.

MIJA RIEDEL: No, yeah.

GARTH CLARK: So, what we do deliberately, and some people might say, "Oh, that's very calculating, and you're behaving like People magazine." But, where possible, we try and relate an idea or an innovation to somebody with importance in the field, so that it's not just this thing floating in the ether, but —Renzo Piano has started using this. And so-and-so is doing this, and this major company has invented this. And so that—and it's a device, but it's a very important device.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Because you link it to some sense of possibility.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly.

GARTH CLARK: Otherwise, you know, it could be an academic thing where we, you know, what if we made ceramics on the moon? Well, at some stage, if somebody of significance works out a reason for making ceramics on the moon, and the science is solid, at that point, you get involved. But you're not going to float that story and that kind of thinking in this. This is not a "what-if" publication.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: This is really about, "This is happening at the very edge." So, where we live, in a way, is that if you think of us as a little dam in a stream, and there's the stone wall, the water behind us is the future. And while it's traveling over the stone wall, it's the present. And the moment it goes off there, it's the past. It streams off into history. So, we're interested in that period when it's crossing the wall, you know? It's not just future.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Right.

GARTH CLARK: It's the first bit of that future hitting the present. And then, you know, we define it as a knowledge center, so we have all kinds of streams, which you noticed, and you—and some of them are not as noticeable. So, while we are trying to do a lot of things that are current, we also do what we call "flashback." Our century's the 21st, we consider the 20th century a historical period, no different to the 18th. And sometimes, we go back into that, but usually, if a person from the 20th century's still living or has just died or has just been rediscovered now—so we also do posts. Let's say we do a post today about some form of 3D printing. We're also doing, and will keep doing, some posts that go back to earlier inceptions of that idea.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Because it fills in the record of progression.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Because, eventually there's going to be 50,000 posts in that site. It's going to be gigantic. And we wanted to be as thorough as possible, so we go in there with the research idea, four-hundred things come up, and you can search through and decide which is useful for you. I mean, this is the wonderful thing about being digital is that it's—everything you do stays until we run out of fuel, and we don't have electricity anymore, right?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: So it's—you can tell. I mean, this is a great excitement. And the day I get somebody to take all the admin stuff off of my hands—Mark, my partner, helps. He doesn't work for CFile, but he's a volunteer. And you know, he's bringing an enormous help. But he's got his own things. He runs auctions with Cowan's in Cincinnati, and he does a certain amount of dealing still, which I don't. I only do writing and CFile; that is my—

and speaking. So, once we've got the setups that we have a modest office that can take care of the day-to-day stuff, and then I will truly have the best job in the whole world. You know? It's just—it's a—get up in the morning and I can't wait to see what's waiting for me. And because it's short-form writing, I've stopped doing books.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

GARTH CLARK: Yes. I have two books in process. They are both written.

MIJA RIEDEL: Which are the two?

GARTH CLARK: Lucio Fontana.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah, okay. I thought that was done, no?

GARTH CLARK: It's done.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

GARTH CLARK: But the Lucio Fontana Foundation is run by a woman in her 90s, and we have just run into every problem imaginable. We can't crop a photograph. We can't show a detail. She's pulling rules on us. We have to find the archive number for every piece in the book. She has the archives. Then, with Ai Weiwei, the whole thing's done—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: But I can't get the final photographs out of his staff. And most people find that a project with Ai Weiwei takes you three years to get the basics out. So, I'm a year and a half going into two years. It's written; it's ready to go; I've got the publisher; everything's set up. But after that, I do not want to do anymore books because what I've learned, at my stage in life, is that—I mean, I do have one other book, but it has nothing to do with ceramics, and it's going to have to wait until I leave, probably, CFile, which I intend to do. This is not, you know—I'm not going to work until I die. I'm there for four years, and then I want to find somebody to replace me and take it to the next stage. And what I've found is when you write long-form, it's so exhausting.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And I'm an editor. I edit and rewrite all the time. So, by the time you've done that to a book that is 300 pages long, you're almost ill. And usually —I can't remember who it was, but one famous writer said, "At some point during the writing of a manuscript, the book makes a determined attempt to kill the author."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] I think that's true.

GARTH CLARK: And that's what happens, so—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, that's funny.

GARTH CLARK: The one book I want to write has to—has nothing to do—has nothing to do with the field. Has to do with a New York art world from 1925 to 1955, and it's about George Platt Lynes, Phillip Johnston [Johnson], oh, a whole bunch of people: E.M. Forster, Jean Cocteau. It just goes on and on. And none of them are ceramists.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. And I think during the 2009 interview, you talked about doing some writing in other fields. And you mentioned dance, perhaps theater—

GARTH CLARK: No. I've only got one other thing I want to do, which is this because the protagonist is a photographer.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah.

GARTH CLARK: And photography is another love, so that I don't mind doing. I do not need another book. I do not need the pain of another book. And above all, I am enjoying people more—I wouldn't say than any other time. I mean, it's not that I didn't enjoy people. I just was working too crazily to think about it. At this stage in my life, I want to enjoy more social time and less time holed up in a room feeling utterly frustrated and furious and insecure and unhappy and disappointed and frustrated writing a damn book.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: You know? That's done. I have to write, though [laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: But short-form? I love it. Sometimes, I will run into trouble, and a short thing will take me a day, sometimes two, to get right.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

GARTH CLARK: If I'm lucky, it comes out in a spurt. There's nothing to edit. It's right there. You know, it's like a sprint. And you run, and you think, "I got there. Great!" So that is thrilling.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Plus, also, you know, I shouldn't say these things on tape, but little things about growing older. Like, I'm not a touch-typer. I'm a hunt-and-peck, but I can type at an enormous speed. But I'm finding that the coordination of my fingers is—it's not bad, but it's a little off, so I spend a lot of time correcting. And that won't get easier. So, if I'm writing a lot every day, five years from now, it will be worse.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: So—you know, I love people. I love friendships. I love deep involvement. Mark and I have a huge circle of friends.

MIJA RIEDEL: I bet.

GARTH CLARK: And, you know, I'm—even though I've got two sons of my own and they take quite enough parenting, although they're both wonderful—and I don't know if I mentioned it before, but our first granddaughter arrived. Actually, our first grandchild, Miriam Rose, and that's the daughter of Mark Clark, who is our eldest son. They're both my biological sons. And Kylee Deterding was absolutely wonderful daughter-in-law. We called her the pre-approved bride because—

[Laughs.]

—we met her when she and Mark were friends, but they weren't dating. And at our first dinner, she was living in Portland. We were here, of course. And I said, "You know, if we lived in Portland or you lived in Santa Fe, we would have to hang out together. You are just the best fun." And, lo and behold, they finally got married, so it was wonderful. So, we adore her. She's great. And the daughter is wonderful, too. But, you know—

MIJA RIEDEL: You did mention that at 8 weeks old, you took her to the Barnes.

GARTH CLARK: Yes, we took her to the Barnes. Never too young—

MIJA RIEDEL: That's right.

GARTH CLARK: —to see art. And my son, who's a mechanical design engineer, is sort of very unique in his field in that he's a huge art fan. That's often a little too esoteric for that community. And in fact, their apartment overlooks the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Barnes, so it's inescapable for them. So, yeah, I've ended up with quite a number of people in my life for whom I'm either the gay uncle, the gay auntie, or the absent father.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: It shocks me, the number of people I meet who had dismal fathers. Too many for it just to be random. Mothers, whatever, mothers have always stuck with the children. Some of them want to be; some don't want to be. But fathers, you know, my gender has not done a good job. I think current generations are much better. They're so much more evolved. I mean, my son—I said to Kylee, "How are you coping with the pregnancy?" And she said, "Oh, wonderfully." She said, "Mark absorbs all the anxiety for me" [laughs]. So, he was with her from, you know—and just so together with her, and that's not unusual in his generation.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: So, that's what I want to enjoy a bit more of down the line. And I do like the idea of one day, actually, really walking out. I tried it for a while—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] I was—I think you did try that once.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah, and I was just sucked back in. So, but I think it would be nice to focus on the most trivial things in life.

MIJA RIEDEL: It should be said that you have significant plans for CFile beyond where we're at.

GARTH CLARK: Oh, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: You've got two or three more phases, right? Would you talk about that a little bit?

GARTH CLARK: Yeah. CFile—the only two things I really think it has to do—we're dropping a lot of things now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: We're looking at the funding situation, and again, we see some projects requiring staff and things that is going to contradict our business plan, which is staying sleek and mobile and maybe even a little mean when needed. Because, you know, ceramics and the crafts have always been so Pollyanna, you know? I remember being attacked once for writing a review of one of the worst books I have ever read in my life. It happened to be about ceramics, and I came in for so much flack that I was so hard—you know, "Well, couldn't you have been nicer? Couldn't you have been—"I said, "It was the worst book I've ever read." And the pretension in it was sort of—I couldn't ignore that after a while. The fact that this author thought that she was some kind of genius, and she wrote the most dreadful book ever—and I'm not going to mention names because I want that just to be in the past—you expect me to just give her a pass because we're all clay people, and we're going to have a beer together?

And they were mainly English. And I said, "Have any of you read criticism in English literature? You think this was a review?" I mean, slash, burn, decapitate. English literary criticism is brutal, and sometimes, you need that. And our field, God knows, needs a lot of it because there's a lot of mediocre stuff that's part of Clubland—you know, we all belong to the club. And so, if one of the club members writes a book that's the worst thing on earth, we're supposed to find something nice to say about it and give it a review that gets some poor sucker to buy the thing, only to discover it's as bad as it is.

So, we don't have that as clearly in our field. The art world, more so, although we're reaching a point now where we're losing the critical base in the fine arts because of the corporate aspect of it, so thank god for Roberta Smith and a few like that who are kind of pretty rough and tough still. But you can tell, in so many reviews, that the reviewer has been wined and dined by the gallery, and it's a puff piece. *New York Times* ran a piece three, four years ago saying, "Whatever happened to judgment?" It used to be that a reviewer looked at it, examined the show, and then made a judgment.

Now, what you do is you get a review where the reviewer becomes an interpreter, and the reviewer says, "Well, it's red because he's signifying blood. And the animal head has to do with the fact that they lived next to an abbatoir." So, what they do is, they take all of the signs within a piece, and they translate it for you, but they don't ever tell you whether the piece is great art or not great art, whether it's boring, whether it is trite, you know? So, that's the role we still want CFile to keep playing. So, if we're going to be somewhat of an activist organization, again, we have to be very careful about our funding.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Are you still considering doing online exhibitions?

GARTH CLARK: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: Online exhibitions ended because I was discussing an exhibition on architecture with somebody, and I said, "You know why architecture exhibitions usually fail? It's because you can't show them the real thing." You can show a drawing. You can show a photograph. You can show a model, but you can't bring the architecture in. It's suggested through second-hand material. And so, you do a painting show; the paintings are there. You do a design show; the design objects are there. It's a direct, sort of, body-to-body contact between the two things. So, as we began thinking of doing the exhibitions, and I struggled a lot with this—we went through 20 different ways to try and create the exhibition experience, and what it came down to was it was an ersatz experience. It was fake. You know, even some of the really complicated things that take you through the exhibition, you know, it's like bad CGI. And so, we dropped that idea. We thought, "No, that's not our role."

Then what we've been left with is two things we want to do: the one is we want to run, in some ways, an academic journal alongside the weekly. The weekly—it was funny. I suggested to one of our staff members. I said, "It's action versus intellect." Here is somebody who's done this exhibition. Here is the intellect behind the exhibition. Now, in the weekly, we can't—we can hint at that, but we can't go into it. But what we can say is the concept of metaphysics that applies to this particular exhibition has been described in a detailed form by so-and-so in the paper that they gave, blah. And you can go from here to our journal, and you can read it. It might be 3,000 words long; it might be 4,000 words long. You can't have that length in the blog format that we use.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And—but not necessarily academic. So, for instance, one of the best papers I've read ever was an article by an artist whose name, unfortunately, I will not remember. He works for Theaster Gates. And I can look it up. But he wrote about his work and all the conceptual basis and how he views signs, what signs mean to him. One of the most beautiful pieces of writing I've ever read. There were some footnotes, not a lot, but it was great writing. But it wasn't—it was the quality of academic writing without being academic writing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: So also, if we do a show and the show is really important and it needs a 4,000-word review, then we do it in our—except that—because, again, I always want to be parting the vines to see the temple that we saw before. We gained—our method of publishing is going to be very different because it's important, when you work in virtual, not to think of reproducing analog.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: That's why the exhibition failed because we were trying to reproduce a real thing and give you the experience, but you're still looking at a bunch of photographs. Maybe—and even I've seen those things where they take the camera around the piece and stuff. It's vaguely creepy, and it's sort of ersatz. You're seeing the real thing, but it doesn't feel real. You can't feel the actual textures. It's, without doubt, a second-rate experience compared to the real thing. There are plenty of exhibitions. Go and see them. We can review them for you. We can tell you they're coming. We can tell you why it's a good thing you missed them because the exhibition was a bunch of junk. But if we do the intellectual thinking that buttresses what is appearing in the news and—so I said, you know, the news is the action, and the journal is the intellect.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And this great guy, Sean Di Ianni—and that's D-I, I-A-N-N-I—who works for us—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —said, "Why not put them together? Why keep the head separate from the body?" And I said, "Because they can't be read properly at the same time." If we put a 4,000-word article into a blog format, it's exhausting. So, what is going to happen is every paper that we republish—and we're going to do more republishing because we don't have the funds to spend $50,000 on funding people to write new material. But what exists out there is an enormous amount of material with a tiny marketplace. So, somebody wrote a brilliant piece for a catalog—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —for a community college. Seventy copies of the catalog were purchased of which three people actually read it. Well, that's a perfect opportunity for us. We can take it, put it in. So, what we're going to do is publish each piece as its own book. So, the book can be eight pages; the book can be 80 pages.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

GARTH CLARK: And what you do is, when we publish these, you go to the library of the books, and you click on the one, and it comes up as a flip book. If you don't want the flip book, you click somewhere else, and it comes to you as a PDF. But each little one is its own publication.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's fantastic.

GARTH CLARK: So, we're working with a company, and what we're trying to do is—they already provide this, but there's complications in how we provide it to our readers. The one thing is you can go and then make notations on the book.

MIJA RIEDEL: Fantastic.

GARTH CLARK: So, you think you can write the footnotes for them. It wasn't so-and-so; it was so-and-so. So, if you're using it as a research tool on something you're using, when you come back and you go back to that, you've made all the notes like, "pick up"—well, the other thing is that it also can be used as a scrapbook. You can go in and pluck anything you want and put it into a scrapbook.

The other thing is that you can then look up that book, and if the other people permit it, you can see what other people have notated in that particular book. Then you can take five books—I'm not into metaphysics, but let's say the subject is metaphysics, and clay and you're dealing with that issue, and there are five books that deal with metaphysics, you bind them into one volume. So now you're not thinking analog anymore.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: You've got this completely flexible thing and of course, they download into your iPad, and you sit reading it at night or whatever. So, that is the other thing we are going to do. We've learnt our lesson; we're going to work out exactly what it's going to cost, and it's not going to arrive until the money is in the bank. That was a big mistake of mine in the beginning.

The last thing is we want to do symposiums. Not conferences, but symposiums. Most conferences are incredibly boring. Of the 55 speakers they drag out, maybe five of them deliver anything of importance. They put them into seven different theaters, so that you can never—and whichever one you're watching, you're missing the one you should be at.

Our people, our creators, generally, cannot afford anything from two to $7,000, which it would cost them to attend, fly to another country, do all of that. So, our symposiums are going to be done in the tradition of the old symposium. We bring together the people most equipped. And our feeling is that we want to work on a maximum of five, plus a moderator, or four plus a moderator. But they are the four absolute right people. We set a narrow format: they have to give a 25-minute paper. They then have 25 minutes of the other people critiquing it. And then that happens through the day, and finally, there's a kind of debate divided into two—the 25 minutes is sort of like the module—into two, 25 minute things where they debate the whole day.

They debate what has happened through the whole day. And it's sort of more free-form and, somebody said, "Well, you know, it was good seeing that I was critical when you said that, but I've been thinking about it and so-and-so, and really it could work, but it could work if we"—so you have one idea very beautifully assembled. What we did when we did our conferences for the Ceramic Arts Foundation is we would basically audition everybody. So, we would go looking for their papers online, given, spoken. We would try and get videotapes of them talking, and we dropped so many people who were very smart and knowledgeable and couldn't communicate.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And then, you know, had 45 minutes for a paper, and spoke for three hours. So, we weeded them out, and we'll do the same with this. It will be a casting operation. It's like, that might be the most important person in the world, but that person communicates the ideas better. You know? It's not that they'll give you wrong information. They'll give you the right information. But they're—some people are not suitable for those things. They write a book or do papers, and then you can dredge your way through them.

You want the people who have the communication skills. Then what happens during the day is you can follow it online. And if you want to ask questions in the final thing, you send them—you text them in. And we go through the text questions, and we give them to the speakers. So that, in one day—now, we might have an audience. If we have an audience, it will be small. And our feeling is, if we have a live audience, we want it to be selected.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: For instance, when they did the conference here, Critical Ceramics, it was about writing and criticism. There were 300 people there. Maybe 30—or if I'm really being very kind—50 of them had anything to do with writing and criticism. The other 270 were there to find out how you could write publicity pieces for them, which has got nothing to do with writing and criticism. So, a lot of the questions were just ridiculously stupid. The structure was not strict enough to make it work.

I mean, we're going to be—I know it sounds wrong because everybody says to me, "No, you've got to be organic." No. I've done this for years. I know what works. I know that if you give somebody 45 minutes, they're going to use the first 15 telling you about their dog and their kids, and then they'll eventually get to the stuff. If you give them 25, you'll probably get all of the information you would have got in double the time.

MIJA RIEDEL: A little more generous than a TED talk.

GARTH CLARK: Yes. A little more generous. And then, by keeping those rigid time slots, you know, if you want—there's never, at any conference I've been, the right amount of time for questions. Plus now, the questions come in from texting—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —and we can go through them, and the dumb questions are gone. The really interesting, provocative questions, we line them up. And so, that means we have this event that's very important that takes on a critical subject in our field. You can, for very little money, become a participant and watch it. You can send in your questions. Then the transcripts are published as individual books in CFile Critical, and you can also call up the video and stream it.

So you can take any one of these things—and eventually, as I said, we do a number of conferences. We've eventually got 50 papers or 50 video presentations; you can build your own conference. That person and that person and that person dealing with something, even at the different events, that you want to learn about. You compose them into your own thing. And what got me to understand this very quickly is a wonderful guy by the name of Ben Carter.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah. Ben Carter is an amazing person. He's smart; he's interesting, and he has extraordinary empathy.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: So, you put that all together, you've got a pretty remarkable person. There's no arrogance in this man.

MIJA RIEDEL: No.

GARTH CLARK: And I was talking about the exhibitions, and I could see that he was getting more and more skeptical, and he said—oh, and by the way, he was also the first one to say, "You're going back to journalism, aren't you?" Nobody, including myself three months before, was aware of that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

GARTH CLARK: Three months before, I began to realize what was happening. And he just pegged it right off the bat.

MIJA RIEDEL: He's got a series of podcasts, right? Red Clay Rambler.

GARTH CLARK: That's him.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

GARTH CLARK: Fabulous guy. And so, he said to me, "You're going to do an exhibition? You're going to trap somebody in the website in the middle of an exhibition? You're going to lead them around?" And I had already, by then, pretty much decided, no. And I thought, that's the problem. You can't walk somebody into the gallery and drag them through there, not on the internet. The kind of commitment to time is completely different. Probably, nobody would go through the whole exhibition.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Because it's a form of entrapment for them. And if you did it in a way that they could just float around and hit things—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —but then you'd lose the cohesion.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: It's like what happens between music when—music used to be—they would produce an album, and they would arrange, from the first side to the second side, how they would appear, where the upbeat numbers would be, where the ballads would be. So, you were attending a very carefully orchestrated concert on vinyl. People don't do music that way. They go into an album; they take two things they want, and they don't even listen to anything else.

Now, we can say that's a good thing, bad thing; it makes absolutely no difference, what the morality of it is. It's just the way people now deal with things. And if you ignore that, well then, you just don't reach them. So, what you can do with CFile is, if you want to watch Grayson Perry's full lecture, you call it up. You drop it into your iPad, and that evening, in bed, you click on it, and you watch the whole 25 minutes. It's the right moment for you to do that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: But you don't force them into that in the beginning. You give them the ability to drop in and pull out. But then you give them the deepest stuff to take out if they want to. And people do. It's amazing how they go, you know? The podcasts, some of my lectures that have been an hour and a half. And people watch the

whole damn thing. But they have to watch at the right time and at their terms. So those are the only other things we're going to do. With one other thing, and that is we do want to give money to writers. They are going to be our lifeblood, and so—not to artists, to people who write about art.

And so, in terms of fundraising, that's something we really want to take on. And whether we give it as prizes, awards, fellowships, grants, whatever form it takes, it would be a very nice thing to see a day where 50 percent of the money raised by CFile goes straight back to writers. That would be—that would be, like, perfect. Not easy. I've learned some lessons about fundraising [laughs] in the last while, and I misjudged it. Because as much as I knew it wasn't 2007 anymore, every time Mark and I have taken on a project, we've gone out, and we've said, "Support us." Whoosh, the money came in. Not enough money to get rich. Not enough money to buy the private plane, but the money came in enough to make it happen.

And this time, it wasn't that. We then had to go out like oyster pickers and sort of nudge it off the rock, you know? So, I've lost some of my grandiosity in the process because I realize it's nice to say, "We're going to give a fortune to writers." And eventually, we will. But in the beginning, it's really tough. And we're having difficulty even paying—well, we pay our staff. But when people write for us, we say, "You've got a week at the casita if you want to use it.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: And eventually that will come in the same week, but—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

GARTH CLARK: So that's it; that's the whole package. And next year, we going to produce the journal, and it's going to be so exciting. I mean, you've basically got—you're going to end up with a few hundred books. And yes, the one book might be eight pages. But it's going to have a cover. It's going to have a bio for the writer, and you flip through it, and any stuff you want, you just take the scrapbook tool, and you go click, click, and you put it in your file, and then you leave—you leave your remarks in, so you know what you've done or what you want to come back to. It's fabulous.

MIJA RIEDEL: Extraordinary resource.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: It's going to be wonderful to watch that evolve.

GARTH CLARK: And totally flexible. Because, again, the other way of doing it is you publish an anthology of writings, and then you're forcing them between two covers. And also, the kind of people who will come to use that are going to be more empowered than most because they're doing a thesis, or they are writing a book.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And they know what they want. They're looking for certain things. They don't want to have to go through each year's structured anthology of writings. They want to be able to get to that in the quickest, shortest time possible. So, I think we've done CFile [laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, I think we've done a good job on CFile. Let's shift to publications, unless you'd rather talk about Viola now.

GARTH CLARK: No, publications for now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, we can talk about Viola tomorrow. I just think that the Mind Mod manuscript, in particular, has got to be an extraordinary work, and I'm really looking forward to seeing that and to have ceramics being made by Ai Weiwei, to have it come into that—its own in that and to play that role across cultures, across time, across eons, across the earliest Chinese ceramics through the recent performance piece that was done here, I think, on Navajo land—is that right?

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: In the Coyote Canyon? The range of—the breadth of ceramics—

GARTH CLARK: Just in that one career.

MIJA RIEDEL: —as addressed is extraordinary.

GARTH CLARK: And—

MIJA RIEDEL: How did you settle on that? How do you—first, how do you select an artist to write a book about? And how did that whole process begin?

GARTH CLARK: Well, first of all, I've done a lot of historical work. I have no desire to do any of it anymore.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: I value my knowledge from that, but I use it to animate contemporary.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: So, I spotted him when he came out with dropping the urn [*Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn*, 1995]. And I thought, "This is the smartest piece of post-Duchampian provocation I have ever seen." And it has to do with ceramics, so I'm on board. And it's based on a very careful analysis of people's ignorance, which was very important to the success of that, and I'll explain, in a moment, what I mean. And it was so precise and shocking. There's three fired across—bang, bang, bang—it's over. So, Weiwei knows exactly what he's doing. Now, that sat in the camera, you know, for six years before he decided to print it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really? I didn't know that.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah. And so—but finally, he did, and when you see the dates, it says something like 1998 to 2007. Well, the first date—

[Telephone rings.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Oops. We've got about five more minutes on this card.

GARTH CLARK: Okay. The first date was when he did it, and the second date was when he published it. And so, what he knew was going to happen was people were going to say, "Oh, this horrible man. He's destroying a priceless piece of history to satisfy his own ego and give attention to himself," which I sort of thought was true, but I didn't give a damn. I thought, "Good for you. This is—this is—whatever we lost, we got so much back from you for dropping that piece." Then I began to research the piece, and it doesn't have great value.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: If it gets to a Madison Avenue gallery, 15, 18, 25; if they're really pushing their luck, 30, 40,000. But if you go to China, and you go to a flea market, you can pick those up for a few hundred. They were made by the millions. They were—if they had to go and dig up every one that is out there, they would have millions of them. So, as he said, "It was industrial then. It's industrial now." The fact that it's old doesn't mean that it's not an industrial object. This isn't art. This is a commonplace thing that exists in huge quantity. So, my comparison was, if 3,000 years from now, an artist gets a piece made by Kmart—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —that was made in this year, and 3,000 years later, drops the damn thing, big deal. You know? So, it was based on ignorance of English—of, not English, Chinese antiquities. He has never broken or damaged a piece of canonical importance. So, you can't say, "Oh, Ai Wei [sic] broke this thing, and it was the most important thing, and we've lost history." No. He breaks things or covers things, which are, in a sense, they're old, but they're everyday. So, what I love about it is it says, you know, old is not a basis for reverence.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Old is an accident of numbers and of history. Oh, so this old piece, we see this so often—an ugly piece that survives. Anthropologists are great with that. They'll find the ugliest pot on earth, and it's three years old—sorry, three thousand years old. But what's important is inside is some residue of the food, so they can take the residue out and see what people were eating. But the actual thing? Ugliest thing ever made, has no redeeming virtue except for the residue they plucked out. So, he challenges this whole notion that age is, by itself, important. No, it isn't. And its survival is a roll of the dice and all of these things. So, he sets up a skepticism, which is great, and it falls in line with his way of thinking, which is—all of his work is based on what he calls "fake and real." Or "truth and fake." And he likes the word "fake" in Chinese because, the way it comes out, it's also the way the Chinese write the word "fuck."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: So, his studio is called Fake Studio. That's where he makes all of his art at a place called Fake. When he set up his first pottery—or only pottery, I suppose, at this stage, in Jingdezhen, which was—I can't remember the exact year. Maybe 2008?—the man he got to run it is a forger who makes completely

undetectable forgeries of Ming porcelains, which sell in the $20 to $50 million range. And they've developed all kinds of things to fake the dating. I mean, not Ai Weiwei himself.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: But the forgers. And one of them is that they get—all right, they're going to make a Ming vase from a certain period. They cheaply buy a lot of shards of the real thing. They crush it. They mix it with the clay, particularly with the clay in the foot because that's where the test is taken. What happens is that you then drill a hole. You take the dust. You send it to Oxford University, and they can tell exactly the year in which that piece was fired. Except that they're testing the grog.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And it was not fired at that period. So, that's perfect. His studio—

[Telephone rings.]

—is run by a man who has fakes, makes fakes. And so, so much of his work is based on this play of truth and fake. And he said—and even——

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MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Garth Clark at his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico on September 9, 2014 for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, card number two. His mind spins around that thought.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah. And so, I just—from that piece on, I became enchanted.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And then, of course, he began to use ceramics more and more. Now, the thing is his reason for ceramics is very interesting. A quick background because it's germane to this is that his father was and still is the most famous modern poet in China. His father's dead. But of course, China in 1958, the year in which Ai Weiwei was born, was a very disturbed place. The Cultural Revolution was getting going, and they decided that this man who was tortured by the previous regime for being Communist was not Communist enough. So, he gets sent off to a re-education camp, which is where Ai Weiwei grows up for the next 16 years of his life.

It's in a province where there is four percent habitable land. They live in a hole in the ground. What they do is they dig a hole, and they build a roof over it, and that's your home. So, but the thing is, Ai Weiwei is going on record saying that he hates ceramics. He said it very forcefully during an interview with [Hans Ulrich] Obrist. And so he—and I thought, why does he hate it? Well, I start digging a little more. It turns out his father was a collector of ancient Chinese porcelains. And when he was sent away, he put the best pieces into the hands of friends to take care of, and he brought a few small pieces with him in a suitcase that Ai Weiwei called the treasure chest. And it's taken me until two months ago to get this information out of him, or to get the information confirmed. And I did the interview that was used for the Navajo Nation, so I used that also to answer the few questions I needed for the book. And I said, "Was it true?" And he said, "Yes." He said these ceramics were there; they were in his treasure chest. And his treasure chest was a suitcase with beautiful things in it: seashells, a piece of coal, some small Chinese pots. And then, I said, "Well, was that the only real, sort of, sophisticated art you saw?" And he said, "Yeah. That was it. I grew up. That was—those things were the only things that were real art."

And so, you can understand why he hates ceramics. I mean, it's tied up with father-son, that whole thing. And the fact that he was a father, his father was a ceramic collector, and maybe, you know, his love for ceramics, in his son's mind, created some kind of jealousy. That was something his father loved and maybe loved more than him. Who knows? And I'm not—I don't speculate about that in the book. I just speculate about the fact that any relationship between a father and a son and a father's passion is going to be complicated, and it's going to be positive, and it's going to be negative.

So, when he started working with ceramics, you can imagine where this is coming from. That's a deep spot in his psyche. And he said, "I hate ceramics, but when you hate something enough, you've got to use it."

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I think that part of it, the hate, is he loves it too much. It's something so precious to him. So, that then adds another kind of deeply, deeply personal and highly emotional content to what he's doing. But then, from a pragmatic point of view, ceramics has never had a fine-art representative of this power. He is the number one artist in the world, and show after show, gallery after gallery, museum after museum, ceramics is coming out, the material that nobody could touch, the art that could not say its name, you know.

So, what he has done in a decade to educate people has been extraordinary. The most successful solo artist show at a public space in the history of mankind took place at the Tate with his sunflowers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: They have got an audience of, I think, 1.5 million people. That has never happened for any other solo show, and it was ceramic. It was all porcelain seeds.

So, I don't think Ai Weiwei ever went out thinking, "I've got to get the world to understand ceramics." He went out thinking, "I've got to understand why I'm using ceramics myself." But in the process, he became our best ambassador. So, it helps the field in an enormous way, and nobody's going to put ceramics back into the bottle again. That genie is out. It is now, probably, for the rest of time, whatever we might have, if a certain political party doesn't destroy our future, it's going to be there now. We outed that. It's all happened in the last 25 years, actually, longer. It started happening in 1950. You know, you always look for the flashpoint where it suddenly pops out, like, you know, people who say they became an overnight success. Yeah, after 30 years of busting their ass, they became an overnight success.

So, it's been 50, 60 years of us moving, and now suddenly ceramics, and not only ceramics, but in Ai Weiwei's case, it's history; it's material. Everything he's brought into the field. And so, what he has done, again, with no intention to do it, he's liberated the field. And he's got people to spend money, although I would say the person who did that was Koons.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Koons' *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* [1988] was when the art world sat up and realized that you could get—I don't know what it was at the time. I think $15 million or $7.5 million—but no—that had never been paid for, for a ceramic art work before. And so, you know, dealers have their tastes and things, but they've got a very acute ear for the "ca-ching" sound that a cash register makes.

Because when we started, the older dealers said to us, "You know what we call ceramics? We call it 'terra worthless' because we can never sell it. You know, Picasso's we couldn't sell. Nero's we couldn't sell." And once that happened, once we got into the high millions, then that was broken—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —that thought that you couldn't sell it if it was ceramic. And so, that feeds back to CFile again. Everything is changing. Prices are changing. Where you sell is changing. What you sell is changing. You have a studio potter I like in Edmund de Waal, and I'm not a big fan of his, you know, selling basically shelves of pots for half a million dollars a pop. And people would stand in line, desperate to get one of them.

So, then you come back to the discussion of money, and in the ceramic world, you get two reactions: the one is the smart people who think, "Oh wow," you know, "that's lifting the tide; maybe I can get $20 now instead of $10." And then, the others who are not succeeding, do not have galleries, do not have a career, who are deeply bitter and, immediately, start going off on a knee-jerk rant about money and art, which is ludicrous.

Money and art have always been tied together. And there is a difference between selling and selling out. An ethical artist will sell; an unethical artist will sell out. You want red; it's red. You know. You want girls in frilly costumes; see, girls in frilly costumes. And so, but it—at the same time, an artist without money, eventually, drops out of the field. And you can lose an incredibly import artist because there isn't a market for that. And then, once you're a successful artist, if you've got some resources to spend, you can do even more spectacular stuff because, in the past, the great artists we admire had a studio full of assistants. They had founding to do extraordinary building-scale things and all the rest of it. And so, once you can lock into that kind of funding, it's not that you have more money; it's that it unleashes your creativity to be more ambitious.

And take the Theaster Gates, for instance. Extraordinary man. Couldn't believe he was real until I met him. And I said to him, "Was it always your intention to become one of the top contemporary artists in the world?" And he said, "Hell no. I was a potter. I wanted to be the greatest potter in the world, but you know. But then, I couldn't afford my firings anymore because I was dead broke, and ceramics turned out to be rather expensive for a poor black man to have to pay for. But I wanted to create, so I went and found things in dumps that I could take away for free and work with, like fire hoses, for instance," which is one of his famous works. And you know, he's only been out there six years. Again, after many years, he was suddenly successful. He went to documenta, and from there on it has never stopped.

So, you know, in his case, it worked very well because it pushed him out of ceramics into another medium, but he still works with ceramics—into another medium because of the financial constraints, but it could have pushed him into a job at McDonalds, and he might never have come back, and we would have lost this extraordinary

artist. Now he comes back to ceramics with money in the pocket, and he is doing extraordinary things. And he can have the ceramics he wants, not the ceramics he has to make because he is trying to sell them at, you know, $10 apiece.

So, artists don't understand when they rant against money—and I'm on their side, in one way, because the market, at the moment, as I say, is a very obscene one. The money that's being spent on people of questionable talent is just beyond human belief. It's pure Versailles days. But an artist who wants to make more than something that's going to fit into his kiln, the moment he tries to do that, he's in trouble because he doesn't have the money. I'll give you an example, and I hope that Beth will forgive me, Beth Stichter.

Beth's problem is—and Beth is genius. You know, she is this brilliant maker. She can model clay and pull emotion out of it like nobody on God's earth. But it can take her three months to make a piece. So, what happens is she makes the piece, and she can sell it for six figures, which sounds like a lot, but it's not when you're also supporting your studio. And she sells it. It disappears immediately, now, into somebody's collection. So, it doesn't tour the museums where people can see it, so her career isn't building. You know, it's kind of narrow success, but it's not building a big name for her because she's now gone. That piece is gone.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: What she doesn't have is the money to take that piece and cast it. Now, a lot of people say, well, that's a terrible thing because a cast thing isn't the clay, and the rest of it. It's not a strong argument anymore. The casting techniques are so sensitive now that you lose nothing. Plus, the surface of her pieces are not ceramic; they're paint. And instead of paint, you can use a patina that is exactly the same as the paint, or if you want, and this is happening a lot now—we've dealt with it in CFile—is they have patinas now that resemble unfired clay to the point that if you see one of these pieces, you cannot believe until you go ting, ting, ting, and you hear metal, that it's not unfired clay. It looks, damn, it looks malleable.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's extraordinary.

GARTH CLARK: It is extraordinary, and so, a lot of people, who are fascinated by clay and by ceramics, are using that as their starting point and then casting it in other materials. There's a potter by the name of Mark Manders, and he really—not a potter, sorry, a sculptor. He's one of Ireland's most important sculptors, and he loves weird clay. He's managed to mimic it with epoxy, but to the point where you put your finger on it, which, you know, you're not supposed to do. But if nobody's looking, you think you're going to push, and the clay is going to give. But, of course, you can't make an artwork on that because it'll dry, and you won't have it anymore. So, he's worked out how to do it with epoxy. So, he works in epoxy and produces things, which look, not just like unfired ceramics, but like damp ceramics, greenware.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Even before greenware. Then he can cast them in the epoxy, and so, he produces a sculpture, which is a big deal to make. He makes five copies. He makes three artist's copies. He's got eight pieces. Beth has got one piece. But for her to go to the next stage, she doesn't have the capital to do this. Now, if she makes five pieces a year, and each one of them is cast in an edition of five plus three, which is a very modest number, that's eight times five. She's got 40 pieces, which can travel around the world. The other thing is her pieces are not super fragile, but they're not super-not-fragile [laughs.].

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Particularly, those legs coming out of nowhere and stuff, so the chances of the bronze being damaged are much lighter. So, you can put them on a museum tour, and they can travel for three years, and they're not going to come back in pieces.

These are realities in the field. The piece would, you know—what's his name? The critic. It was Harold Rosenberg, and there was Clem Greenberg. And Greenberg said to me, "Most bronze belongs to clay because most bronzes, particularly at a certain period in time, were all made in clay." And so, the motion on them, the way the material slides and stuff, it's got nothing to do with bronze. They weren't working in bronze. They were working in clay.

And so, Beth's pieces, even if she were to transfer them from clay into something else, they remain part of the clay tradition, and the original piece remains in clay.

Judy Fox does the same thing. She works in tetra stone or some other medium, but the original piece is in clay. But again, the same thing: she then paints the surface, so you can't see any of the clay. So, that very sort of pious belief that, you know, truth to materials; you're still doing truth materials, but you are also being realistic about what the artist can earn, the durability of the piece in the marketplace, all of those things.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

You know, Lucio Fontana's big balls, which is partly deliberately a crude remark, but—from his point of view—he was a pretty crude man. He was very elegant and beautiful, but even though he came from this middle-class family, he had this really course, working-class way of speaking. What are they called again? They were done in 1968-69.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, right.

GARTH CLARK: It was giant clay pieces. Parts. And he made them in clay. He made about 30 of them. They would not be the icons in contemporary art that they are today if he didn't go a step further and bronze them. Two things: they translated into bronze brilliantly, which certain work doesn't. I think that Arneson's work does not translate into bronze. You lose—in that case, you do seem to lose something of what—the goopiness. It's difficult to get goopy in bronze. So, the fact that he could make those pieces in bronze meant that they ended up everywhere. Every major museum has one of them or a set of them or something.

So, I don't have problems with that. I don't think we should look upon ceramics as a kind of prison, and the moment the piece is made, it's locked up in the ceramic prison, and you can do nothing with it thereafter. They wouldn't exist but for ceramics. And if we acknowledge that, and we acknowledge that the most important pieces are the originals—and that's started to happen. Initially, when you would sell the work, a bronze would sell for 10 times the price of the original piece, which is ridiculous. You know, in rarity, marketplace, everything. It's like photographs. The big price goes for the vintage photograph, the first one ever printed. And that's a very important factor, both in the artist's history of creation and also in the marketplace. So, all of those things are coming ripe, but if you go and you speak in some parts of the ceramics world, they don't get that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Because they've lost control. And when I came here to the states—God, '75?—I said to them—I said, "You know, you better get a lot more liberal and creative about how you function. You better get into different marketplaces. You can't just sit in the clay world and point fingers at the fine arts world and say, "You know, it's not fair; you won't let me in. Do you want some cheese with that wine?" Because, at some point, the art world's not going to wait for you. When they're ready to move, if you're not in place, they're moving without you. Nobody—they thought they were going to own it forever. And in some ways, what they did was they actually stopped it from really crossing over because they were scared. But they thought that if they built a fortress, they could keep it forever.

Now, it's unleashed. And it's not just materials turning into taking something in ceramics and making a version of it in another material. You take somebody like Ricky Swallow. Are you from LA?

MIJA RIEDEL: San Francisco.

GARTH CLARK: San Francisco. Well, he's from CA, one of the top contemporary sculptors today. Two of his big heroes are Lucie Rie and Hans Coper. He does not work in ceramics, although he's becoming one of our top ceramic curators. It's really interesting. He works in bronze. He often works in vessels, but not exclusively so. And so, his work is informed by pottery. But the pieces themselves are not made out of clay, and aside from the fact that they are vessels, they do not attempt to imitate clay. It's a sculptor looking at pottery; it's not a sculptor making pottery. So, there's a case where you're just taking the subject matter of ceramics, and it's energizing a whole career. To me, that's as important as anything else.

And so, when we begin to look at our ceramic world as an entity, we now have to start incorporating that into the total impact of our medium. If it's going to inspire a great sculptor to make great art, we own a little part of that, you know? And in the history of our field, that becomes part of our history.

I don't think I'm going to have problems the younger the field gets, but at the moment, with the older group—and I can understand why. I mean, I'm not—in some ways, I'm exactly the same as anybody else at 67, except that I'm an explorer. And so, because of that, I never settle down with what I have explored because it's done. I've found it. What else to do? I'm not going to sit there and write about it for 50 years. So, it's the similar thing with my taste in literature, with music. I just keep moving. But I understand why, when you're 67 and an artist, some people do it. Ken Price did it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely.

GARTH CLARK: But a lot of people don't and can't, and that is a normal reaction in an artist. If anything, what they do is, as we discussed before—and I'm doing the same thing—is they return to what their original inspiration was. So many of the abstract artists went back to the figure.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, the field's going to have no problem. The younger artists coming out are going to have no problem. Education is the problem. And it's still stuck in a sort of 1950s loop. A lot of the teachers are older. The problem is when some of the teachers leave, the department closes. So, what we believe in, in CFile, is that the craft department should be retained as a joint entity, quote, "materials studies," in pretty much the same way that the Bauhaus did it. Because you can sit your students in front of computers as much as you'd like, and you can have philosophers come and lecture to them, but even if they don't use it later in life, if they don't have experience of material and form in the real sense, then they are faking the orgasm. If you don't really know what that is.

An example I'll give is Frank Gehry. I believe that the reason why Frank Gehry's buildings are plastic—they take on shape that prior to him, buildings never took on. It was all right angles, one way or another—is because Gehry began as a potter.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

GARTH CLARK: He worked for—[Side conversation] Hi, Mark.

MIJA RIEDEL: Should we pause this for a second?

GARTH CLARK: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: Didn't go. Okay. Gehry studied ceramics with Glen Lukens.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah. Gehry studied ceramics with Glen Lukens at USC and was a particularly good match, in some ways, because Lukens was a scholar of architecture. His own building, his own home was an important modernist building, and so, and eventually, Gehry became his technical assistant.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: But one day, Lukens, for whatever reason, said, "You know, there's this seminar on architecture. I think you should attend it, and I'll pay for it." And I joked with Gehry, and he didn't find it funny [laughs]. I said, "You were that bad a potter [laughs] that he had to get rid of you?" So it was a potter who put him into his career. And I think that beginning, his notion of form, his first notion of form, as sort of in serious education, came from clay. Things are round.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And they curve, and they move, and they collapse inside, and they do all this stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Absolutely.

GARTH CLARK: I don't think that that's accidental. I think that that began to inform his idea of where he wanted architecture to go. And then, of course, the other great influence, also who I think is one of the greatest ceramic artists in the world, is Antoni Gaudí.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: I mean, all right, there's the building, but then the surfaces were just pure art.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And I [Laughs.] said to Gehry, "What did you think the first time you saw a Gaudí building?" And he sort of glared at me, and he said, "What do you think I thought?" [Laughs.] He knew what I was saying. There can be no Gehry without Gaudí. You two guys, you know, this has to be an important part of who you are.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, we were talking about education and materials. And so, I think it would be tragic if all the craft departments close. I think it will be pointless if they continue as craft departments because we are not producing material specialists anymore. The market is not particularly interested in them. You can have a material specialty that is a great fondness of yours. I mean, you know, sculptors who work mainly in metal, but not only anymore. So, metal is your thing. Okay, fine. But then, what about your photography? What about your videos? What about your prints, your drawings, your paintings? That is what the marketplace is demanding. It's not that, this is a good idea or a bad idea. I think it's a fine idea, but it's not a sort of moral absolute that you should do these things. It's an economic absolute.

To give you a few ideas, and I have my spies, and I've found things out. You take somebody like David Zwirner. David Zwirner gives one of his show—his artists a show. There's probably $50,000 worth of advertising for the show, at least. His budget for the party afterwards is $150,000, and it has been known to go much higher. His budget for the document, the book-sized catalogue that accompanies it, is $300,000. So, you are, on opening night, just to open the show, you're talking about over half a million dollars. He's not doing that because he's rich and generous. He's doing that because that artist is worth much more to him, and in the next year, he's going to—those costs are going to be nothing compared to the money he pulls in.

Now, even if we take a smaller gallery—and they are still facing a similar thing—and then, you want to take the artist to a fair. Well, when I last checked 10 years ago, Zwirner's budget for fairs each year was five million dollars. So, what that is all telling you is that being a dealer is very expensive. We could never do what we did with our gallery 30, nearly 40 years ago. We could never have done it. We couldn't have done it with that kind of money. We couldn't have survived. The marketplace, which was largely for us upper-middle class, is practically gone. All of those factors have changed, but what it tells the artist is that, if somebody's prepared to spend half a million dollars on your opening night, you better damn well be able to produce tens and tens of millions of dollars of product—and I use the word product specifically—to justify that expenditure.

So, the problem with ceramists has always been that they —jug and mug makers, they make masses of stuff, but that's not art. And they sell it too cheaply, so they make no money anyway. If you're a ceramic, quote, "artist," then you're making elaborate things, and our artists, because most of them taught, would make one body of work every two years if we were lucky. And that body of work might be 10 pieces. So, when you start backing away from that, trying to work out the economics, a dealer today will look at that and think, you must be joking. You're a dilettante. You're doing this to get your tenure, so that you can show that you're still an exhibiting artist. You are not a professional artist. And most of the ceramic artists were not professional artists. They were educator artists. Now, that doesn't mean their work wasn't good, but they didn't make enough of it to support a gallery.

So, you start off now; you're 25 years old. You've come out of school, and you can make 10 ceramic sculptures a year: bye, bye. You have no chance of anybody picking you up. Now, if you work very quickly, and you can make 100 sculptures a year, and they're all handmade and stuff, as some do, actually—not major pieces, but, you know, lots of little pieces—and you do assemblages and stuff like that, you can get away with it. But then, you know, where are your paintings? Where are your drawings? Where is your video? You've got to be able to provide a range of product to be a professional artist, the same ways I described with the design studio. To come home at the end of the day with a living wage from your design studio, you've got to be able to do six things, not just one thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: You've got to do six things, and they all better be pretty viable and have an ability to return income to you. So, the difficulty when you talk this way, of course, is that artists in public don't like this. And then they get on their high horse, and they go on about the evil of money, although I have never had any artist return anything to me because they got too much money. And off the record, if you get them privately, the joke is if you join a group of bankers for drinks, they want to talk about art. If you joint a bunch of artists for drinks, they want to talk about money because it is this rare, three-horned animal that doesn't appear in their life very often. Plus, nobody is more conscious of, and often jealous of, the artists who do make money. So, they want to know what they're getting. "Oh my God, do you mean he sold it for that?" And then, the conversation goes from there.

So, there's a certain amount of two-facedness with artists when it comes to money. Of course, they all want to succeed, and how do you measure success? You measure it through income. The notion of the starving artist was great for movies and that, but it's not good for a career. You starve. You eventually go to where you can get money and survive.

MIJA RIEDEL: Quick question, actually, in relation to that and success. When you look back on the gallery from this perspective, from this point in time, what do you think of as the most successful shows that you had there? How do you define them?

GARTH CLARK: We had successful shows where we sold nothing. We had artists like Richard—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, what comes to mind?

GARTH CLARK: Well, the first shows we did of Richard Notkin, for instance.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Death heads, you know? Objects attacking the status quo. All of these things. One dealer said to

us that, at that stage—it's not as true anymore—death is a very hip subject in the art world, but that was 1980, and she said, "The two things you can't sell in art are—is death and green." And the first show from Richard Notkin was green silt on [ph] glaze teapots with death heads. So, he gave us the perfect unsaleable. Now, of course, it's different because collectors like to have a lot of death and primal stuff in their collections because it seems to be profound. It's not pretty because we don't cater for pretty and beauty anymore. We want angst.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, what made that show successful in your opinion?

GARTH CLARK: It was just that the work was so great, and the next show, and the next show, none of which we sold. They were just very, very wonderful shows. But the difference with us is if we—even though we were younger than the Virginia Zabriskies and the other dealers that we became friends with, are usually, they were at least a generation older than us. We loved them because they were in it for the same reason as us. They weren't expecting to make money; they were expecting to make a living because this is where they wanted to be more than anything else in the whole world. And, of course, they wanted to make money, but they were very skeptical as whether they could and would be like, "Oh God, we got through another year, and we paid our bills," or, "We got through another year, and we made some money. It's amazing."

Whereas the current group will go in to make money, and if they don't make money, they get out. It's not entirely their fault. It's also the market structure doesn't allow for "if," "but," or "maybe." You make it. It's a very expensive, or else you don't make it, and you're out. It was true of us, too, but not as brutally. We could come back from a bad year. And so, the most successful shows: there were other shows that we did. We did a show, Georges Jeanclos. We'd known his work for a long time. He was represented by major fine arts galleries, and even though we were friends, we didn't want to ask him to show with us because we felt that a lot of time, people didn't—particularly, if they worked in clay as he did—they didn't want to show outside the fine arts. Like, Ken Price was the same because then it kind of messed up their brand, and then people began to confuse who they were. It was a tough enough job to get in their place in the beginning. They didn't want to, essentially, be demoted.

But, as we discovered with a lot of these people like Caro and Jeanclos and a whole bunch of them, they couldn't give a damn about that. They were so secure as artists that several of them said, "Oh my God, it is such an honor for you to show us because you are the top ceramics gallery in the world. Therefore it says that we're doing a good job with our ceramics."

Anyway, so eventually we got up the courage because his gallery in New York closed, and that was important, too. We got up the courage, and we asked him, and he sent us back a postcard. On it he wrote, "What the hell took you so long?"

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: So, unfortunately, just before the show he died. We had the show anyway, and that show was remarkable. The things that happened during that show with people—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Telephone rings.] Finish this story up.

GARTH CLARK: —still make my hair stand on end. For instance, this man came in and said, "Oh my God. Oh my God." And we don't know what's wrong. And he said, "I saw this artist's work 20 years ago." He said, "I've been searching for it ever since. Here it is." He just—he was beside himself. He said, "I'd never got the name. I could never quite—and here it is in this great state." And people would burst out crying.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Now, there's pathos in the work, but not that you would necessarily expect would do that. And people would come to the desk and tell us very painful stories about their life that this work just generated. One woman came in. The fact that she's black is neither here nor there. What's more important is that she worked at one of the department stores and probably didn't earn a lot of money. She got into tears and then began to explain the work to us. I mean, she just got it, like, totally.

So, the month that it was up was one of the most emotional we've ever spent in that gallery. And so we did a lot of shows. We did 600 shows, so—because we had more than one gallery. We had more than one city. If I think about it—tonight I'll sit up and think of these—oh, eureka. Then there was this. Then there was that. But there were shows that really sort of rocked the boat for the field, and what we were able to do was get *the New York Times* to take us seriously as an art gallery. And God bless Roberta [Smith] for that because she's the one who pulled it off.

MIJA RIEDEL: We'll pick this up tomorrow.

GARTH CLARK: Oh, okay. Tomorrow we'll start with —

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MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Garth Clark at his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico on September 10, 2014 for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. This is card number three. Before we jump back into finishing up the conversation from yesterday, any thoughts occur at 3 a.m.?

GARTH CLARK: No, luckily, last night, I was asleep at 3 a.m.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay [laughs].

GARTH CLARK: Because I've not been asleep very well, and I haven't been since I—since the accident and since we came back, so it was a relief last night to just konk out; that's great.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, nothing kept you up. All right. So, let's finish up thoughts about Ai Weiwei, and in particular, I do want to touch on that *Pull of the Moon* installation or performance.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Because I do think it—that's extraordinary in the multiple levels that it talks about ceramics over time, and history, cultures. But, by all means, if there are any thoughts that you'd like to start with.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah, and after Ai, there is one other thing I want to deal with, and that is a connection that I made in North Carolina.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: Because it really has become very meaningful—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

GARTH CLARK: —and was surprising in some ways. But, to get back to Ai. I have been working on this book. Having terrible trouble getting the photographs out of his office, but I've got a feeling in about six months' time, it will finally be done. They kept blaming him for the delays, but then, when my friend Eileen Braziel—and that's B-R-A-Z-I-E-L—was in Beijing and she mentioned the book to him, he had no knowledge of it. So, the problem with an artist like that is they're surrounded by rings of staff, necessarily, but sometimes self-serving, sometimes obstructive. Sometimes—probably in his case—just terribly overworked because the man is a project factory, and he never stops. So, what happened was, she runs a non-profit group in town called TIME and, actually, that's not the group; that is a project of New Mexico Arts.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: And New Mexico Arts is a department of New Mexico state government. It's a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, and they sponsor temporary, site-specific art.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: So, we were just talking about the project, and she wondered if there was any chance of Ai Weiwei participating. And I said, "Well, as long as you don't expect him to be here, sure, be in touch." And they got in touch, and surprisingly, he said yes, he would do this. I think, in part, it was because, first of all, Bert Benally. Benally is B-E-N-A-L-L-Y. A Navajo artist went to visit him.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah, in China?

GARTH CLARK: Yeah, and they—Bert Benally looks like a mini-Weiwei.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: And not accidently. At least I don't believe so because Benally is Navajo. Ai Weiwei has some Mongolian blood in him, and I mean, it's practically certain that it—the Navajo are from Mongolia. And when Manuelito [Wheeler], who was the—is the director of the Navajo Nation Museum went on a visit there to Mongolia, he said the experience was very bizarre. It was constant deja vu. The people looked like his people. The yurts looked like hogans. They take care of horses and sheep. They wear strangely-shaped hats, which, traditionally, the Navajo made as well. So, I think in some ways there was a little bit of romance in this for Weiwei. Also, the fact that it's a sovereign nation because he has a real feeling for indigenous people. So anyway, it came about, and what the project is, Benally wanted them to work together on one piece, and Weiwei

said no. "You do your piece next to my piece and, we can—you can react to my piece, but I'm not going to do it as a collaboration," although it was still a collaboration, but just not—and I can understand — he wanted his artwork to be a distinct piece.

So what he created was a black circle on which they stenciled an interlocking pattern of bicycles, and then the bicycles were drawn in porcelain sand. Weiwei took all the broken pieces and shards in his studio and ground them not to dust, but ground them down to a sand-like consistency. So that against the black was very beautiful. The black, crushed rock came from Coyote Canyon. They found some in an area further down. They trucked it to the site, created his drawing absolutely exquisitely. And then on the night of the performance—

MIJA RIEDEL: This was June 28, 2014, yes? Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah. Bert Benally had done a piece, which responded, in many interesting ways, to Ai Weiwei's. One of the things was that he said that when he looked at the drawing, he felt that Weiwei was saying Chinese people are industry. So he said that posed the question in his mind, which was, what is the industry of Navajo? If you see the Navajo as industry, what is the? And he decided on selecting two things. One was weaving and the other was silver-smithing. So, he created the circle, and in the center, he built a giant pot. I think it was about eight inches—sorry eight feet—tall, which he made from reeds that he had found in the canyon, then wove them into the shape of a pot, then covered it with clay. And he said the reason for that was that people have so many stereotypes about his people, other people, outsiders. He'll meet them, and say, "Oh yes, you're a bunch of drunks; you're a bunch of sick people." You're this; you're that. Whatever they've decided, sometimes with an element of truth, but still, it is sort of is very unkind to constantly be shrunken down to these few things.

So, the pot was filled with all of the stereotypes, and when that began—from the interior, it began to burn. That was the beginning of the performance. That destroyed the stereotypes, and it was very dramatic because the flame just seemed to be shooting out of the middle of the pot and going up into a very dark sky. We were all seated on the edge of a cliff that dropped—there was a sheer drop of about 50 feet, and I'm okay with heights until there are other people around. It's strange. I'm not that phobic about it. It has to do with the behavior of other people around in dangerous situations. Anyway, so we're sitting there, and the sun goes down, and the ground down on the bottom where the artworks are starts turning black. The rock is black, and the two suddenly merge, and you had this feeling that the rock suddenly moved forward. It was very, very strange and kind of wonderful, and all of us who were seated on the edge went scoot, scoot, scoot back a few feet. But it was as magical moment. It was just an illusion of light.

So, then this great pot begins to burn. When it's finished, in the outer perimeter of the circle, there are twigs and pieces of wood laid out, and they make up the patterns that come from weaving and the chalk marks that come from jewelry. So—and so the fire now moves from the inner center and begins to light the wood, and then it travels through, creating a path with fire. And then, each one of them goes to a sort of pyre of wood that are the four compass points because the four directions, as they call it, is a very, very crucial part of their religious belief.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right

GARTH CLARK: So, from the north, comes this; from the south, comes this. From there, comes your intelligence. So it's all tied to that. And so, but the thing is when the pod finally collapsed, inside was a large, metal sculpture of a corn stalk with corn on it, and partly, it was made out of bicycle parts. Particularly, what I thought was really brilliantly done were the ears of corn; to get the feeling of an ear of corn, they wrapped bicycle chains around, and it came close. So that was how Weiwei—not Weiwei—Benally worked out of his own culture, his own religion, and yet, made a point with Weiwei.

It was really interesting for me because, you know, Weiwei's piece was static; it just didn't burn. Didn't collapse, it just sat there. Very beautiful, glowing in the dark, this white shape, but then, seeing as that was the only light, as the light ebbed and flowed, in the beginning, it was this gigantic outpouring of flame, and then it began to work down towards the ground and travel on the ground. The light that was given off by the flame, and it was sort of reflecting against the drawing of Weiwei's, began to change what you saw.

Now, I doubt that Weiwei anticipated this. It was just what happens in performance art. Things arrive. And so the bicycles—because the light was flickering and hitting a part here and a part there—were no longer clearly bicycles. Until, eventually, it looked like a circle of skeleton bones, the bones of a human skeleton. I didn't say anything about that at the time. There were only 30 of us there as witnesses to the event. About a third of them were Navajo, and the rest were Anglos like myself. And I didn't mention it because the Navajo have a very uneasy relationship to death. When somebody dies, they want to bury them, get it out of the way quickly. If they're digging somewhere and they come across human remains or something, that is a horrific moment for them. Now, in a sense, it's a horrific moment for all of us, but really different because, in their religion, if something goes wrong with things related to death, it's not good news. So, I said nothing about it, but there, I

could see a skeleton, circle of human bones, which of course, from a viewer's point of view, made the whole thing kind of fascinating and exciting.

You know, it was about an hour, and I'm sort of missing out on one of the most important parts, which is Benally is a very, very good musician, but in the electronic tradition. You know. Mixing, not so much from single instruments, but using different things. So what he did was he took 20, 30, 40 different tapes of indigenous music and began to blend and play with them. So he'd pick up the rhythm in one, a bit of the melody in another, Navajo as well, but all intermixed into this beautifully ghostly music, which somehow did feel tribal and feral and gentle and natural, and it was extraordinary. And the speakers were buried deep in the canyon, so sitting there, in a very still, beautiful night, there was no—virtually, no breeze, which was—caused some problems in his burning of the circle, but it was like you were in the finest symphony hall in the world. Every note was perfect. And it begins and ends with the volume going down, down, down, down very slowly until there's silence. You could almost hear the last pin drop.

So, that gave the whole night, you know, a total magic. And then, before that, the family who actually owns Coyote Canyon, the clan, did a really wonderful meal for us. Then the family was introduced, and it was very fascinating the way they would introduce each other because they had very complex relationships within a clan, and when they introduce each other, it's sort of like a paragraph. I am so and so, born of this, lived with this, that, and they keep mentioning other clans, other connections, other families, so in this way, the Navajo become a giant family. Everyone is connected one way or another through one of the dimensions of this statement of identity that they come up with. And that was really rather touching and very special to see.

So, it's not all about blood. It was great fun, and Manny, director of the museum, introduced us to the matriarch, and she was, I think, 78 or something. She looked—and I probably shouldn't say this, but she looked 110, just in the way that, you know, the dryness and the heat.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And all the rest, but not in her mind and not in her behavior, and she was very funny. And she said—she told Manny when he said, "You know, I've got this Chinese artist I want to work with, and I want him to bring his art to our land and have this event." And she said, "Okay, you can do it on two conditions. The one is Ai Weiwei does not come and live with us, and the other is that the Chinese don't invade the Navajo nation."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: So, it was very funny, and then, you know, afterwards, we all go down, and Granny—as she was—is known, came with us, and we're going down the hill with big rocks and things. She went flying down there, hopping from rock to rock. You could not believe her agility. I'm sort of tentatively going, so I don't fall and crack my skull, but—so it's, you know—it was a great thing to be involved in. And for me, from a very selfish point of view, was it gave me the perfect final chapter for my book on his ceramics, and something which—because I became the media consultant to them, and I wrote the press releases, and I interviewed Ai Weiwei. We tried to do it by Skype, but then he didn't want to do that, so we did it by email, and I got a wonderful interview out.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, as I said, selfishly, I took a lot back from this, but it was really a very special and unexpected event. I didn't think that I would move to Santa Fe and end up driving three hours away and be one of the few witnesses of an Ai Weiwei performance and, of course Bert Benally, who's a wonderful man. So, that's pretty much the piece. I mentioned earlier that I also wanted to touch on North Carolina.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, and I just think it—I want to pause for just a moment. Just, ceramic-wise, this seems like such an extraordinary full circle to come to, in a way, as well. To come back to the home of ceramics in North America, the southwest here, with that history of pots and clay from the earth and shards, and then to have this piece come over from Ai Weiwei with the porcelain sand, go into the earth, there's just something so extraordinary about spanning millennia and spanning cultures that is—then bringing in performance and bringing in installation and temporary installation and earth work—all of that just—what we were talking about yesterday. Just the diversity of CFile, and it seems like this, to me, embodies so much of what you're focused on these days, international.

GARTH CLARK: Oh, it does; it does. And, you know, it's partly because when I was with the gallery, although a lot of my writing did not have to do with gallery artists, but it still kind of locked me on a certain course, and yes, the moment I closed the gallery, I have sort of just exploded in 50 other directions, which I've always been doing. This is not like it was new, and I just only discovered this.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: I mean, I had been following architecture; I'd been following design. Mark and I collect contemporary photography. We ran the board for the Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane Dance Company, which is one of the most progressive modern dance companies in the world. So, we've never really been one-trick ponies, but in our professional appearance, that's what we were. We were—we had a gallery; we had a stable of artists, and many people just assumed that that was the beginning and the end of our rising. But, you know, what has been remarkable—as I said, I came here for a third act—was now, you know, I know it's a cliché, but the world is really my oyster.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, you have the time now, too.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's, I think, the time to probably explore and develop all those other interests.

GARTH CLARK: And then, also, CFile gives me the mechanisms.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: So, it's really just an amazing time, and most people don't get this. I don't mean, by that, they don't understand it; I mean, they don't have the opportunity. I see so many artists, friends, others, as we were discussing before, throw themselves back into the beginning of their life. And while I've done that to one extent, which is I've sort of gone back to journalism as my primary style of writing I suppose—although it's not pure journalism either; it's really kind of newspaper art critic in a way, which is a form of journalism. It's not the art critic that comes out of a university and writes a 300,000-word thesis on a handle. I can't do that. That would drive me insane. Sometimes, those works are very useful for me because somebody's passed it all through and detailed it, and you take a few nuggets out of it. But, it really has just allowed my horizons just to go crazy.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: So, yeah, I think what happened with Ai Weiwei definitely had a feeling of an epiphany about it. But then, I've had a lot of that in my life because Mark is more cautious than I am, and one day, he will be right and say, "See? I warned you."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: And in some cases, he has been right in smaller things, but I'm very intuitive. So, if I make a friend, I can make a friend who I know I'm going to be in touch with for the rest of my life within an hour. I know. I just have this feeling. And, if I'm required to trust people in situations sometimes, where somebody else would require a signed, notarized contract, that usually goes fine as well.

And, because of that, I've had extraordinary experiences and extraordinary relationships and Mark, too. Mark keeps sort of a weather eye on me to see that I don't go too crazy, but if I really want to do something, he'll say okay and off we go, and we have another adventure. For instance, he was not keep on going to Burning Man.

MIJA RIEDEL: I would love to hear your reflections on that at this point in time because that seems to have been a bit of an epiphany.

GARTH CLARK: Oh, that was, and so, I said, okay, then we'll just go for a few days, so that if it's really terrible, he'll only have to deal with it for a few days. Mark hates camping.

MIJA RIEDEL: This was 2008? 2009?

GARTH CLARK: 2008 I think, and so, he hates camping, and with our two sons, when they were younger, we had some camping experiences, which admittedly, weren't thrilling, but they just decided him forever that this was not something he was going to do. I, on the other hand, have been a hiker and camper for as long as I could remember. When I was 12 years old, I would take my dog on and a pup tent and go off into the African bush and camp on my own. And now, I look back on it and think my parents were terribly irresponsible because I would never had allowed my kids to do that, but you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Different era.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah. So, we went, and because Mark will not travel anywhere where there is not a flush toilet, we took our own. We got an RV and had the most, most amazing time. Nothing could have prepared us for it. We arrived at about three o'clock in the morning, and I thought I knew what it was about. My youngest son, Caleb [ph] had been. Our best friend, John Pagliaro, had been and, or one of our best friends. I don't want to upset anybody. And I'd read about it, and I'd seen photographs, and so I thought, yeah, I understand. I had no idea.

First of all, none of them could explain the scale. When we went there, it was still only close to 50,000 people. It's now 65,000, maybe edging to 70,000, and we drive in, and there's this huge town, 50,000 people, beautifully arranged in a kind of letter C, lights everywhere. I mean, this is not a small carbon footprint. This was big carbon footprint, and lights and towers with lights flashing and music everywhere and 600 illuminated art cars. And the art cars can be anywhere from a tiny, little two-seater, to a vehicle in several parts that is 90 to 120 feet long. Lasers going in every direction, giant plumes of fire. This is at three o'clock in the morning.

And so, we sort of drive towards the center camp because we wanted to sort of find out where to go, and we had to stop while 40 people dressed in full-length, white, fur coats—now, they weren't real fur—it was fake fur, but white, full-length coats, chanting with these long poles with red lanterns at the top. And the lanterns were swaying in unison. And we stopped, and they went by, and somebody rode by on a 20-foot high bicycle. And you couldn't believe it. And that goes on the whole time you're there. You probably, even if you work hard at it, you can't see more than about a third of what is happening. There's just too much. And, so driving back, Mark says, "Let's do the whole week next time." [Laughs.]

We've been back twice since and, but the simplest way that I can describe what happened and, you know, talking about the times I used to go camping on my own, I did one of these trips, and I was near a sort of beach camp that was run by some Baptist or Evangelical church in East London, South Africa, and they had a big youth camp going. So I'm on the outskirts of this, and I thought, "Oh, this is interesting." It's 100 kids, so I go and find out what it's about, and I get involved, and I come back home and I say to my parents, "Oh, it was amazing. I've been born again." My mother's eyeballs rolled because, basically, our family's been atheists since sort of day one, and a week later, of course, I was unborn again, you know. It didn't last very long.

So, I worried about the same thing with Burning Man because when I came back I jokingly say I lost 20 pounds in skepticism.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And they fell off me like reptile scales. And so, you think, oh, that's great. You had this high, and it was wonderful, and then three months later, you're back to the same person. No. I changed during that time and my lesson—I have no problem with individual people, but humanity, en masse, is a mess. It behaves stupidly. There's so little to praise us as a clump of people. And so, I've always lived my life very tribally with a small group of people that I'm close to. So, I expected it would change. It didn't. I saw things about people, human nature—now, admittedly, we are a self-selecting community. If you're some, you know, sexist, racist, this is not a place you want to come to, and if you do, you'll be thrown out.

They do not allow any bigotry, and they don't allow and commerce, which are two wonderful things. When you take money away from people for a week and all you've got left is your charm and whatever you've got to barter, you become a different kind of person. It has never left me and I don't think it ever will. It was just a stunning, stunning human experience.

MIJA RIEDEL: And was there anything in particular about the art aspect of it that was significant?

GARTH CLARK: Oh, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Let's touch on that briefly, and then we can move on to North Carolina and Viola, but I think it's worth pausing here for a moment.

GARTH CLARK: Oh, yeah. The art was—the most important thing, for me, about the art—and it varied. Some of it was mind-blowingly spectacular. Sculptures up to 40, 50 feet high. Some of it was trite. Some of it was ugly. It was the whole spectrum, but there was a lot of it, and everybody was art in a way. They did body painting; they made jewelry; they had costumes; they decorated their vehicles; they decorated their camp. So everything was about creativity, but the difference with this is—I've been in the arts in a professional capacity since I was 25, 26, so it's always been a source of income or as-needed income, so I had to do things to pay for researching a book or doing something like that. And then I lived my life in that world with people who—art historians, who get paid for that, artists who get paid, dealers who get paid. Restorers get paid. Critics get paid. It's a profession. We don't do it for the money, but we get money.

There was a whole bunch of art, which, most of the time, I had no idea who made it, so the authorship wasn't an issue, and I didn't feel impelled to sort of knock on doors and try and find out who made it. The feeling was it was there for you to explore. So it's not there to go on somebody's resume. The person who made it may not be a professional artist. You know, I saw a great piece that was done by an insurance agent, and he just wanted to—he had this idea, and he wanted to do it, and he did it. So, it was the most unfettered creativity I'd ever seen. There was no endgame; there was no agenda, and often it was done by a collaborative of 20 people or 30 people. One case, it was this extraordinary traveling trawler, fishing trawler, and we got on board, and we were chatting to the guys who were running, and we said, "Boy, you've done this really well. You look like professional

fisherman." And they said, "We're from Alaska, and we are professional fisherman. And we thought we could create this fabulous boat that could,sail across the desert."

So, and then another night, we were walking down the street, and somebody steps out of the tent, looks at us, and says, "Have you eaten yet?" And we said, "No." She said, "Well, we've just made supper. Come on in." And that happens all the time. So, of course, the more people do that to you, the more you want to give back to them, and even down to the—you know, you make these friends in your neighborhood. We actually took a campsite that was supposed to be for a woman from New York, who is rated as one of the top dominatrices in America, and her camp offered free floggings. And you could choose whether you wanted the bullwhip or the cat o' nine tails or whatever.

But the rules are that you can't keep space. If you're not there, someone else comes, so we took it. And so, then we tried to make friends afterwards because we felt a little guilty, but we weren't going to move. We had a great site. So, we spent an evening; we brought over some bottles of wine, and strangely enough, what we discovered is that all of us had done software writing in the early '80s.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: Who would have thought that that would have been the discussion that night, you know? So, that is commonplace. That's every day. Everything just puts you in a situation you've never been in before with the great thing that it's not threatening; it's always friendly; it's always kind. And I think, also, you know, we don't collect addresses, telephone numbers, and emails unless you really make an intensely personal contact because the idea is very much, like, it's for then. If you take that away with you, in a way, you're taking baggage with you. You arrive without it; you leave without it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: The only thing you take back with you is all your garbage. And you're in a camp with, you know—last time we went, it was 65,000 people. You will hardly ever see a single piece of litter anywhere. It's called MOOP: materials out of place. And you'll see somebody cycling along and, say, a Coke can falls out of the back of their bag. Immediately, somebody rushes over, grabs it, crushes it, puts it into their garbage can, and takes it away with them.

There are no garbage cans; you have to take everything. Any mess you make has to go back with you, and it works. It just works. Will it survive? I don't know. Now, we said this this time last year, but Mark and I are not planning on going back again. It's beginning to change. The numbers worry us. They just keep growing it, and I think it's going to cause problems at some point, We didn't find, the last time, that there was much of a change, but you could feel a bit of a change. The most terrible thing is these concierge services. So, what you do is you pay $35,000. Somehow, the service gets hold of a ticket, which they probably buy from scalpers. You fly in—because they have their own airport—you fly in. They have built an art car for you because you can't—the rules are that when you drive in, you park, and then you do not move until you leave. If you have a registered art car, then you're allowed to tootle around because that's half the fun, all these—yeah, this is, like, gigantic, you know? Three buses interlinked, you know? So many ships out on the playa; it's just unbelievable. And at night, it's a kaleidoscope of hundreds of these moving around.

Each one has a sound system; some of them have discos built into the top. Just amazing. So they pick you up; you've got your own art car; you've got a chef to make your food and a guide to take you around. That is not Burning Man. Those are lookie-loos, and my feeling is that there's almost nothing in the world that the one percent can't ruin, and now they're starting to move in and ruin this. So, that feeling that you are going to be viewed by them as voyeurs, not as participants, but as voyeurs, is disconcerting. It's not, for the rest of it—you know, the interesting thing is, the first time I went there, was that you, there's nudity. About 25 percent, maybe, round about. The first time you're there, you think, whoa, whoa. [Laughs.]

So three days later, I'm having a chat with somebody and we talk for 10 minutes, and I turn around and walk away, and I think, "Was he clothed?" And I look back, and he wasn't, and it didn't register. It had become unimportant at that point. I found that, as an older man—not ancient but certainly over 60—there was a slight difference in the way that 18-year-olds or 19-year-olds addressed me. Because, usually, there's a little bit of a distance, and you can hear that they are sort of speaking to you because you're ancient in their minds, but that was gone, the sense of age.

You know, all of the things, you know, sex, gender, orientation, all of those things disappeared, and I have a sort of slight fetish about redheads. I think they're the most extraordinary looking people on the planet earth. So, the one trip, if I saw a really attractive redhead, male or female, I would explain to them that I think they're the children of gods and demand a kiss. And straight men, gay men, didn't matter, they were just totally caught up with it, and so, you see, it's—now, can you do that in the real world? To some extent, probably. To the extent of Burning Man, no. But it just, you know, talk about being reborn again; I was reborn as far as humanity was

concerned.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, thanks for that because I could tell, from the earlier interview, that that had been especially significant in specific with the way you looked at art, but in general, and I think it's nice to have a little bit more insight to that.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: North Carolina.

GARTH CLARK: North Carolina. I get this email from somebody by the name of Matt Jones, and it is insulting and, you know, I'm self-opinionated. I'm a critic, but if I wasn't, I'd be a pretty bad critic. But you know, patronizing this, that, the other and—

MIJA RIEDEL: Was this in relation to the lecture, *Envy Killed the Crafts*? [*How Envy Killed the Crafts Movement*]

GARTH CLARK: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: What had happened is, prior to that, I got an email from somebody by the name of Alex Matisse, and so he friended me, and I thought this is an unusual name, but I friend him back. And he calls his girlfriend, and he said, "Oh my God."—He's a potter—He said, "Oh my God, I friended Garth Clark by mistake, and he's accepted."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: "What should I do?" His girlfriend said, "Talk to him." Anyway, so I began asking him about his background, and yes, it is Henri Matisse, his great, great grandson or whatever. But not only that, the other strain in the family is Duchamp. Can you imagine, you know? You're a young man; you want to be in the arts, and you've got Duchamp and Matisse in your family. I mean, it's almost like, you know, give up, and become a mechanic.

So he was very smart. He went into traditional pottery. So there was no—now, he's not going to stay a traditional potter. He will probably keep making it, but he has got an extraordinary intellect, and his nature is to search, so eventually, it'll change. But it gave him a platform where there was no basis for comparison.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: It was his own territory. So he spoke to Matt and said, "You know, there's this Garth Clark guy, and there's this book of his, *Shards* [*Shards: Garth Clark on Ceramic Art*], that you should read." So, Matt went trolling around and found the podcast of my lecture, and that's a very important part of this as you will see—and was absolutely livid and then sent me this ferociously [laughs] angry email and several after that.

Now, I've spent my life being attacked because, when I first came into this field, there really wasn't a thing called a critic. There were people who write, wrote about ceramics, but in a very partisan, supportive manner, because the field was very collegiate, and it's a very nice part of it, but it also means that when you make the worst thing you've ever made in your whole life, your friend's are not going to tell you. And if you get a review, they'll ignore that piece, and they'll write about the pieces that are good. So, when I arrived a lot of the ceramic people, Peter Voulkos, Richard Shaw, a bunch of others expected me to be their PR agent, and they were absolutely shocked when it turned out that, you know?

For instance, the first trip I came to the States, I deliberately did not meet Voulkos, and I deliberately did not meet Arneson because I worked out that they were the two most important figures in the game and that, if I got caught up in their personality before I got caught up in their work, it would corrupt my feelings. And I knew that they were both very charismatic men. So, with Pete, it was a problem because Pete liked hangers-on, and he liked hero worship and stuff. Wonderful guy, by the way. I'm not putting him down; he just was—there were certain things about him which were difficult. He wasn't trustworthy. He could be very friendly with you today and then bite you in the back the day after.

Not so much from his own volition, but he has this groupie crowd, and they would push him to do this. Like, why don't you do this? Oh, that's a great idea; why don't you just burn holes in his bunk? [ph] That's really a great idea. So, Pete would get nudged by them to do all kinds of really kind of foolish things. The real Pete Voulkos is a deeply poetic man who didn't allow the world to see that side of him. He got into that sort of beatnik, Abstract Expressionist, gorilla act that he would get into, and that's what people saw. A much deeper, more complex man than that. Arneson, on the other hand, being who he is, loved that I was this pain in the ass. And so, we got on incredibly well, and he would disagree with me ferociously, and I would disagree with him ferociously, and he

liked that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: So, in some of the cases, it was really good news; in some of the cases, it was bad news. But the bottom of all of that is I came in for an incredible amount of criticism. It was perpetual. It was often vindictive. It was often very personal, and I would get a review of a book—a book I had just done—and the review would say, "I don't like Garth Clark; therefore, I don't like his book." It would not review the book.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: They wouldn't say, it's badly written; the history is poor. It was the mere fact that I had written it meant that they were going to dislike it. And that was a certain generation, and as I got older and the field got older, that began to drift away because the younger generation was in no way threatened by me. The older generation was, because they had their little world in place, and most of it was run through universities and workshops and things, had very little to do with going out into the world and selling your work, being in the art market, being on major museum shows. I began to point that out and began to rock the boat. And I'm sure, at some stage, I was an insufferable prig, but anyway—

[Laughs.]

So, when Matt contacted me, I probably should have had a different response. I should have been, how dare he? You know. Get angry. Send back a very tart reply. But what I saw was, when you go out and you're walking down the street, and a dog you don't know comes running down the hill barking at you, but its tail is wagging. So, it's putting up the aggression, but it really wants to play, and in essence, that was the case with Matt. Matt had reached a stage where he was really beginning to rethink some of the values as a potter, some of the aesthetic, some of the status quo dogma that everybody accepted. He was in a vulnerable position as he was beginning to shift these things. Of course, the more we write backwards and forwards, the more we were enjoying the experience because neither of us is being vindictive, but we certainly are throwing punches.

So, then, he said to me, "Well, why don't we just take this public? Why don't we have a blog? And our correspondence can go in the blog, and then everybody else can come in." I did that, and the blog caused some consternation. One of his friends said, "You've taken on Garth Clark? You must be insane." I was raised in the rough school of English debate, and the purpose of it is to win. You're not there just to exercise your brain. You're there to demolish the inferior concept of your opponent.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So we started to do this. With that, we become closer and closer. Matt is an absolutely wonderful person. So then, I said, "Okay, well, you keep telling me North Carolina thinks this about me, and North Carolina thinks that about me." I said, "I'll come to North Carolina for a week and do a lecture tour, and we can have meetings with the North Carolina potters and see what happens."

So, he took it on. He worked with the Mint Museum in Charlotte, the university in Raleigh and an arts organization in Asheville. Working with him was Mark Hewitt, and Mark Hewitt is an apprentice of Michael Cardew's. And Michael Cardew was my first true mentor in this field and my first—my second book was a portrait of Michael Cardew. So, Mark and I had spent very little time together, but we had a sort of closeness because we both—we were sort of at the same age when Michael had a very big impact in our lives.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: And we both survived [laughs]. So, Alex assisted with this as well, and I remember when we fly to Charlotte, and we meet face to face for the first time, and you could see that both Alex and Matt were, like, not sure, you know. Because you know how reputations develop, and yes, I'm very tough when I write, but I'm a very different person socially. But half an hour later, we were laughing and joking. Everything was fine. And then, we drove through—stopping off at these points, visited incredible potteries together, debated, and talked the whole time in the car.

Then, I made another very special friend; that's Daniel Johnston. And Daniel Johnston is a sort of traditional potter with some differences. He makes giant pots, but he makes giant pots not according to the tradition of North Carolina, but according to the tradition of making those pieces in Indonesia. Louise Cort, who is one of the greatest scholars in ceramics, she's a curator at the Sackler/Freer, part of the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., who he's been friends with since he was 18. And the moment I heard that, I thought, you don't make friends with Louise Cort easily. This is an extraordinary person, and it immediately gave me that shorthand to take him really seriously, which I would have done anyway, but the shorthand helped.

And so, she—so he said, "Okay, well after the conference today, tomorrow are you coming for lunch?" He lives in Seagrove, which is one of those giant pottery communities there. And we drive up the hill; we get to the top of the hill. Here is an old North Carolina house made out of logs and rock. A big lawn in front of the house, beautiful trees around it. Nobody inside and about a 20—or 30-foot-long table covered in the most incredible wildflowers and handmade pottery, and this was where we were all going to gather for lunch. It was the most extraordinary welcome you could ever get. Then it turns out that he makes the best brisket in the whole of North Carolina, so that was another step forward. And that was—the trip kept going like that. And I think it was a surprise to all of us.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: I mean, I expected to come in; I expected to get on reasonably well with people. I expected to like the pots. It's not that I didn't know them. I'd seen them; I'd just not spent a lot of time with the potters per say. And so, I didn't expect it to be a bad experience, but I didn't expect it to be an overwhelming experience where the, sort of, the moment people realized that I wasn't—that I didn't have horns, or if I did, that I'd put them away for the trip, everything changed.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And they just began to speak openly, and because my concern—one of my great concerns and part of CFile's great concerns is continuity. How do people stay in business? And they all kept arguing, in the beginning, that everything was fine, and everything I said about it being difficult for studio potters to make a living wasn't true, and they were doing well, and you know. And then, the more you talk, the more they began to confess that they're doing okay, but they're not doing as well, and they're worried because the trajectory is not up. The trajectory is down, and when they discovered that that was a key concern of mine everything just evaporated. And then we love pots. I don't care if it's a traditional pot with treacle glazes on it or whatever. Good pot, it's great.

And then, I had this marvelous experience because most of the world I live in is 50 percent conceptual. So somebody pours a bottle of ceramic material on the ground in the middle of a vast space, and then it has some deep, significant meaning that is supposed to impress you. And then, you have to get into this whole debate, whether it really does it or not, and whether the fact that he is supported by the writings of Freud and Foucault makes it any more interesting than it is, which is not very. And so, one's constantly wrestling with this sort of gap between the power of the object and the power of the conceptual reason for making the object.

My belief has always been that the two have to find a happy place together. You can't look at a dull object, read a 50-page thesis, and say, all right, because of the thesis, it upgrades the boringness of the object. No, they have to—there has to be a chemistry. Sparks have to fly in both directions, or else it doesn't work. So, I had the pleasure of going through North Carolina for a week without having to discuss irony.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: It was, "Look at the handle; look at the room. Look at the balance," you know, "look at how this lifts." Or else, that didn't lift very well; it's a bit dumpy. And they would say, "Yeah, it wasn't a good day throwing," or whatever. But it was all about the sensuality of the process and the material, so that was just wonderful. And then, I left with these great friends. Now, I've gone back to being the writer-in-residence of the Penland School of Crafts.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: I'm going back again for a conference in October, and several of the guys we became friends with have already visited and spent time with us.

MIJA RIEDEL: Extraordinary.

GARTH CLARK: They're coming out for an exhibition at the Folk Art Museum in two groups: one half of the friends in one group, the other half in the other. Not our doing, this was done by the Folk Art Museum, and so, you know, it's, again, as I say, I'm open, and then when something happens, I just throw myself into it fully. Mark had the most extraordinary time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: He came with and was a participant in one of the events, so—

MIJA RIEDEL: And where was this exactly in North Carolina? What was the trajectory? What—where did you go?

GARTH CLARK: We started off at the Mint in Charlotte, and then we drove from the Mint through Seagrove to

Raleigh. And then, in Raleigh, we were at the major university there. And then, we drove from Raleigh to Asheville.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

Garth Clarke: Stopping off en route at people's potteries, and then we stayed—I can't even remember the town—where Mark Hewitt works in a beautiful guest house. Not his, but one in town, and then drove from there to Asheville. And then, you know, we also spent some time; we stayed with Matt Jones and fell in love with his wife. He's got a son and a daughter who are just both extraordinary. He has one of the most wonderful dogs in the whole world. The dog's name is Jack, and that dog could have Mark and I just about crying with laughter.

This dog had a sense of humor, and he knew he was doing it, so we warned Matt that, if one day Jack disappears, he'll have to take a flight to Santa Fe, and he'll find him here. We also had fun with their goats. They've got four or five goats, which are pets. And then, you spend time in the studio, and you look at the pots, and you discuss things and, you know, a lot of ceramists are starved for that kind of conversation.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely.

GARTH CLARK: Because everybody wants to discuss their kiln.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Right.

GARTH CLARK: And cone numbers and, you know, clay recipes and glaze recipes and what went wrong with the wheel, but they don't want to get into the metaphysics of it very much, so.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Or into the critical things, you know? And, you know, I'm bad mannered enough—

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—to be a guest in somebody's home and still point out that the neck of their pottery's weak, you know, and most of the time, that is very well received.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And often, they'll say, "Yeah, I've been working on that, you know." Occasionally, you hit those artists who believe that they are God, and any criticism will—means that you will never be friends with them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: So that's the risk you take, but it's my profession, and I do it, and generally, I find that the artists who are not prepared to get into a critical dialogue with their work, sort of are not worth bothering about anyway. I don't just rush into the house and start pointing and say, "Ugly pot. Ugly pot."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: It's that you arrive at that jointly through the conversation. Very often, they'll say, "Well, what do you think about?"

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And then you tell them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And particularly, if you're a friend, you should tell them exactly what you think because the chances of them getting that from most of their friends is zero.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Because nobody wants to take that risk of upsetting somebody—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —because I've found that artists are more offended by criticism of their work than they—say, their personality. You can say, "You're a total jerk," and they'll laugh it off, and then, you say their pots are ugly, that's the end of it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

GARTH CLARK: Because everything about them is invested in that object. It's all their values. And some jerks are great artists. I'm not going to list them on tape, but there are some who are some of the most monstrous, horrible people in the world. Their art is wonderful. It's really sort of silly to think that there should be a—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —you know, as Pauline Kael, who was the film critic for *New Yorker* said, "Art is amoral."

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Right.

GARTH CLARK: And the idea that there is good morality in art is totally naïve. It's got nothing to do with that. It's got to do with creative energy.

MIJA RIEDEL: Were you up in the hills around Penland as well, or more down in the flats closer to Asheville?

GARTH CLARK: Oh, no. I was up at Penland School—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: —which was up in the hills.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And what I did on this dirt trip is I gave a lecture in Asheville and then went and spent two weeks in—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, okay, so those two were connected—

GARTH CLARK: —Penland—

MIJA RIEDEL: —the trip and the lecture.

GARTH CLARK: —and so I gave another lecture there and I sort of made myself available in the ceramics studios and things, so—and that was a wonderful experience—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: It's an extraordinary area.

GARTH CLARK: I came away with a few more friends from that, and that wonderful man who did that book, not *Finding Your Way with Clay* [*Finding Your Way with Clay: Pinched Pottery and the Color of Clay*]. That was N.C. Richards.

MIJA RIEDEL: Paulus Berensohn?

GARTH CLARK: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

GARTH CLARK: We met for the first time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And it's been a very complicated thing because, over the years, we've had friends who were friends with his, and they always were very—seemed very nervous about the idea of me ever meeting him. As though this wasn't going to go well, and if I did meet him, I'd have to be very careful in the circumstances. I was in love with—in like, 10 heartbeats. This man is extraordinary.

MIJA RIEDEL: He was a dancer before he was an artist.

GARTH CLARK: Exactly.

MIJA RIEDEL: Remember, that book was exquisite. I can't remember the name right now either, but we'll get it.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah, and, you know, he was with Martha Graham and those sort of things. He was with—oh,

[Merce] Cunningham.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And so what made our encounter so wonderful is—I said to you there was a book I've not done, and the book is about that group of people—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —in—and about a third of the book is about the founding of the dance movement with Lincoln Kirstein who founded New York City Ballet and brought [George] Balanchine out, and then, of course, Jerome Robbins, and Martha and the whole gang and, you know, and when I research, I research deep.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So we were sitting, talking about people who've died in the late '50s as though they were our friends. So he had the most wonderful time because how often does he come across somebody of my age with, you know, a pretty deep knowledge—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —of a period, which is now two generations gone?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: So that turned out to be really, really great.

MIJA RIEDEL: *Finding One's Way with Clay*.

GARTH CLARK: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: I think that's it.

GARTH CLARK: Yes, that's it, and it's just sort of combination of Zen and hand building.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, the trip to North Carolina caused such a stir that eventually, and this happened about three months ago, the Mint decided to have a little conference on what had happened as a result of this. I wasn't there for that. It was mainly Matt Jones talking about it, and I think there were a couple of other people, too. So that was funny, but the first time, it was a daylong symposium, and I was the key speaker, but then Mark Hewitt, Matt and a few others spoke as well, and Mark Hewitt has got a wicked sense of wit. He said, "What we have here today is something similar to this bird. And this bird, what it does is, crocodiles sit there with their mouths open, and the bird goes and picks out—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —the meat from between their teeth." He said, "It's a really good arrangement because the bird gets food and the crocodile gets its teeth cleaned."

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: He said, "So what you have to understand is that what has happened here is that Matt Jones flew into Garth Clark's mouth."

[Laughs.]

Oh, it took me about 15 minutes to stop laughing. It was such a funny thing, but, everywhere, there was this wonderful sense of concern, and so, I'm going to be going back there, probably, it seems, quite a bit. Once you've got a group of friends, I mean, one friend is enough, but when you've got five or six people, Andrew Glasgow, who I've known for a long time, of course, was sort of part of that in a way.

[Dogs barking.]

MIJA RIEDEL: [Side conversation.] I think the dogs are going.

GARTH CLARK: That's very strange.

MIJA RIEDEL: Shall we pause for a moment?

GARTH CLARK: Yeah, let me just check and see.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

[Audio break.]

GARTH CLARK: So, I think two things that have helped me. The one is that I'm eclectic, and so yes, I can get off on a traditional storage show in North Carolina and Ai Weiwei at the same time. When I was at the Royal College getting my degree, my much hated professor of what they call "general studies," which was really art theory and history, had a sort of disagreement at one point because he said, "Well, what is your favorite work?" And I said, "I like highly decorative work, and I like pure Minimalism." He said, "You can't do that." And I said, "Why?" He said, "Well, they're each other's natural enemy. You've got to choose," and I said, "No, I do not have to choose. I mean, maybe you have to choose if that's the way you deal with art, but my feeling is that I can like it all if it fits within my taste in a certain aesthetic achievement." So, that was the first time I sort of really encountered the fact that often in our world, we get herded into camps, and often, there's a certain antagonism between A and B. The other thing is that I—my parents were really, really successful in timing my birth.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Okay.

GARTH CLARK: So, when I started working, I was able to be in touch with some studio potters who were born in the 19th century, and now, I am working with artists who started their careers in the 21st century, so—and that's the whole span. I mean, before that, then you get into industrial pottery and things, but the ceramic art movement, late 19th century and up to now. So, I think that was, you know, if I was older or younger, I would have missed one end or the other.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So that has worked very well. Viola—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, let's move on to Viola. So, how did you first—how and when did you first meet Viola?

GARTH CLARK: I was on a lecture tour, and at one of my stops—because the American Crafts Council sent me on a lecture tour—

MIJA RIEDEL: This would have been mid-70s, late '70s?

GARTH CLARK: Yeah, '74, '75.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: And it was—we jokingly now refer to it as the forced march. They were very good. Again, I'm a student at the Royal College, but I'm the only person working on the history of modern ceramics. So, it gave me a certain cachet. They scheduled me for three months non-stop, two to three universities, or art schools, or museums for three months. Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, all over the country, which was wonderful.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I met everybody. So when I got to San Francisco, there was this guy who worked with her, and my hard drive, which is Mark, isn't here at the moment. So his name will occur to me [Art Nelson].

MIJA RIEDEL: Either Sam Perry or Neil Williams, maybe?

GARTH CLARK: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, Kevin, maybe? Kevin Anderson, no.

GARTH CLARK: No, before that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: They ran the ceramic department together.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, oh. Oh, Vernon Quakendale [ph]? Charles Fiske? No, he was—

GARTH CLARK: A younger guy.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: But his name will come back to me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: So, I go and I lecture at the school, and Viola wasn't there, but that evening, he said to me, "Well, tonight we're going to go to Viola's, and we're going to have a meal with her, and you're going to meet one of the great geniuses of our time." And maybe he shouldn't have said that [Laughs.]. And we go over, and she's there, and crazy Charles is there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Brilliant man, in some ways, but you know, a—an emotional cluster bomb.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Just going off all the time, doing absolutely crazy things. He was very lucky. Somebody like that could have ended up incarcerated, and Viola just took him up, took care of him, went through incredible things with him, including being thrown into a closet, locked in the closet. This was her house in San Francisco before she moved, and then he went running across the room, threw himself through the window of the top floor, and this is so Viola, so she's in this closet, and she feels all around. She finds a screwdriver, so she unscrews the hinges on the door, and she gets out. She gets out. She looks down. There he is in the garden, spurting blood all over the place, running around screaming.

So, she called the police, and she called the ambulance. And when they got to the hospital, and this is the touching part for me. He was a gay man. There was not a relationship between them. Well, not a sexual relationship, and they get to the hospital, and the woman at the desk says to her, "What is this man's relationship to you?" And she says, "He's my mate." Now, you know how Charles got into her life.

MIJA RIEDEL: He was her professor, yes?

GARTH CLARK: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: No?

GARTH CLARK: Her professor of ceramics was Charles' lover.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, I think that's Vernon.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: No, I've heard—so, yeah, let's hear this from your perspective because many different people have told it many different ways.

GARTH CLARK: I'm sure they do. I feel pretty sure about this because I've discussed it with Viola, and I've discussed it with her friend, and I can see his face. I can see his art; I just can't remember his name. And we became fairly close friends with him as well.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, he was her professor's lover.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Then, as later, you know, really sort of nuts, and eventually, they—he threw him out of the house.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: And Viola had just bought a new house, and he realized that Charles was living on the street, and he asked Viola if she would let him stay in the basement. He said, "You know, you don't have take care of him, feed him, or anything. Just so at night, he's safe, and he can sleep there." Well, then it just evolved into a much more complex relationship. And that's the story that I've been told.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And pretty much, what Viola said, and pretty much what her friend said, and also, some other people, but it doesn't mean I got the right story. I just got the most repeated one.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And even with Viola, you couldn't be sure because Viola's the one I learnt from not to trust an artist's telling of a moment of history because they're creative people.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, they don't tell you the facts.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: They tell you their perception.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And amongst a few times I've got into trouble for having inaccurate material, it came from Viola.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

GARTH CLARK: And she wasn't a liar.

MIJA RIEDEL: No.

GARTH CLARK: It's just that in her mind—because Viola just lived art every single breathing second. We once took her to visit some friends of ours who were not in the art world and perfectly nice people. When we left, she said, "Don't ever do that again." She said, "Life is too short to spend time with people who are not intimately involved in art." So, what we did was the next time, we took her—we took her to a gay, leather disco. That was fun, and Viola has this way of attracting people—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —and there she's standing in her ugly, Spanish, cowboy boots, which are really unattractive looking things, splattered with clay. And she's got one of her denim tents on, and all these beautiful, gay boys were just all around her. We—when Margie Hughto and I curated *A Century of Ceramics in the United States*, and the show reached the Renwick in Washington, Mrs. Mondale gave a party for us.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And invited at the vice president's manor—mansion—and invited all kinds of people, senators and, you know, people involved in the arts and stuff, and it was very dressy.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Everybody had their jewelry on and their most expensive cocktail dress, and there she was with her ugly cowboy boots and her denim tent, and her hair pulled back, you know. And again, there were more people clustered around her than anybody else at the event. She's sort of plain, salt of the earth, and very smart. And it's sort of—something about her is just magnetic for people. And not always easy to understand because Viola would sometimes speak in fragmented sentences. So she would begin a sentence, start a new sentence, close off the next sentence, open a new one. Stop in the middle of that, but it—I found it very easy, after a while, to see what was happening. So you just—without thinking about it, even. After a while, you just connect the broken parts, and she made perfect sense, and she was—

MIJA RIEDEL: Sounds just like her work.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah. Isn't it?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Interesting. And super smart without being pretentious or in any way academic. She was just like so—I don't want to say clever because clever always sounds as though it's shallow, but she was, but partly because she had this laser beam and was focused on her art. However, she did have other things, which was surprising, and I stayed with her for a while—

MIJA RIEDEL: At her place?

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Or her house? In San Francisco or Oakland?

GARTH CLARK: In Oakland, and I don't recall why. I was probably lecturing at the school or something. But I was on the grape diet and—which made her very happy because she doesn't and really can't cook. And Charles, who's a fantastic cook, wasn't there. And so, two things came out of that. The one is, I wandered into her room one day looking for her. I wasn't snooping, but having walked in, next to her bed table was a whole pile of—in England, we call them "penny horribles." It's very cheap literature, sort of the kind of book that you would buy at the supermarket. And they were romance stories. Really low-grade—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —romance novellas, which just amazed me, you know. But then, when she wasn't reading that, she was reading art theory—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —or color theory, or all kinds of other things. And then, finally, my diet was over, and the last time I was there, she—last night I was there, she made a meal, and it was like—she made a salad, and I can't remember whether it was ham or whatever it was, but she sort of took a big knife, and she just hit everything like five times, so the lettuce was still like half a lettuce, and just threw it into a bowl and poured dressing on top, and that was it. But I really loved her, and I mean that in a real sense. It's not just like she was fun or something.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I adored her, and, happily, we never had a falling out, but towards the end, we were just not that close, you know, but that happens—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —you know, but it was no feeling of dissatisfaction with her, and every time she came to New York, almost every time she came to New York, we would have dinner together.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: With Mark as well, and in fact, this story's a little complicated, but when Mark first turned up in my life, and she met him, she really, seriously said to him—said to me, "You know, you should drop him because he's going to take up too much of your time"—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: —"and you won't be able to devote it all to art, so get rid of him." [Laughs.] So, anyway, so I go over. It's driving me crazy, and he takes me over to Viola's place, which, at that stage, was fascinating because Viola had just been—had just received an inheritance from an aunt, or an uncle, or some relative, but I think it was an aunt. Might even have been her grandmother, but what she did, which was so smart, was she took that money, and she stopped selling her work for five years.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, right, so this would have been around 1980, or so?

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Right.

GARTH CLARK: Actually, it was a little earlier. I probably met her in '78, '79—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: —and so, which I thought was so brilliant—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —because her work is so complicated, and she said, "I—you know, I make work; I sell successfully, so I make it; it's gone. I make it; it's gone." She said, "I wanted to be with my work a number of years, and I didn't want to deal with pressures coming from dealing, selling, expectations of collectors, that kind of thing." And I looked at this mess of stuff, and I looked at these sloppy glazes and these strange things all stuck together, and we went back, and I said to him, "I have to disagree with you. I think she's just incoherent. Can't stand the work." And then I got smarter. First of all, remember, I've come from England, and my experience of ceramic art in England was much more conservative than in the United States.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And I had a sort of tendency to want work to be well made. Well, her stuff is wonderfully well made, but it doesn't look well made.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: You know, it doesn't wear that badge that says, "I'm very refined."

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: But it didn't take me too long to work out that, yes, indeed, she was absolutely brilliant.

MIJA RIEDEL: How did that shift happen for you? Were there particular pieces that did that? Was your own education and exposure? How did that shift in your mind happen?

GARTH CLARK: The shift happened because I so enjoyed her. So, every time I went back to San Francisco, and often, I would stay at the house, and then when Mark and I got together, we would stay there, too, at the house of her colleague [Art Nelson] at school who was also a ceramist and a very, very good one, in the technical sense.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, yeah, did he pass away?

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Very young, yes. I can—

GARTH CLARK: He dies of AIDS, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, I—Shaner? No.

GARTH CLARK: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: It'll come.

GARTH CLARK: It'll come.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And so, I'd go back, and I would see him. I'd look at the work, and then I'd—it happened in degrees, like, "Well, I like that body of work. That was really smart," but then, also, as Viola starts talking—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —and you begin to understand what this journey is for her, you do the right thing, which is you shift out of your aesthetics into her aesthetics.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: You start listening to her because you're not—your role is not there to come in as a writer to the arts, sort of imprint your feelings about art on that artist. You can't deny them; they're there, but each artist is an experience to grow, and, of course, the moment you begin to speak to Viola, you get this tremendous sense of intelligence, authenticity, and an incredible sense of eyes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Because, coming from somebody else, it would be like, university professor who decided to become an artist, and he's brilliant, and he can talk it, but he can't make it. There was nothing of that about her.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And then, she shares this little perception about this, or this joke about somebody's work, and you realize she's seeing it right on. So, it became a very special friendship and, again you—I'm much more careful now, but when you're younger and your friends get older, and they're older than you anyway, it's very sad that you will sometimes slip away.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I have to say there was one problem with Viola in the later years, and that is that I think her work went down.

MIJA RIEDEL: How so? When did that start?

GARTH CLARK: It started when she started doing the very big figures. Not the grandmothers in the beginning, but they got bigger and bigger.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And Viola herself said to me once, on a visit to her new studio in—was it in Oakland?

MIJA RIEDEL: Oakland.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah, by which stage, she was well into production of those big pieces. She'd say, "You know, I'm not an artist anymore. I'm an engineer." She said, "Most of the time my job is to worry about how they fit together. Will they stand up right? Will they fall over?" And I don't know if she really knew what she was saying at the time, and in some ways, I wouldn't be surprised if Viola knew that she'd made a deal and that she enjoyed making the money, and that she was prepared to go along on this trip. Maybe she thought, at some point, she would come off the trip, and then go back to something else, but in the meanwhile she'd sort of, you know, do it. But the man who, eventually, will not be nameless, said to me, "God, Viola's doing so well." He said, "I wasn't snooping, but she opened her checkbook to write a check for $5, and the balance was $180,000 in her checkbook." So she started to make a lot of money, and I'm sure that if you take all of her larger figures and you reduce it, you will get a group that are good.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: But to me, what went wrong, the scale got too big. The figures became impersonal, and most of all, they lost human gesture because, at that size, they were these frozen things. Now, some of the smaller pieces with that frozen feeling still worked because you could address them at your body scale. When they're twice your height and they are rigid, a lot of the magic that happened in her earlier work began to disappear. I thought the painting got very coarse, and as I say, the figures lost the figural identity. Now, the thing is with abstract art, people make lumps. It's a bit of a sort of open game as to whether it's a good lump or a bad lump because we don't have set rules for lumps, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Noguchi got most of his lumps right. Jun Kaneko gets them all wrong. But a figure is different. You know, a figure does not have to be realistic. It can be five sticks thrown together, but if you don't sense a human figure within the human figure, it's not figurative art. And it can be in the most bizarre way and the most unlikely thing. And that began to leave her work, as it is—for me. I'm sure that just about everybody else will disagree and say the big figures were a great achievement.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Some of them were great, but they got worse and worse, in my mind, the longer she made them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Now, are you thinking primarily of the vertical figures, or the reclining ones? What about when the pieces began to—she began to cluster the pieces and then also the reclining figures?

GARTH CLARK: The reclining figures, generally, I find nicer, and we were just in Madison for the opening of the Hootkin ceramic collection show, and they have one of those big worlds, the globe, with a figure kneeling in front of it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: But here's the fascinating story she told me about the reclining figures. This is early on in our friendship, and all she's making are tall, straight figures.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And I said, "Why don't your figures recline?" She said, "Because I'm not famous enough yet." And I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "Oh, it's very simple," she said, "It's about real estate." She said, "A tall figure of mine can be eight feet, but it—the footprint is 24 inches. So, you're occupying 24 inches of somebody's floor. That's fine. Now, you make a reclining figure, and it's going to take up 10 feet of somebody's floor."

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: "They're not going to give you that space until you're a very important artist." Isn't that fascinating?

MIJA RIEDEL: It is fascinating.

GARTH CLARK: And that's where Viola—that was part of the brilliance. I mean, she saw the whole picture.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: She saw what celebrity was about. She saw what the market was. She saw how it worked, and you know, I pass that on to students, and they just get angry and say, "Oh, that's terrible. That's restricting all of your creative freedom." And I said, "Yeah, big deal." So you make a 10-foot long, reclining figure. By the time you shipped it, the shipping costs what you can get it in the market. You have lost all the money, and when that piece comes back, you are now that amount in debt. I said, "So, fine, if you've got lots of money, and you can spend it that way, do whatever the hell you want, but you can wait a few years before you start doing that. You've got a career to think of." Well, they don't like that because, in school, career issues are never addressed.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: It's just like you're going to become the next giant art superstar and do whatever you want, and it's really a very cruel thing that they do to students. They come out, and then suddenly they get pistol whipped by the marketplace. Most of them drop out of the field. They should have a little sense of what they're walking into. But that was the genius of Viola.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: It didn't affect her as an artist. She didn't put red glaze on because she thought red glaze was going to sell better than something else, but she had a career, and she wanted that career to work, and so she wasn't going to do stupid things when she knew that, at that stage, that was a stupid move.

MIJA RIEDEL: It sounds as if that—we were talking yesterday about single media work. It sounds as if she—she was also very clear on the fact that she wanted to do paintings and drawings and figures and plates.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah. And the plates were wonderful. I said to her once, "Viola, your plates are ridiculously cheap." She said, "Yes. Deliberately so." And I said, "Why?" She said, "My plates are sketches." She said, "And if I think that sketch is going to get $18,000 in a gallery, I'm going to become inhibited." $4,500 for a plate, who cares? One way or another, Viola will sell it. She said, "So, because they don't have great value, or because of their price, great expectation, I can make good plates and bad plates. I'm not inhibited." Again, she was —she just had this kind of down to earth brilliance about it. And the more I look back now, the more impressed I am by how, you know. She was a farmer's daughter. Feet were on the ground.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And in fact, she said that's why she made the big pieces. Now, of course, it doesn't mean it is. It's just what she said. She said, "You know, when I was growing up, even when I was a grown adult, I grew up in vineyards. The vineyards were always taller than me. So maybe my figures are the way that I look over the vineyards."

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Again and again, she would come back to things like that, which I've learned, through all my time with the artists, are the most honest things about artists. When they try and sell you, you know, a treatise by Foucault, you know you're on very shaky ground. For instance, we worked with Sir Anthony Caro, who was wonderful in that regard, too. He had these sculptures, which sit on tables, and then they drop over the edge of the table, and they're made out of metal.

And when you read about them, it's this unbelievable treatise about disorientation, accidents of gravity, this, that, the other, a combat between vertical and horizontal, and they just go on and on. And I said to him, "How did those come about?" He said, "I was walking in the studio with a slab of clay in my hands. I tripped. The slab of clay went flying. Half of it hit the side of the table; the other half drooped out the other side. And I thought, 'Sculpturally, that's very interesting.'" So I think, more often than not, that's how things happen. And this is something I point out to students, again, as I said, "You can take up—off six months. Go to a lake and sit there for six months and examine your belly button, and think about things. You may come up with an epiphany. You're more likely to do it while you're working."

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Most artists, it—they slip; something goes wrong, or something goes right, but it happens during action, not in concept.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And, of course, the way they are taught in schools now is actually the opposite.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Right, right.

GARTH CLARK: You know, get a pad and paper, write a complete treatise on the history of microbes, and then you will find a way to make art out of that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So—

MIJA RIEDEL: There's something about the process, discovery in the process that I've heard many people say that, but you're right. That's not something you hear about as much these days.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah. And then, Viola had a wonderful sense of humor. And one night, we were at an Indian restaurant in New York that's right next to the gallery that we loved going to, and the food was just incredible. And she, Mark, and I came up with this concept for an exhibition.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I won't mention the names of the people, but I still remember them, and we were sort of commenting on the fact that some of the most successful people in our field made the ugliest, most boring work ever in the history of ceramics. And we came up with a list that we both agreed with instantly, and then we decided that, in order to make the point, you would be in a situation where, when you enter this exhibition, you can't return. You've got to go through to the very end. Then it's this sort of one-way street, and there are 50 pieces for each artist.

So that the true gruesomeness of what they do, by the time you stagger from one artist into the other, you are just horrified with how bad the work is. And so, we would have lots of fun, you know. She and Mark eventually got to be very pal-y and liked each other a great deal, and then, of course, it was perfect because Mark joined me in my career, so that didn't take me away from my career. I had another asset. So, a lot of things about her were just wonderful. I—you know, looking back, I don't remember a bad moment with her.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: You know, moments when we would disagree and stuff, but there were never, you know, you didn't storm out angry. She was—in her plain manner, always very gracious.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And—but again, with the sense of humor—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —and we both had a very, shall we say, satiric view of the ceramic world—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —and so we found so many things about the field absolutely hilarious.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And so, when we got together, it was—if you'll excuse the term, a real bitchfest.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: But she was not disrespectful of people with talent.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: But she was of the people that had none and still managed to claw themselves into a position of importance.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Very often because they were teachers, and they ran an institution or something like that. But all—the whole time, actually, it was just because she was so real.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] This may be too much of a stretch, but I know that among her many influences was Lucio Fontana, and I wonder if, in the course of writing the book that you did about him, if you gained any additional insight into her work.

GARTH CLARK: You know, it's interesting that you mention that because I've sort of forgotten about that. Now, yes, we talked about it, and I said to her, I had a Lucio Fontana epiphany in the library at the Royal College. I had found this book. What I would do when I was researching is just, like, go to the ceramic section, take 10 books, and just page through them. Sometimes, you would go through 20 books and not see a single thing, and then, suddenly, wow. And for me, it was this one book that had both future ceramics and Lucio Fontana in it. And that was '74 or '75. So, when I met Viola, we both agreed that he was probably, of the modernists, the most important. Far more so than Picasso by a long shot, and probably better than Miró, although we both respected Miró's work enormously.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: But it never came back to me while I was working on the book. And I think because there's very little direct—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —relevance to that. But at the same time, it's probably there because, at the Royal College, one of my professors was Eduardo Paolozzi.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And Eduardo is a very well-known sculptor. He was one of first of the pop artists because the pop art movement began in England, in a somewhat more intellectualized form than in the United States, and the United States sort of took it over and moved it ahead. And what I loved about him were two things. The one was that he's—things look like pork sausages. They were the least impressive artist's hands I'd ever seen in my life. I think a gorilla would have been offended by his hands.

And the other was that he would say, "Well, you know, I did this, and I got this old piano, and I cut it apart and so, you know, I did this because of the piano." And you look at that, and you look at the piano, and you can see no relationship. But it's because it's gone through a process of digestion, and it's gone through meshes and sieves within his own mind. Comes out as something completely unique.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: There's nothing imitative.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And, you learn your lessons, and that was a very primary one for me, so probably, Fontana is all over the work—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —if you really thing about it, but not in ways, unless you can understand a way of digesting influence. I mean, here and there, there are pieces with holes and things, but that, you know, holes you've been around in ceramics since the colander, so that is not necessarily Fontana.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: But yeah, when the Fontana book comes out, I think almost nobody would have been prouder of me for that book than Viola.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Took me a long time. I was going to write that book when I was still in college, and luckily, I waited, except now, we don't even know if it'll get past the elderly lady who doesn't have a great grip on the present, shall we say that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: There were two of them. They were friends of Fontana's wife, who really had no understanding of art whatsoever. But then I managed to—I became friends with Carla Panicali. Carla Panicali was Fontana's dealer in the last years of his life. She was one of the three partners of Marlborough.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: She was an absolutely extraordinary woman.

MIJA RIEDEL: I can imagine.

GARTH CLARK: I was totally in love with her. And if I'm lucky, as I grow up, I will grow into an 80-year old Italian woman.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: Because she was just extraordinary, and when we met her, we did the first Fontana ceramic show in the United States in our gallery. And Mark calls up to my office and says, "There's a woman very beautifully dressed, gray hair, looking at the Fontana work. She's wearing a piece of Fontana jewelry. I think you should come down." So, I come down. I go introduce myself and she said, "Okay, so tell me about this." And I looked at the brooch, and I think, "Yeah, tell me about this, like you don't know who Fontana is." But I so loved the work, and I get all excited, and I start chatting.

And then, she said, "Enough, enough." She said, "I was testing you. I was trying to find out whether you were selling Fontana or whether you love Fontana." She said, "Clearly, you love Fontana." She said, "And those two pieces used to sit on my living room table." And out of that came the most extraordinary friendship. And, of course, this wonderful access—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —to Fontana.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: An absolutely wonderful, wonderful woman. It took me a long time before I started working on it, and I think that was the right thing. I had to be ready for the project. I didn't think that the project would wait for me. I thought there would be a dozen books about his ceramics. There still is not a major book about his ceramics, and it's really appalling when you look at what happens with the people who write about him. They almost ignore it, and yet, he worked in ceramics from 1926 to 1965—'68, I'm sorry.

In '68, he dies, and in that year, he produces a large body of work, for the first time, in porcelain. He worked in ceramics almost every year throughout that period of time. He worked with ceramics long before the whole Buchi and Tagli, the cuts and holes came into his life.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And there was a period of 14 years where it was almost his exclusive medium. It certainly was his primary medium for that period of time. And the way they just turn their back on it and then go look at everything else that happens in his life to find out, "Well, why did he punch holes in it?" Don't you see the holes he was doing for 20 years in clay, the cuts, the holes in cuts? The cuts in clay for 30 years before he started doing them? It's—an extraordinary thing about ceramics is that traditional art historians and writers, almost have a sieve. They've made a decision that it's not primary—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —and so it just never gets through.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And there are times when I read some of the writing about him, and I want to throw the book at the wall because it's like they're missing everything.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: That whole gestural, physical thing. You know, he found clay because he hated marble. His father had a business that made marble statuary for gravesites, and he used to refer to marble as "the slavery of

material" because it was such a slow, arduous thing. And he was—he was volatile and powerful and wanted to, eventually, slash canvases, you know, but anyway.

MIJA RIEDEL: Circling back to Viola for just a couple of moments, when you look at her career from this distance now, what do you see as the similarities and the differences between the early work and the later work and, perhaps, between the ceramic and the painting and the bronze?

GARTH CLARK: Yeah, let's start with the bronzes because that's the easiest. I don't think her work migrated well into bronze. It just doesn't—and I think the same problem with Arneson, who she loved, and he greatly admired her, too. Arneson knew she was a really major talent and spoke of her always with enormous respect and she of him.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I think they were the sort of in the figurative scene there, they were the twins. They were the man and the woman, and they were the top of the game—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —and there were a few others you could take to DeStaebler, but DeStaebler's work was very dated. You know, he didn't come across as a 19—

MIJA RIEDEL: That's true.

GARTH CLARK: —'80s artist. He came across as a 1950's artist. Whereas Viola and Arneson always just—you could put them anywhere, and they were now. And it just didn't translate well. I think partly because, also, what she did was such a wonderful combination of painting with thick glazes, and we come back to the word "goopy" again. Thick, goopy glazes, and so the tactile quality of her figures was, like, half of it. And before she started using the thick glazing, of course, she was doing much more of a kind of China painting—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: But even then, it was the brush strokes and the delicacy, but it was always—I think she was one of the most successful, even more than Arneson because Arneson tended to used color sculpturally, and there's a difference between sculptural color and painting color.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did Viola do both over time?

GARTH CLARK: No, I think Viola almost all the time used a painting format in her sculpture.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: What I mean is, for instance, Arneson would just do a huge, blue head.

MIJA RIEDEL: I got about five, 10 more minutes.

GARTH CLARK: Okay, he would do a huge, blue head.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Now, that's very much sculptor, because he's turning it into one, monochrome form. Sometimes, he would paint, and some pieces are very painterly, particularly that altar that he did—that Jackson Pollock—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK:—piece that he did. Very deep painterly sense, but most of the time, he would use it the way sculptors use color. Viola very rarely did pieces that were monochrome.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

GARTH CLARK: They were all heavily painted and so, when you get the bronzes, you lose that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Even if they patina them and the rest of it, you don't get the sort of squishy, soft textured, bubbly, you know, all the rest of it. Some people can make the transition very easily. Fontana did that with his—those pots that he made in '59, '60. They translated very well into bronze, and, of course, now bronze is more sophisticated, so maybe they'll take Viola's pieces today and do a better job of it. A strange thing to say just,

they almost look tinny when they were in bronze. So, that is not an issue.

Her paintings I loved. And I think she was every bit as much a painter as she was a sculptor. Again, you see that because so rarely did she do monochrome works. The form was not enough for her. It had to be form, and then, of course, the other thing is she was one of the smartest people I have ever come across when you talk to her about the science of color.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: She used to teach it at the Oakland College of Arts and Crafts, as it was then known, and—I mean, she could tell you exactly — the limited bit that I know about color that is not intuitive, I learned from Viola, and she would tell you, how she put this with that because she wanted them to have the same value—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —but if she had done this to the tonality, then this would have dropped, and this would have come forward—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —and if she had did this, she would have done that. Her—

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MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Garth Clark at his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico on September 10, 2014, for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, card number four. We were talking about tonality and value.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah, and so, when she played with color, she knew exactly what it was going to do optically. I'm not saying that she painted that way in that she was carefully considered, but she knew what she was doing. So when she picked up the blue brush, she knew that that was going to dominate the piece, or it was going to retreat, or whatever it was going to do. Or when she put the blue next to the red, what are we doing? Pushing the red out.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: A lot of artists know that intuitively. She did, as well, but she also had a real sense of the science of it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: But if you look at her style—

MIJA RIEDEL: Did she talk about that—just real quickly—in relation to any of the people that she'd studied with, Rothko or Diebenkorn, or was it primarily from her own study, do you think?

GARTH CLARK: I think probably Diebenkorn—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —more.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Maybe Rothko. Again, as I said, it's difficult to know. You look for the signs of Rothko, and you don't see them—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —but they could be everywhere.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: But one person was more important than any other, and that was Max Beckmann.

MIJA RIEDEL: Hmm.

GARTH CLARK: Max Beckmann is a German—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —Expressionist.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Left Germany, I think, before the war, settled in St. Louis. I was just showing images in Madison to show the connection between the two, and he did the same thing as Viola, which is he put black outline around everything.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And you know, a figure, where the breasts are, there would be black showing the shape of the breast form, but then it would be pink.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: It was like very coarse mosaic, almost, with, you know, the way—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Well, not even mosaic. Stained glass.

MIJA RIEDEL: Hmm, right.

GARTH CLARK: You know, the way everything—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —is channeled, and it has the lead in between. And the black does that in his pieces. So it was—I mean, he was very much painted because the paint is raw and very tactile and, a lot of shift in texture and tone. But it's almost a illustrative device.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: It's the way illustrators do things. You draw the thing; you get your black line, and then you paint in the local color to fit it, but in a very dynamic way. I mean, I'm not trying to say he was not a great painter. He was a great painter. But there was an element of illustrating by doing the definition of edges of things with black.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And you see that even in some of the earlier pieces. And so, I was doing the lecture preparing stuff, and I thought, "Well, you know, that's mainly the later work." And—but then, I picked up an image of an earlier piece, and I thought, "Yeah, that doesn't really illustrate." And I thought, "Wait," and then I blew it up on the screen just so it was the head, and there it was.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: You know, much more refined—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —than she would do it later, but there it was.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And this is not a guess of mine. Viola would talk a lot about him.

MIJA RIEDEL: Hmm. Okay.

GARTH CLARK: Now I'm sure that she mentioned a lot of other artists as well.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: I don't really recall that much. And she was voracious, so—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —she looked at everything.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: But I would say that Max Beckmann sort of, in a way, pushes everything out.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And spend some time, look at his paintings—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah. Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —look at her nudes, look at how he composed them. He, I think, was without any doubt the most important influence in her work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you think about it in terms of Dubuffet as well?

GARTH CLARK: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: Less so?

GARTH CLARK: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: Dubuffet was more calculated—

MIJA RIEDEL: Hmm.

GARTH CLARK: And Viola could be that, too. Look at her—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —paint-by-numbers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: But even paint-by-numbers, in a way, was sort of going back to an illustrative style.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: You paint within borders. I think she liked Dubuffet, though.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. I know she certainly mentioned him.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah. But the closest relationship of anybody is to Beckmann.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did she talk about her work with you at all in terms of gender issues, feminism, political, or social commentary? Did that ever come up?

GARTH CLARK: A little. She was not into that much.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: She would rather discuss the theory of art than politics.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I don't remember ever having a political issue with her. Gender, yes. I mean, she was acutely aware of the fact that women artists have a tougher time, and I think that, in part, was why she was so cautious with her career.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: She wasn't going to let that stop her, so she wasn't going to add to the burden of being a woman in the art market. She was going to subtract those things.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: But like a lot of women who are very powerful and very empowered, they're not that interested in the subject because, in a sense, it's got nothing to do with them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: You know? Beatrice Wood—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —would infuriate feminists because Beatrice would say, "The role of the woman is to kneel and kiss the hands of the man." And, you know, you would just see fumes—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: —coming out of their head. And, "I would give up my career tomorrow to dance the tango with a handsome Argentinian."

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: But she never did.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: She didn't kneel in front of everybody. She didn't give up her career for men. She was very unlucky with men, but that makes her an average woman, I think.

[Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: And so, Viola was sort of, you know, of course she was aware of that. Somebody who realizes that she can't occupy too much real estate—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —on somebody's floor has to know that she's also walking into that house—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —as a woman and not a man.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: But now, you know, memories are tricky things, but I don't remember—we discussed it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I mean, she was aware of those things. But she was never shrill about it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: On the other hand, she dealt with the power of men as a subject matter.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

GARTH CLARK: And—

MIJA RIEDEL: Those blue suits.

GARTH CLARK: Yes, the men in the suits.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: You know, IBM executives.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: She was very conscious that power resided there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: But she had a way of looking at everything like somebody might examine an insect under a microscope. She had a certain detachment. So, if she was going to do a big figure of a man, what was she going to do, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: One of the most interesting things that Rena Bransten said to me about that was that Viola said to her, according to Rena, that she put men in blue suits because that was the power of the male figure.

GARTH CLARK: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MIJA RIEDEL: And she—the women were nudes because women's power was in their nudity. And I thought that was very interesting and astute.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah. Or else she put them into chintz—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

GARTH CLARK: —because that was their kind of conservative garb. So, the grandmothers all had that—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —chintzy, floral dress.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Yeah, I think that she was thinking later on—

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —how the look evolved.

GARTH CLARK: I mean, I would think that she knew every nuance of everything. She just didn't talk that way, and she was—she never had the anger that a lot of women artists have.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

GARTH CLARK: I understand why they're angry—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —but it finally doesn't help them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Well, she just worked harder than just about everyone.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: That was her solution.

GARTH CLARK: And were you told what she was like when she was younger in her dress?

MIJA RIEDEL: I don't think so. Let me hear it.

GARTH CLARK: We couldn't believe this, but our friend, who shall remain nameless—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] For a period of time. We will come up with that.

GARTH CLARK: —yeah. So that, you know, when he met Viola, she was working at Macy's—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right—as an accountant, I believe.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Hair done up.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

GARTH CLARK: Painted fingernails, full makeup, this total glamour girl look. He said she did the whole thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Amazing.

GARTH CLARK: Isn't that amazing?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

GARTH CLARK: And also, I think she has one of the most beautiful faces I've ever seen on the planet earth. That strength—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —just gorgeous looking woman.

MIJA RIEDEL: Hmm.

GARTH CLARK: So then, to continue answering your question, the painting, to me, there's no problem with it. I sort of wish she had done more painting actually. But her paintings were great. And she could move backwards and forwards from the one to the other. Her early work was caught up in her obsession with bric-a-brac.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: You know, she talked about the Alameda Flea Market as being her church.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And we went with her.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, did you?

GARTH CLARK: Oh, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah.

GARTH CLARK: So, it was fascinating.

MIJA RIEDEL: Was it insightful?

GARTH CLARK: Well, yes, but we were also flea market junkies ourselves.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

GARTH CLARK: So we weren't watching her all the time to see what we chose, but we would—you know, we'd come out with our bags; we got the things we wanted. I've got off that in the last few years. I find those things now, actually, depress me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Hmm.

GARTH CLARK: Partly because the average quality is so poor and that it begins to depress your sense of human creativity after a while. Part of the reason for that is the best stuff goes onto eBay and online.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: So, what you're really seeing now is sort of gross junk. And so, Viola said to me that what she tried to paint was the way shadow and sunlight fell on the stalls on the different things and moved around them. And so, that was one of her primary—and that's when she was doing that paint-by-numbers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And you can see the relationship—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —between the two. She sort of—she's painting-by-numbers, but they're her own paintings. She's not following anybody's schematic, and she's choosing the color based on what happened with the dappling of light—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —at the flea market. That work I just think is extraordinary.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Even more, I like the pieces which are not molded, but like the piece that we gave to our collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston is Deborah Kerr—and God knows who the other actress was—by the poolside.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: And they're both in bathing costumes, and there's a swimming pool, and the whole thing is made by hand, and it's a—it's a panel about the size—let's see what that's—18 inches by two inches or something.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: She did similar ones where she has Persian carpets—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —and motorcycles lying on them, and then a stuffed chair.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] These are the little tableaux.

GARTH CLARK: Yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

GARTH CLARK: And then, of course, she began to do tableaus with the figures that were molded.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: But really, if I have to pinpoint what I think is the best of her work for me, the work that still drives me crazy when I see it is that period of work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: It was so—it was all from her own hand.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: They were beautiful. They were crude, in some ways, and yet, they had enormous information.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: An extraordinary economy. And then, we owned a really great figure. Of course, everybody thinks theirs is the best. And we bought it directly after—it was at a show at Fullerton Art Gallery at the University of California—no, California State University.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And we had just come back from a meeting with our attorney who said, "You guys are not in good financial shape. Stop buying anything that you don't have to." And we took one look at the figure, and we go, "We've got to have it."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: So, what that did for us is, down the line with, you know, two kids, parents coming from South Africa that we had to support an ex-wife and her new husband and a baby, who we had to support because my children were with them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, if they fell down the toilet, the kids went with them. So, we won't go into this because it's a horrific tale and will take two days, and we'll all be crying by the end of it, but—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, we thought, okay, we'll put together a home in Long Island. We're living in New York, and there's this new baby that Lynn has, and it's a really nice house and really great schools. And my parents can help with babysitting the baby and we can use this as a launch pad for everybody to get back on their feet."

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And, you know, Lynn can get a job, and they can get some money going, and needless to say, it was a catastrophe. But to get that house, we had only one truly major asset that we could turn quickly into money, and that was the figure—

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah.

GARTH CLARK: —which we sold—

MIJA RIEDEL: Which one was it? Do you remember the title or where it went?

GARTH CLARK: It belongs to a collector in Arizona.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: And we can look up the title. It's illustrated in one of my books. And the funny thing is, I said to him, "You know, we so miss that piece. My kids miss that piece."

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh.

GARTH CLARK: It was like a great loss.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: But we turned it into a home.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And that home, I think, in many ways, because of subsequent problems, was a lifesaver for the boys.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Gave them the stability which they had not experienced. Beatrice Wood would give us these wonderful, extravagant gifts and say, "Now, if you ever get into trouble, don't think twice about selling it because life is finally more important than art." In this case, it was. And then, the collector contacted us a couple of years ago and said, "You know, I want $300,000 for it, and you have to pay me cash, and I will not consider any offers. Take it or leave it." And we waved goodbye.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: It was a wonderful figure. I still think it's—it was stylistically rather different to much of her other work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And well, as I said, you know, we went from not quite a bankruptcy hearing, straight to the gallery and bought it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: It was just—we could not, not.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: And we had fun. We used to dress it up as a Christmas tree at Christmas time—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

GARTH CLARK: —and as I said, both of our sons just adored it. Also, every so now and again, you would walk into the living room and forget it was there and jump out of your boots. "Huh," you know, "whoa." So—but that period of hers I really loved.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I've loved work all along, but finally your personal aesthetic is going to light on a few things.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: There were a lot of later pieces that I would love to have.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Not the big figures, with a few exceptions. Every so now and again, there's one or two of them, which are really nice, particularly the women, not the men.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: The men were shapeless, I felt. And I think the suit—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —did that. But the women sometimes had these little wasp waists and—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —perky breasts, and the whole thing, and they were kind of joyous.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: But one of the things she told me about those figures is she said, "If you look at my figures, what do you notice?" And I said, "Well, I'm not sure." I said, "Well, you know, the hands are very big"—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —"you know, that it's—not everything is proportionate." She said, "Good." She said, "That's very deliberate," she said, "because space exists in different zones, and you have private space, personal space, public space." She said, "What I do with the hands is that I want people to be in an intense connection to the object. So, what I do is I make the hands very big"—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —"so that even if you step away from it to a position where you have stepped out of—say, that was a person—you've stepped out of their private space now."

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: "The hands are so big that they make you feel that you're still in the private space."

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Isn't that brilliant?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah, it is.

GARTH CLARK: And so, yeah, she was remarkable.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] How do you envision her work faring in the future? Any predictions?

GARTH CLARK: You see, we do the auctions.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And now, really, Mark does them because we want to keep—I mean, everything we do in this field ends up being non-profit, whether it is designated so or not. It's a very tough field—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —to make any kind of money. But with CFile, I had nothing to do with anything which is commercial. So, the auctions, even though I might write an essay for them or something, which, by IRS rules, I'm allowed to do. That is not considered a conflict of interest. Mark is the one now who runs the auctions. We used to do them together. And so, the Viola Frey pieces come up, and they're not doing terribly well at the moment.

MIJA RIEDEL: Hmm.

GARTH CLARK: The big figures, in particular, are very often—don't reach the $70,000, $80,000, $90,000 that they're looking for.

MIJA RIEDEL: Hmm.

GARTH CLARK: And more than that, sometimes, they—they're brought in; they're not even, you know, because bidding doesn't get high enough to reach the reserve.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Now, all kinds of stupid assumptions are made about the death of an artist and their marketplace. One of them, particularly for an older artist, who you know, for years, is heading towards the exit zone, is that people kind of do their cashing-in early because they think that the moment they die, they will triple in price. So, rather callously or smartly, depending on whichever way you want to look at it, they go in, and they buy pieces before that. What they do then is, often, push the prices a little higher than they might go under normal circumstances. Then what happens is the artist dies. And, more often than not, the most common thing is that the market then goes into a tailspin for five years.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Three years, four years, five years, sometimes, they never recover.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, this guaranteed sort of wealth that you're going to reap, you know, "If I was only dead, my work would be worth"—no, if you're dead, you might be forgotten.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I don't know what her foundation is doing about her own marketplace. And from what I can tell, they're not doing anything. You have to—when an artist passes on, the return is not accidental or just an automatic like a piece of elastic. And after five years, you let the elastic go, and they shoot right back into the middle of the market. It is—first of all, you go through all the dead artists, and the field chooses some.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Only a small number are going to be resuscitated.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: You see that as you look through recent past, like you look at Pop Art, which is not that far back. Maybe 10 Pop artists came back in a big way.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And we know exactly who they are.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And the other 10,000, whew—gone. No market, no interest, no—so what pushes it is there is an estate, and the estate is very astute—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —in keeping that artist present—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —all over.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: I've not noticed that with Viola.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

GARTH CLARK: You know, she had that touring show.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: But you don't see it turning up in other exhibitions; you don't see articles, deciding whether she

was great or not, trying to revitalize her career. Again, those things don't happen by accident. Those things happen because there is—there's a group of interested parties who want to see—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —that happen. It's not just some automatic, karmic thing that just happens to artists. Now, if you're Jasper Johns—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —you never have to worry. You're selling contemporary paintings, what we call "red hot," at $25 million a pop; that means that, already, the need to retain the benefit of that—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —and some people have 20 paintings in their collection, that's, you know, half a billion dollars. So, it's all built-in.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: They have been deified; they're not going to disappear. Viola never reached that level.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: She reached it in the ceramic community—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —but she never reached it in the larger art community, not that she didn't make appearances; she was around, and a lot of people in the art world thought she was very good, but she never really got there. She didn't do what Ken Price did.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: She didn't move into the top tier of the fine arts. So she is an artist at risk.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: She may not come back in a meaningful way. I think it would be tragic—

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: —but she may not.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: On the other hand, it might take 10 years, and she comes roaring back like a steam engine. But at the moment, she's not faring very well.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: And nobody seems to be doing anything about it. And it's a shame because the moment is perfect.

MIJA RIEDEL: What would you do?

GARTH CLARK: Well, I'll give you two examples just to show that it's already starting to happen elsewhere, which is that John Mason has come roaring back at the great, old age of 84.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And a complexity of things happened, three things, three major things, probably 100 hundred other, but three major things. First of all, when they did *Pacific Standard Time*, for the show at the Getty, they made him a star.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: You walk into the show, and that beautiful, blue wall of his is up, and that—immediately,

everybody just stopped in their tracks and thought, "Oh my God. This man we've ignored for decades." Then he shifted galleries. He went with David Kordansky. David Kordansky is an incredible dealer.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: You know, if he goes public, I'll buy shares because he, I think, is going to go to the top of the tree. Gave him one of the most beautiful shows I've ever seen. I mean, a stunning, spectacular installation of his work. And being one of the up-and-coming dealers that people are watching, of course, you can parlay that into —his work last year on Basel Miami all sold because it is just so damn good.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: One thing, looking at it from a distance, you walk up to one of those big pieces, and the surfaces are majestic. Then he gets onto the Whitney Biennial.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: So that's the trifecta.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And he's really got it going now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: So, it's a mixture of the culture world, the commercial art world, and maybe also the intellectual art world coming together and saying, "You know, we want to re-anoint this artist."

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: The other ones who've done that have been [Michael and Magdalena] the Frimkesses.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Again, Kordansky is partly behind that. He doesn't represent them, but he featured them on a big group show that drew a lot of attention. Then, they became the most successful artists on the *Made in L.A.* show at the Hammer Museum.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: They won one of the big prizes in the—in that biennial. And their patron, in a way, is Ricky Swallow.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And Ricky Swallow is—has become a famous artist in his own right. So again, you've got a nice trifecta there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: It's all it takes, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Viola's case has enormous potential because, as far as I can tell, there was a fair amount of work left.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Most ceramists do not leave a lot of work behind. Mason was the same thing. He's got a substantial amount of his own work. When you're dealing with an artist and there's no work, well then, one part of the trifecta falls down because you can't make money.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And if you can't make money, you don't generate interest. It's—and I don't find anything wrong with that. That's our society.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Art has been bought and sold almost since the first day somebody—you know, I doubt it was sold in caves. I don't think that they had real estate agents then who said, "Well, you know, one of the attractive things about this cave is it has this brilliant mural." But once we became a slightly more complex society, there's always been that money thing. And now it is much more prevalent.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Mark says we've lost the art world, and what we have left now is the art market.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: A lot of truth in that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So you've got Ken Price; you've got Mason; you've got Frimkess. Viola is perfect to be the next one to step in and everybody to go, "Oh my God, California ceramics from the 1950s on, the most brilliant thing—one of the most brilliant things that happened in American art."

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Hopefully, somebody's working on that now. And if they're not, they should be—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: —because I think she is really at a perfect time. And the dealers now, 20 years ago, even 10 years ago, wouldn't bring ceramics into their stable.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right.

GARTH CLARK: Least of all by a ceramists.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: You know, if one of their artists was not a ceramist, made some God awful-turd out of clay, they'd happily show that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: Actually, even then, they felt a little uneasy—because ceramics was like a dirty word. But, now it's, you know, soup du jour; everybody wants ceramics. So I think if somebody doesn't grab this one by the horns in the next year or two, they're missing out on something. And then you said, what would you do?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: I would commission some new writing about her.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's a good idea.

GARTH CLARK: I would go to New York, and I would find a really hip, adventurous gallery with enough credibility, so it's not like she's moving into the corner store, but—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —you know, these are people whose tastes matter in the field. You might even be able to jump that and somehow convince, you know, Zwirner or—not Matthew Marcs. Mathew Marcs hates ceramics, even though he represents Ken Price. But Arneson was shown by Zwirner last year.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: You know, that was big news.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: So, all the way around, it's starting to bump up. And last year at Basel Miami, the nice thing is now, it goes with press credentials, and so I asked price, and he doesn't have to tell me; the highest price for a

ceramic object at the Basel fair, as far as I could tell, having interrogated 100 different dealers, was for a piece by Arneson. And it went for nearly $600,000. So you see, it's all there. Viola's got — compared to where life was 20 years ago, the field is waiting for it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And even though I don't feel great about the later pieces, it's not unusual with artists. There are a lot of artists who I don't feel great about in their later work. And Viola got the same kind of mortality affliction that they all get: Anthony Caro, Arman, you go through the list. As they are reaching the end of their life, they become furiously productive.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: It's almost as though they're trying to—that all of this action will hold back death.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: And in the process, they very often make the absolute worst work of their career.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: So, you know, if I was running things, I would take Maxwell's magic hammer, and I would go through the bigger figures and allow the great ones to live.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: But the ones that were awkward and badly painted and done at a time when she didn't have the —all the facilities she needed physically, strength-wise—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: —to do the best job, you know, you deal with those.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: We always tell artists, "When you know you've made a dog, kill it."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Present company excluded.

GARTH CLARK: Not adopted a dog; that's a very different situation.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: But we once had a show Akio Takamori.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: The show went up because we had an opening, and people were coming. We put up the show. As soon as the people left, we took all the pieces down, and we boxed them, and we sent them back to him. And we said, "We will not show this work." Now, Akio is a great artist.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: Not only that, I think he's one of the most wonderful human beings I've ever met. So, we dug around a little, and it turned out that Akio was in his studio; some friends came by; they got very drunk, and he decided, then, to paint the pieces. Well, it was a disaster. And so, we did the thing, which I think any decent rep for an artist should do.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: We refused to show them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: We had to for the opening. As I say, we were kind of stuck.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: We couldn't have the opening and say to people, "Sorry, there's no work. Akio sent us a bunch of crap, and we sent it back" [laughs]. And even at the opening, several people said, "Oh yeah, not so sure about this." But people who come to openings generally don't buy art anyway, so no harm was done. But I don't think you have to do that often with Viola.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: It was really those last pieces. She was making them for shopping centers and parks, and I hate to say this because it sounds so lacking in sensitivity and lacking in loyalty, but my job is a critic.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: You know, I'm not here to paper over what I believe is reality, and you will find 40 very-well qualified people who will disagree with me. I'm not sure that Viola would be one of those 40 because, as she said to me, "Less an artist these days than I am an engineer."

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: But it made her a lot of money.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: She now has a foundation that can do a lot of good in the arts. It's a marvelous legacy to have left.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And when you sort out the pieces that were not that wonderful, the rest of the oeuvre is fabulous.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: So—no, I admire her a lot. I miss her. Again, that terrible thing of, you know she's not doing well. Well, you should have made the effort to go and visit more often. But you don't.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

GARTH CLARK: A friend of mine in New York—Mark and I have been very active in social causes, one of which was the Bill T. Jones Dance Company.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: It was an enormous amount of work, but we were also amongst the first to start doing AIDS fundraisers at a time when people came into the gallery and said, "Back off. Don't do this. Take your name off the event. People will think you've got AIDS, and they'll fear that if they come into the gallery, they'll get infected." You know, this was very early.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: We said, "Tough," and we went ahead, and we did some pretty spectacular events. And so, we had this one wonderful friend of ours, and we went to him, and we said, "Look, we're doing this event, and we want you to help us," and she was a real activist in her early years. She said, "You know, I would love to," she said, "but in a given day, keeping my gallery alive allows me six hours of sleep, and as much as I would love to work with you, I just don't have the time."

MIJA RIEDEL: Yeah.

GARTH CLARK: And that was the issue. I mean, now you can look back and say, "Why didn't we give more time to Viola when she was going?" Well, two reasons: I didn't really have a clear sense of death at the time. I wasn't young, but I was too young to be a little more profound in my understanding. And the other thing was, like, when would we get three days to fly to San Francisco?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

GARTH CLARK: Viola, in turn, didn't see us as often because she had her crazy schedule. So those things happen. You can't be—the guilt is good—because the guilt is part of you still mourning. It doesn't mean that you're a bad person. It just means that you wish you had more with that person and, you know, there are enough people in our lives that we wish we had less with, so that's good.

[Laughs.]

Okay.

MIJA RIEDEL: I think that may be a perfect place to stop.

GARTH CLARK: Me, too.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Thanks very much.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]