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Oral history interview with Kenneth
Josephson, 2015 September 29-30

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Kenneth Josephson on September 29, 2015. The interview took place in Josephson's home and studio in Chicago, IL, and was conducted by Lanny Silverman for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the the Archives of American Art's Chicago's Art-Related Archival Materials: A Terra Foundation Resource. Josephson has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. 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

This is track one.

LANNY SILVERMAN: This is Lanny Silverman for the Smithsonian Institute's Archives of American Art. I'm interviewing Kenneth Josephson and it's September 29, 2015.

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This is track two.

LANNY SILVERMAN: All right. So I guess the first question is the big one—where were you born and when?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: July 1, 1932, in Detroit, Michigan.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Ah. And when you were in Detroit, Michigan, what was your family like?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, my family—I had a brother, two years older than I. And my parents—my father, his work history, he was in the Army for a while after the First World War. Then he was a policeman. And then he worked in the auto industry, various jobs, inspecting mechanical things, a variety of things. And I grew up during the Second World War years, so they worked in the military productions, you know, for the war. My mother worked for some concern that dealt with the fire extinguishers or those kinds of things.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's interesting, too, because in that era there weren't that many working moms, so you had both parents working. Did your parents express any interest or support—either or both, in your interest in—how early were you interested in art or photography?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I was interested in art at a very early—in grade school. And they encouraged me. They liked what I did, and they didn't have any formal education in art or anything like that. But they always encouraged me.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [00:02:00] So were you—you said art. You put it as art, which, at the time we're talking about, art and photography weren't—photography was a little bit separate niche. So did you start off by being interested in painting or—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Drawing, primarily.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's interesting. So what was that, kind of, interest about? I mean, what were you particularly excited about as a kid?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I was interested in animals, so I would draw a lot of animals.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's interesting.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So they appeared a lot in my work. But it was toward the end of my grade school, probably my seventh—probably seventh grade. A friend of mine introduced me to making contact prints.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, of course. Yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And that was really magical to me, and I was hooked from, you know, age 12, I guess that was.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's a certain magic to photography. There's a certain kind of alchemy, yeah, of just being able to, you know, the chemical—I mean, I think that's always fascinated people. So that's what got you,

initially, was the actual process of, you know, being closer to the prints?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Seeing—being able to print and view an image was really impressive to me.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So did you get a camera at a certain point?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, my parents had a camera, and I hadn't thought about photography very much prior to that, but then I became very interested, and I would use the family camera.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So that's pretty early, you're talking about just after grade school, like maybe—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, 12 years old.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that's pretty early interest. Now, were you aware of—were you looking at books? Were you aware of shows or exhibitions? Were you getting ideas from outside, or was it all—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: No, but I used to kind of prowl the galleries of the Detroit Institute of Arts. [00:04:00] I had two interests: the art and looking at art, and reading. So I would—the main public library in Detroit was right across the street from the museum, so I would visit both places and that was very exciting to me.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Do you remember any particular shows or artists or photographers that got you excited at an early age? I'm just curious about early sensibility and how you formed it.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Not really. I mean, I didn't pay much attention to names. I liked viewing the art.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Kids are sort of omnivores. They just take everything in. It's all sort of equal, like masterpieces and crap. It's all—it's just like all out there. So you were just gathering information at that point?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, right. Just visual stuff that interested me.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So did you have any specific classes, like, in junior high or high school that got you further along in this path with photography?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: No. My high school—I think they had one art class and it was terrible. It was just—I learned zero. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: It can turn people off, I mean.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I thought my grade school education; I really enjoyed that while I was a student. And—but then I realized later on, like when I was in graduate school, the best education experiences I had were grade school and graduate school. And my undergraduate work was kind of interesting. The second two years were very good.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Was that Rochester?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, were very good at Rochester Institute of Technology. But the first two were so highly technical; [00:06:00] I was not interested in that at all.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's interesting. Well, you studied with Minor White, who was sort of—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Beaumont Newhall, the historian.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, Newhall, too, those are big names. And not only that, but they're—I'm thinking of Minor White. I mean, his work was, not as much so as Ansel Adams, but it was very technically proficient. So there was a lot of emphasis on technique there and on, you know, formal kind of properties maybe, yes?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah. Technique was pretty high on the list of things we experienced. But through Beaumont Newhall, I really got introduced to aesthetics and the history, which—

LANNY SILVERMAN: I was going to say, since he's an art—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: The way he presented it was wonderful. He was just the greatest influence in terms of the history of photography, which—

LANNY SILVERMAN: So that was your real education to what was out there in the world of photography?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that was before Szarkowski or some of the big shows that really changed the sort of—we're going to talk about that a little bit more later, but—photography was—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, it was. It was in like the—second two years I was there from '55 to '57, and Minor White, of course, had published *Aperture*. He was the one who started, founded that magazine. And it was the only serious publication about photography at that time. The only other one was, like, *Camera* magazine.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Right, which are like, a whole different level; in terms of quality and—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, *Camera* magazine out of Switzerland, it was pretty good. But the other, like, *Modern Photography*, *Popular Photography*, were just geared to the amateur and to selling products, you know?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I'm going to get to that a little later, but the whole assessment, that's why I mentioned Szarkowski—that whole assessment of photography as an art [00:08:00] and as a collectible, sort of purchasable commodity, all that stuff sort of comes much later. Let's go back to your training, because you said you had a really fruitful last couple of years. What—the last couple of years at Rochester, you said, really were very valuable. Was getting the history from Beaumont, getting the—or was it other stuff? Was it experiencing, you know—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, there was another teacher there, Charles Arnold, who had come from RISD [Rhode Island School of Design], and he was a photographer and a designer and I learned a whole lot of—about putting a picture together. The elements and how to make it work. And he was very valuable that way.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you're a student at that point, and is your work—you're particularly known for a certain kind of conceptual photography. Is your work formed at that point, or are you still sort of just trying out a lot of things? What was your work like on Rochester in graduate school, as well?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I guess it was—because of Newhall, I did my project; my undergraduate project on a street in Rochester called Front Street. And it was not quite like Maxwell Street here, but it was—had its similarities. It was a bunch of shops—clothing, food, bars. It was kind of—there were a lot of derelicts hanging around. But it was very colorful place. And I decided to document it. Because I was real taken with Atget's work, presented through Newhall. I learned of his wonderful documentary work in Paris. And so I wanted to experience [00:10:00] doing documentary work. So I chose that street and I did a handmade book of that experience.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So I was thinking, going back to what photography—so-called art photography—at that point in time, you know, there weren't that many choices. There was sort of—there was some abstraction and things that were avant-garde, but by and large there was street photography or landscape photography. So you fit into the—that's what I was going to say. Given that you were coming out of that time, you started out with one of those. Did you do any landscape stuff either, or no, at that point?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Not really at that time, but shortly after. But great influences were the picture magazines—*Life* and *Look*.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure. And they had some really wonderful—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I read those all the time.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And the Magnum photographers. There's things, yeah, there's very professional.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And then Steichen had that show, *The Family of Man*, which really presented a lot of very fine photography. But it was—in the area of straight photography, unmanipulated photography was the norm then. And at RIT [Rochester Institute of Technology], if you deviated from that, it wasn't terribly accepted. It wasn't accepted too well.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, there'd been a tradition—I guess I alluded to this before, I guess when I was thinking about Man Ray and some of the more abstract and sort of manipulated concepts or Surrealist photography. Or even later, Jerry Uelsmann. There are people that were a little more akin to where you ended up, people that were interested in the staging of reality and of fooling with your mind a little. [00:12:00] So that—were you aware of the Surrealists or any of those kinds of things, too? I mean, even Newhall must have—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Through Newhall, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Must have educated you to those. And there were other, sort of kinds of abstraction and things that were, not just photograms by way of Man Ray, but things that were—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, Siskind's work.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yeah, Siskind is pretty early too. I guess I was thinking that would be later, but yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And he started out doing documentary photography and then became abstract, primarily abstraction. But he didn't manipulate the photograph. He presented it full-range of values and it was pretty much a straight photograph. Only, it was very abstract-looking.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's the thing about reality. There are times when you can—and some of the street photographers that we're alluding to in the history of photography end up with very abstract patterns, whether or not—or things that you can't tell what's going on in terms of reality. Some of that calls into question your perception of reality. That was already happening, but it wasn't manipulated, generally speaking. It was presented to you. And then it's like, whoa. So sometimes your choice or the subject or the way you framed it or made it so you couldn't see what the context was. I'm thinking of—blinking out on his name—but someone who did, like, did the things in the South and—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, Clarence Laughlin, you think?

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, well that might be also. But there was a number of people that did photography where, perhaps, you might see graffiti or you might see something and you're not sure, because of the depth—it flattens out when you see it in a photograph, and you're not sure what you're looking at, if it's a painting or if it's a wall or something like that. No, I'm thinking of—what's the James Agee book? *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*? [00:14:00] Walker Evans. That's who I'm thinking of. Walker Evans.

Even some of his pieces, which are very straight, some of them are just beautiful formally and end up being formal compositions that mess a little with your head and perception. So did that stuff—since that's an area that we're going to talk about more as you develop your voice, did that kind of stuff, the more abstract or the more questioning-reality kind of photography—did that appeal to you more at that point, or you still were in formation?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It started at the end of my work at RIT. I started doing multiple images and I started arranging things for the camera. That was at the tail end of my work there. But then when I came to—you want me to go on about—?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: For family reasons, I had to—after RIT, I had to go to work to support—I was married at the time, and my wife was very ill. So I needed to care for her and also have a job. So I worked for Chrysler Corporation for—

LANNY SILVERMAN: I have GM here, a factory—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I worked for GM just on a summer one time.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So this is more important. I was going to ask you about GM, because it seems like an interesting, I don't know, sort of commercial application you were doing. And also the aerial photography reconnaissance stuff. We'll get to that. But let's start with—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: When I was in the Army, I was in the Army after my first two years at RIT. I didn't have any money and I couldn't continue my education, so I was drafted into the Army. And it was during the tail end of the Korean war, and luckily the armistice was signed about 10 weeks after I was [00:16:00] inducted, which was a relief. So I was sent to Germany. First of all, I was given a course for nine weeks at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, near Washington, in photolithography. It was an Army course. So anyhow, after that, I was sent to Germany to print aerial photographs that the Air Force would make and we would print for intelligence and for mapmaking.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's a certain kind of abstraction that happens—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Those images were very abstract, aerial.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's painters that have done things off of those kinds of, you know, maps. Those kinds of abstracting patterns that occur, so that—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: They were fascinating, actually.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I don't recall seeing any of your work directly influenced by that, but it must have had some impact on—if not your technical skills, your—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, looking at pattern, looking for details, the abstraction of it from that height, you know? That all interested me to look at.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So this all just accumulates in the formation of your voice, eventually. So I guess go back to where you started out with, you mentioned Chrysler. I had caught that you had worked at GM, too. Did working in the factory give you some ideas of practical applications of photography?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, first of all I started in the studio area where there was a huge seamless background and we would photograph cars for advertising and that sort of thing. And then I couldn't—I had a problem with the chief photographer. I couldn't work for him any longer, so I was put in another division, [00:18:00] which put me into the factories, which were very bizarre. It was a very bizarre experience, actually, which formed some of my interests, actually. Like, I'd have all kinds of photographic experiences, like crawling under a tank to photograph some part that needed to be looked at or they would be moving part of a factory to another location, so I'd be on a forklift and they would put a number on the end of this massive machine and I would photograph it and the number and then go to the next row of machines, put a number down. You know. That kind of thing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Laughs.] That's very conceptual. That's a very strange kind of—yeah, gridding it out.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Or I would go to a room where they were testing parts. So these cars, there'd be no one in the room. But these cars would be bouncing up and down continually, doors opening and closing, trunks and lids and everything. [Laughs.] And it was like you were in just a bizarre film. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: That sounds actually crazy and sort of wonderful in a way. And you were paid for this, too, so this gets into—are there at the time—it's a question I was thinking of asking earlier. Is—how did you graduate to become—how did you sort of form into making a living out of the photography? Was this something—this was your thinking in terms of supporting a family—was this maybe the direction you thought you needed to go? Commercial photography?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: No, I didn't.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Didn't do much for you.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I didn't want to do that. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: If you could help it.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I didn't want to continue doing that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You got enough of the bizarre experiences to last a while.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, and I would photograph, like, someone retiring. And they'd done it so many times for a photograph for their fellow workers that they knew the [00:20:00] angle of view and they would just form up, you know, into this group. And I'd hardly have to ask anyone to move.

[They laugh.]

And that was kind of sad. I got sad about someone working 35 years there.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Just plugging into a formula.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And they're taking out a couple minutes and the foreman is looking at us, watching.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That wasn't for you. So you managed to duck. You had your forays into the commercial world. Have you done any—I mean, I know you've taught and that was one way that you survived, but have you done any other kind of commercial photography?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yes, when I was in graduate school, I worked for graphic designers and that helped. You know, I had the GI Bill which helped pay for tuition, but for living I needed to do commercial—some commercial work. And that was much more interesting work, because you're working with a, you know, a good graphic designer.

LANNY SILVERMAN: An art director, somebody who has some ideas. Yeah, it's not plugged into the group shot formula. "Okay, folks, let's line them up." And check out the watch. So there was a little more creativity to it, but still. But it's still sort of a production technique, in a way. I mean, there's certain things that you learn technical skills, but it isn't exactly as creative a voice as—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, and I would do what I was directed to do, and I was thinking, "Well, that's not a very interesting image." But whoever I did it for would just love it, you know? And I thought, "Something's wrong here." [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Hey, take the money and run. I mean, if they love it—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, yeah. I did it to live.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that's what I'm getting at is it's not exactly an expression of anything inner or, you know, personal aesthetic [00:22:00] or any of that stuff. Just do what they like and it's fine. Did any of these experiences see their way—I mean, you mention that with the number on the little overhead views gridding out the views. Did any of this stuff have an impact on your own? Were you making work at the time, your own work at the time or even later that had any, you think, any relationship to these experiences?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I think everything impacts you in some way. And it's hard to say specifically. I mean, I'm drawn to kind of quirky things or bizarre things, and I think maybe that experiences of working for Chrysler helped that. [Laughs.] Helped that interest. But I think just all kinds of experiences just impact your work and sometimes it's indirect. Sometimes it's real direct, I think.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, I think as you said earlier, everything builds into who you are.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Like one photograph I made with the idea of evidence and events was—I photographed my wife after—her hips where the imprint of her underwear was. And it was like evidence of something that is not going to be permanent, it's going to disappear. So those things interest me that are just, for a short time, visible. But the camera can preserve that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But the camera sees it differently, maybe. The camera is different than the eye. Sometimes, too, by the way you print the two. [00:24:00]

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And I used a pencil to exaggerate and direct the eye to that mark on the skin, the marks on the skin. And it was like my experience at Chrysler when they would photograph a part or something, that they would put a known size object like a pack of cigarettes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, of course. Scale so you could know what you're looking at.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Scale. And it was like, this exaggeration of, you know, making sure people knew what size or what that was. So that's why I was using the pencil to kind of exaggerate that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Now, that gets really directly into—I was going to save that for later, which we probably will, but that gets into some of your key sort of visual vocabulary where you have the scale, where you have introduced the photo. For example, the famous one, the first one that I saw of your work, probably, at the MCA when I first came to town here. The picture of a boat held up against the sky and horizon and it's a scale sort of thing going on and it's also a reality thing—what's real, what isn't and, you know, how are you choosing to crop and frame it and put it in context. So in a way, yes, that's sort of a setup for maybe some of the things that came, the GM and Chrysler stuff may be deeper in your learning process than you care to acknowledge. [Laughs.] It's kind of curious, but now I know you also went to IIT [Illinois Institute of Technology], too, here.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yes, and Minor White was very helpful. He contacted me that there was a scholarship available. I didn't get the scholarship but I went anyhow. But he was very helpful. My wife passed, you know, after—while I was at Chrysler and I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, but then I heard about this institute of design. [00:26:00] And I'd seen some of Harry Callahan's photographs, which I was very impressed with. And found out he was teaching there, and so that was double the reason I went there.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So that must've been a big—and Siskind, too.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Siskind was there with him.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Those are both big, important photographers. It must have had an impact on you, I'm sure.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, they were wonderful. And there weren't assignments or anything. You'd choose a thesis to do, and I chose to do an exploration of the multiple images, partially because I knew Callahan had done multiple images. But he wasn't directing me, necessarily. I was—but I was influenced by what he had already done, and—but it was kind of like—it wasn't a direct way of teaching. There weren't assignments or anything. You did your work toward your thesis and you brought the work in periodically, like, every two weeks or so for a group discussion about your work and other people that were in the program.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —by Mies, by the whole Bauhaus way of teaching too—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —Yes, so I experienced that method of teaching, which was very different than anything I had ever experienced before. And it was so logical and made so much sense. Like, for instance, in the beginning course, which of course I didn't take, but I observed and I actually taught or assisted sometimes—in

the beginning there was like the introduction was to the medium—was through photograms. And you didn't need any special equipment. You just needed paper and you needed some light source and chemicals. [00:28:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, it's pretty simple.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So it very quickly introduced you to the relationship between light-sensitive material and light and the duration of—that was exposed. And what was interfering with the light to cast a shadow, in some cases. And then you learned developer, the short stop, which—and then the basic things: the fixer, which fixes the images permanently. So very quickly you learned quite a bit about photography.

LANNY SILVERMAN: About dark room technique, yeah, and about light and shadow. All the basics.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Without having hardly any equipment at all. And the Institute of Design attracted some very talented people.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You knew Barbara, of course, there.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, but students. And I was teaching one semester there and I introduced the students to photograms. I explained a little bit about them first, you know, and then we all went into the dark room. And this one student, from what I had talked about, he—with so little information, actually—he took the enlarging paper, which we used for the photograms, and he kind of creased it and bundled it up and spread it out and [00:30:00] then he set it on fire.

[They laugh.]

So that it exposed the rest of the paper from the fire. [Laughs.] And because it was all crinkled and everything, it had shadows and the texture and everything. And he put it out in the developer, you know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's pretty wild.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: The rest of the students didn't appreciate it too much, because I think he exposed their paper, too, by setting it on fire. But anyhow, it was one of the most creative things I'd ever experienced. It was really just splendid. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: So were you influenced by teaching, by your students as well?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I think so. Yeah. Because a lot of the work that beginning students did, because they didn't have a lot of baggage, you know—

LANNY SILVERMAN: They didn't know what the right way to do it was, so they could do whatever they thought—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah. And so they would do things that were really very interesting that I think I used, you know, as part of my work. I'm trying to remember specifically, but I'm sure there's quite a few things that—anyhow, I think Siskind was interested—interesting to me because he taught me—he would talk about a photograph like it's an image on a piece of paper. And you can bend it, you know. You can tear it. You can mark it. You can do—it isn't just this illusion of reality.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's an object, too.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It's an object. And that was very important to me. That really helped me a lot.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [00:32:00] That was sort of a leaping off point for you. I was about to ask maybe where your sensibility got formed or how—it's a slow accumulation of experiences, but that's a big thing right there. So how about Callahan? Did you have any good stories about either of them? Because they're sort of big figures in photography—Harry Callahan or Aaron Siskind.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, yeah. Siskind—

LANNY SILVERMAN: I know Jed has told me some stories about Siskind. Wasn't he like his assistant or something? He traveled around with him?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, he did work—did some work.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Somehow or another, I vaguely asked the notion of there being some good possible stories with him if not with—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, Siskind used to invite us over, the graduate students—he wouldn't have—there

were about seven of us at that time. And he would invite us over when a well-known photographer was coming through town. They would often stay with Siskind or drop in. And so we were introduced to these other well-known photographers like Arnold Newman and Frederick Sommer and Laughlin. There were very good experiences, and there was one person who was very helpful to me—Arthur Sinsabaugh, Art Sinsabaugh, and just a story: One time we were at one of these gatherings, and someone came up to Aaron and said—Art being Art Sinsabaugh said, "He's in your kitchen and he's breaking everything that's possible, like plates and dishes and glassed and throwing them against the wall." And Siskind was so easy-going, he'd say, "Oh, that's Art." [00:34:00] And it didn't seem to faze him very much. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Did he ever find out why he was breaking—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Art was upset about a woman.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So he just had a rage—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: He was taking it out—

LANNY SILVERMAN: —on the dishes.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Like two days later, he bought replacements. But anyhow, Art Sinsabaugh was a very interesting guy. But I was always nervous around him, because he was so unpredictable.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Laughs.] Yeah, I guess so. How about Callahan? I've not heard stories about Harry Callahan.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Callahan. Very quiet guy, but so creative. We didn't get exposed to many personal things.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So it was more formal in the sense that the distance—because I've been talking, like, with Art Green, some of the relationships between, like, the people at the Art Institute, which you taught at later—we'll get to that—the distance between the students and the teachers was very small because they would go out picking together. There'd be a lot of—there was a lot of personal camaraderie. It was more formal at IIT, you're saying? That there was a certain—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: No, it was very open, in terms of Siskind, especially. Callahan—occasionally we'd go to his home. But we didn't know him as well as we knew Siskind because of the frequency that we were at Siskind's place, you know? And Siskind was more gregarious, you know. And Callahan was a little more closed, you know? But he was very friendly and very helpful. And—but there weren't that many stories about him, I don't think.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I had a feeling he might be more private just by not having read any particularly personal stories about him.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: [00:36:00] Well, he—the only story that kind of I remember is Callahan liked to drink and I guess he was picked up one night on the street and put in the drunk tank and maybe he had visited that before, but I don't know. But anyhow, Siskind, always the teacher and wanting to explain things, called me up and explained that Callahan was released the next morning, and—but he started photographing right away. And that was the point of the story about [laughs] Harry's experience with the police. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, so you had—did you have a body of friends? At that point in time—so you're doing some graduate-level teaching, too, at IIT. You were assisting, teaching?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Assisting.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Assisting and teaching. I guess let's talk just a little bit in terms of just career, because you talked a little bit about GM. And so how were you surviving? It was through that that you were surviving at this point in time? You were—through some part-time teaching and school; you were going to school as well?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I wasn't paid for the teaching that was just voluntary.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So how did you—I guess I'm kind of getting into the career thing, because that's kind of a tricky matter in terms of the arts. How did you manage to figure out—we all have our ways of figuring out the tricks to game the system, to get paid to do this lovely stuff we do. So how did you progress in terms of becoming self-sufficient in terms of making a living from photography?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I really studied the methods of ID [Illinois Institute of Design], [00:38:00] which I was so impressed with. And I really observed a lot of how students were influenced and what the result was from the assignments that they were given, and the assignments were always open-ended. So there wasn't too

restrictive, but it had—there was always, like, a—some kind of—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Like a problem to be resolved?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I'm trying to think. It had its limitations. It was like it had a framework around it and you could work within that framework and because it was that way, people were directed to do very interesting work, because it wasn't—it had a framework.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It had structure, but it was open-ended—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah. But it was specific, but open-ended.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, because like you said with the person burning those things, you can do aberrant things, you can do within any structure, no matter how tight. You can find someone who goes off the charts—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —so that impressed me a lot. And I thought, "That's really interesting ways of teaching someone art." And so I decided I'd like to teach art.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So that was kind of the solution, that figured—you were engaged enough as a student that you figured it would be enjoyable, it would be a good way to stay—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, and I respected Callahan and Siskind very much and their intelligence and the way they were of assistance to people, you know? And always an emphasis on being very professional, especially in presentation that you do that in a very solid way. [00:40:00] And so that experience at my graduate school—experience was very important to me, and it was very, very helpful.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So that formed the basis of your teaching, from what you got. Now, you went on to teach at the School of the Art Institute. At that point, they probably didn't have any photography department, no?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: No. They had Harold Allen was teaching photography, but it was for—I think it was called an advertising department or design department. They were required to take a photography course as part of their experiences. And—but it wasn't a department. It was like a service kind of thing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So when you came on, did you get to do what you wanted? Because there wasn't anything —

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Create a department, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, you could basically start from scratch.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, so I was very lucky that way, because I didn't have any precedent.

LANNY SILVERMAN: They can't say this isn't the way to do it because [laughs]—they can't say, "Well, X did it this way," which is a lot of jobs you walk into. "Why are you changing everything?" So there wasn't—but what approximately—what time period is this? I'm curious.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: 1960. I started in 1960 and I think our department was formed in '62, I believe.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I think probably at that point in time, something I've alluded to that maybe it's time to talk about—photography was just—I'm thinking of Szarkowski's windows and mirrors and other things that happened where photography gets—a boom starts to happen where it becomes looked at as art, whereas before, it was always either documentary—it was always functional, which is a whole interesting subject. [00:42:00] Or commercial, as you were alluding to in terms of—it was useful. In terms of freeing it up, in terms of aesthetic—I mean, they were always wonderful—you mention Atget—and they were wonderful photographers—and Steichen. There were people that were making art photography in the '20s and '30s, but in terms of the art market, it really opened up quite a bit. Do you think that's why they were open to the idea of having, you know, a photography art department at the Art Institute? That the times were changing, or—?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, the times were changing. There were very few institutions had photography programs.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's what I'm thinking at that point.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So they were pretty much on the ground floor, so to speak. The other person that was—that helped me a great deal was Hugh Edwards, who was curator of Prints and Drawings and then photography also, in the Prints and Drawings department. And he recommended me to the dean of the school. And I think I was—he was very instrumental, me getting that position.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's great. That's a great lead in terms of—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: He was a very interesting character.

LANNY SILVERMAN: He's not the older guy that's still there or was still there?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: No, he's not.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, he probably—because there was another older guy that was there that's really quite a character that was there as of five years ago, but may be gone by now. But this was way before—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, I think I know who you mean. I'm trying to remember his name.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, he's a real character.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, he really is.

LANNY SILVERMAN: More so than probably the one you're talking about. Forgot his name, doesn't matter. It's not—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But anyhow, Hugh Edwards, he was—I think he was kind of lonely, you know? He lived alone and he would take me out to dinner or sometimes—and a movie. [00:44:00] And I remember he took me one time to *Lawrence of Arabia*, which he loved, you know? And he—during the film he said, "Now watch this next sequence." He said, "They've removed five seconds from that."

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh the editing, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And I don't know if it was another print that they were using, or the film got damaged and they had to re-splice it or something. But he knew—I said, "How do you know that?" He said, "Well, I've watched it 20 times."

[They laugh.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: I've seen a couple films like 30 times and I knew when one was playing—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Really?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh yeah, like *Jules and Jim*, Truffaut, I mean, there's certain classics.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Which ones?

LANNY SILVERMAN: *Jules and Jim*, for example. That's one of my favorites. Truffaut, early Truffaut. And there's certain films that I've seen—many films I've seen 10 or 20. My wife says, "Why do you watch it again?" Well, I'm just fascinated. I think the scene works. In a good film, you see more each time and you see how it's put together. It's a little like a photograph as you start to realize what the person's done. You look at something intensely enough, or if you persevere long enough, you see all kinds of things you didn't see there. Especially if it's a decent work of art. If it's crap, then it probably doesn't bear worth looking at more than a couple times.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, the one I've seen a number of times, *The Wild Bunch*, and I try to figure out why I'm not feeling like people being shot—the emotional experience, like some films you see a knife going into someone and it's really horrible and you can almost physically experience that. With Peckinpah, I don't know—I never really figured it out, but it was more like a ballet.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Ballet. People have talked about that. He aestheticizes violence, yeah. It's choreographed.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, and it's a way of presenting violence without it being negative, in some ways. [Laughs.] [00:46:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, that's what's so interesting about the point of view. I often give this as an example, that our culture spends—instead of spending all its money on art, it spends it on sports. And you know the slow-motion camera, you look at a football game—if you look at it from the ground level like, straight on and have the audio on, it'd be kind of disgusting, what they're talking about. You hear people's guts being pummeled about. But when they take the overhead point of view and they slow it down—they didn't do this for ballet. It's been used since then for ballet. But they do this for sports. They take the camera, take it up there and make it slow-mo and it's beautiful. I try to get people who are not interested in sports to see the beauty of it. It's hard sometimes to convince them. But there is a beauty to anything if you look at it in a certain way, and that's one of the things that's so interesting about our culture of violence, is that we—and Peckinpah's known for doing this

—we aestheticize violence which, I don't know if that's bad, because it probably makes people able to kill without even thinking about it as a real act of—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I mean, you may have a point there.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I don't know. But the Peckinpah thing is a really wonderful example of that, is that when you aestheticize something, you have a distance from it and you can look at something that's very human and very emotional and turn it into something very formal, which is very weird. So did you ever have—I gather you're real interested in film. Did you ever have any interest in extending photography to film as a career or—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I did two films.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You did? I didn't know that. So that's interesting right there.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I did—one was at the end of my stay at ID. There was these buildings being removed for the Dan Ryan Expressway and it was close to my route walking back and forth to ID, and there was this one building with posters on it. One was for Bathsheba—who was the guy in the Bible? Solomon and Bathsheba? [00:48:00] Yeah. Solomon and Bathsheba.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Something like that.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —and *West Side Story*. And they were close together. Maybe there was a window in between? I can't remember now. But I knew this building was going to be demolished because it was, you know, in the process of being taken apart. And so I scrambled to get some 16 millimeter equipment. I never did a film before. I was very interested in film and I'd studied film. I mean, just studied films but not formally. And so I started photographing this building in the interior first, because I knew that was the first thing to go. And there were some very curious things inside the building. And then I started photographing as it was being demolished with a ball smashing into it. And the operator of the crane, who was demolishing the building, he kind of understood what I was after and he, in a way, cooperated with me. I didn't tell him what to do, but he knew what I was up to. So when the posters were coming down, he hit them in very interesting ways.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, so he was performing a little—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Parts of them disappearing, you know, and then finally the whole thing crashed in. But I had made a lot of mistakes, because I—technically, I didn't understand filmmaking that much. But I salvaged enough footage to make a film out of it. Which was about 14 minutes or so. And then I did—after that in '64 I think [00:50:00] I did a film about a motion picture projector that was a subject of the film, and what it's projecting and what it's projecting on and the parts of it, the working parts of the projector. And it was called "Silent Sound," because I didn't know anything about sound. But the projector, when I would show it, I would have the projector in the audience, and that supplied the sound.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's the sound. So again it's the object you're playing, again, with the Conceptual thing.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And then I would put a deliberate break. I cut the film. And so the lights would have to come on and a person would have to rethread it. So they were performing. It was like a performance.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So again, you were tearing back the curtain. You got this Oz thing going on with all your work, tearing back the curtain to see how the film was made and what the process is. You want to reveal the process as you go. That's kind of like a big theme for you.

So I guess now that I see that you've even developed that into film ideas, what do you think got you going on that sort of, I guess the term for it, the big term from the '70s and '80s was deconstructing. What do you think got you into that kind of mode of examining the very process? You mentioned some of your teachers and mentors, you know, instilling that notion, but that's a real—that's sort of—that's your theme. What do you think got you on that? Where did that come from, I guess? Is there even any way that you can assess where that came from, if not in gradual increments?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, one was my interest in the history of photography, which fascinated me. And one thing that—Minor White one time, I think it was when I just graduated from ID, he was having a small exhibition here in the city. And I asked him what he had done that summer, and he said that he had been traveling out west [00:52:00] and was trying to find the equivalent of one hand clapping in a photograph.

And I said, "Well, did you accomplish? Or how did you do?"

And he said, "Well, I didn't find that, but there are awful good things along the way that I photographed."

And I took that to heart because I started doing various series of photography, like "Evidence," and references to

the history of photography, and images within images. And then I did a kind of pseudo-archaeological series of the meter stick they use in digs.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yeah, I've seen that, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I know there were a couple others. Oh, nudes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I was surprised when I was looking at your work online because I kind of know the things you've mentioned so far.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Women, actually, not necessarily—

LANNY SILVERMAN: You like the women.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I like the women.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's been a theme for a couple of the interviews.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And then I did the collages using—like very early I found an older postcard of the Greyhound bus station in downtown in the Loop. And so I thought, "Well, I'd like to combine that with one of my photographs, a black and white photograph." So I looked at the photograph and then I lined up what I thought was the spot where it was made from, and then I printed it and sized it to the postcard, [00:54:00] and then used parts of the postcard to place on the same areas of my black and white photograph.

LANNY SILVERMAN: With torn edges?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: You had the—you would see changes because the buildings had come down or up since that. It was about 10 years old, that postcard from when I made the black and white photograph. So I couldn't use—I never had done color photography. I was kind of turned off of color photography.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's a good question, too. I was wondering—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I could use these color postcards to work with color. And that was interesting to me. So I did a series of those.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Were they torn edges or were they clean edges? I can't remember.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Those were clean edges.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Clean edges.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah. I got into torn edges with other images. So I started a series of collages that way.

And then it led to three dimensions. So I would use like my daughter's dress that she wore in Hawai'i when I was teaching there. And I photographed her in the dress and put the photographed framed onto the dress so that you would have the dress plus an image of her wearing it, only my photograph was in black and white, and the dress was—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Was that one of the earlier cases of where you did a photo of a photo? No, this is where this—you were telling me—because this—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It was three dimensional. It's an object, an actual object.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, but I'm just thinking that—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: That was images within images. [00:56:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Images within images, this was how this sort of developed. This was really early in that because as I say the—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: That was earlier, yeah, the images within images.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, so you started that before. That's interesting in terms of your development.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: One early image of images within images was of a tree I photographed, and I was always interesting in sequence and also film sequence. But the way sequences were usually presented was a series of pictures, like six pictures that you read kind of left to right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, narrative, sort of forward motion.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And I thought, "Well, maybe you could maintain that within one image." So I photographed a tree with a Polaroid camera from a distance, and then I got closer, and I put that image on the tree bark, and photographed it with another Polaroid image closer up, of course. And then a film image I made real close up. So you had this sequence of images contained within one image.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's wild. That's kind of fun.

Now that brings to mind, you introduced me—a long time ago, you introduced me to the work of François Mechain. We talked about landscape photography. Have you ever done any setup or conceptual kind of things along the lines of what he has done? Or did his work appeal to you because it had a certain conceptual bent, and it also deals with the real world in novel kinds of ways. Did you ever try anything like that independent of him or—?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I'm trying to remember now.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Because I don't remember seeing too many—anything quite like that. I've seen—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: No, not really, not physically. Like I might introduce another image into the landscape, but not physically change the landscape.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Other than the tree you just mentioned. [00:58:00] It just brought to mind that François image you were talking about, that sequence, but that's very different than what he did. He would alter the—he'd sculpturally alter them, but then fool around with it, photograph reality, but in a way, it sort of reminded me of that.

Now you mentioned color. There's a whole school of thought about that. Is there a particular reason why you sort of generally avoided color or—?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, at RIT, one of the assignments was to make a dye transfer print, which is one of the most difficult things to do. And it really turned me off.

LANNY SILVERMAN: One bad experience or couple bad experiences and you've learned that—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, this was in '52 or '53, you know. And also I would make transparencies, but they were never—I never felt they were successful.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, there are some—in terms of certain things that happen with black and white that are very different than with color and you see very differently when something that's in—there are some people who say the same thing about film. There's an argument to be made that some filmmakers that really love black and white film, and we'll get to digital stuff later in terms of that difference, too.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, I just saw "Nebraska."

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh yeah, that's wonderful.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And that's very well done.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And sometimes, like you say, having limitations, it's like the ID thing you were talking about. Sometimes—or having a problem. Sometimes having the limitations get you to do even more within the limitations.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, right. I was talking about the ID experience. You have these imitations and you can really concentrate then on a specific thing. And you have some leeway, but not a whole lot. Like Ray Metzger. You know his work.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: He did a—he was kind of arbitrary, but he did a whole series for his thesis [01:00:00] of photographs taken in the Loop. And he used the periphery of the boundaries of the Loop. He wouldn't photograph beyond that. I mean, for the project anyhow. And so here he was with a set number of streets, and he could concentrate on photographing just that area.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So like Minor White's little sort of trick to find the sound of one hand clapping, the process when you start to look at things in a different way and start to, you know, focus in and narrow in, it almost helps the process rather than having the whole world of possibilities.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, then you see other things. Like often I like photographing when I'm traveling. And I'll stop the car for one reason or another, you know, to pee or something. And I'll notice something I wouldn't have noticed had I just kept driving, something interesting to photograph right there.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I've been there. I used to have a long distance relationship, and I did a lot of Polaroid SX-70s of, like the Bechers, but different color work. I didn't usually use color, either. But it was—I just love the sort of alien nature of them. And in the travels I'd find—you're looking for—I wasn't looking for them, but they just happened upon, something you start to look at in a different way. So sometimes the context is really important.

I was going to ask you about traveling. As long as you come to it naturally let's examine that. I know you like to travel, and I'm curious, has that influenced your work? Have you done work that relates to your travels? I mean, you just mentioned you shoot when you're on the road.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Right. Yeah, I've done a lot of things I'm very satisfied with as a result of travel. Because one thing is if you're in an unfamiliar [01:02:00] environment, you look more closely at things. I find because of that there are really exciting visual things that if you were accustomed to being in that environment you probably wouldn't see.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You take things for granted. When your world is turned upside down, particularly in foreign travel, I find that you're looking at the world, you have to examine the core of everything you're looking at it because it's all different. The signals and cues are not the standard ones.

I know very much what you mean. That's a good point. So you see things differently when you're abroad.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah. And your experiences are interesting. Like I photographed in India a couple times, three months each time. And I would just wander the streets and photograph street life. And I would have maps I had gotten prior to going to India. And when I was there I would show someone on the street a map because I wanted to go to a certain location. And they don't understand. Most people there did not understand maps. They go by landmarks. So they would say, "See that large building down there? Well, you go there and then you turn left."

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's a lot of people, that's the way they reckon. I found it confusing in India because certain kind of Queen's English. They love speaking English, but they don't always understand. Sometimes it's better to just do what you're saying, point and shoot and lead you to the next place because the misunderstandings are kind of comical.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh god. I met this art collector, and he gave me a poster, I have it in the bathroom there, of an Indian painting. It's a lithograph, a very early one. And he gave it to me as a gift, but I didn't know how to transport it. [01:04:00] I figured out I could roll it up and get a tube.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So I went to look for a tube.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Hard to find there. They may not have it.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Okay, so like you said, a misunderstanding. I would ask someone. I would say, you know, where I could get a tube. And I think I had a—

LANNY SILVERMAN: A drawing?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: No, I had a toilet roll tube, and I said "but larger."

LANNY SILVERMAN: There you go.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And I said "tube." And they said yes, and they direct me to this store. And I'd go there and it was a bicycle shop.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Close.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Because a tube.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Tube, yeah, close. Those little language—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So I finally figured it out. I saw where they sell a lot of fabrics there, and they're rolled up on tubes.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That makes sense.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But you buy those things. Like, I had to mail something. You have to buy a box, a used box. Everything's recycled. I mean, we're into recycling. You should see India.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, they're the ones who actually take apart the computers, the little kids. It's probably not to their health advantages taking apart all other little rare earth kinds of materials. That's where all the stuff ends up. Yeah, there's a whole industry there of taking—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It's dangerous stuff.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Dangerous stuff, definitely.

Let's see. There's a bunch of things. I want to talk more about the specifics of your work, maybe for tomorrow. But I mentioned Barbara briefly, Barbara Crane. Were you friends with her? Were you friends with any of the other students? She was at ID when you were there?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: No. She came later.

LANNY SILVERMAN: She came later. She's roughly your age, isn't she?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: She's a little older.

LANNY SILVERMAN: She's a little older? Oh, but she came later. I didn't know that.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: We were colleagues at the Art Institute. She started teaching there.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, so that's where you know her more from.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: In maybe '68 she started. [01:06:00] Somewhere around there. You know, we've known each other all that time, you know, just forever.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, I figured you had to know her. It's a small photo world in town. I just thought given the era, early IIT things maybe you crossed paths then, but ironically it was later.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But I had classmates like Joe Jachna. Ray Metzger was a year ahead of us, and he didn't have much to do with us. He was kind of standoffish.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, it's interesting too because it sounds like—I mean I'm comparing notes with some of the other people. With some of the Hairy Who people, a really tight knit community, and the exhibitions and all the things sort of followed by their sort of friendships and the curator, the relationships.

That brings me to another point. I guess we could go into that a little bit. We haven't talked about exhibiting or how—we talked a little bit about how you managed to maneuver survival, which was teaching career, but in terms of exhibitions, what kinds of response did you have to your work early on and then starting out early on? Did you have, you know—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, the earliest was Nancy Newhall, wife of Beaumont Newhall. She was a writer. And she was very friendly with Ansel Adams. And she was putting together a show for the State Department, which was going to travel to embassies around the world.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I know those kinds of shows, sure.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And she selected one of my photographs. And Ansel Adams was going to—you had to give the negative to her so Ansel Adams could make a print.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's interesting.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So there would be this consistency of print quality for the show.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And so that was probably the first time—

LANNY SILVERMAN: When was that in your career? Roughly.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Fifty-eight.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That was pretty early on.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: [01:08:00] Earlier I won a Tripod for modern photography.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There you go.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But that wasn't an exhibition, but I was published, anyhow.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you were finding an outlet, a venue for an audience. You were finding ways to have your work shown.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, but the Ansel Adams story, I just called him one time I was in San Francisco. And he invited me over, you know. He didn't know me, you know. So I was showing him some work, which was probably boring him, but he saw the photographs that he had printed for the show, and he said, "That's from a D23 developer negative, right?"

And I said, "Yeah. How did you know?"

He said, "Oh, yeah."

How anyone could tell what developer was used for the film was beyond me.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, he was a stickler for printing in terms of—that's why I asked a little bit about that school of photography, because that's clearly not what you're about. But there are people that go obsessive and beyond. Yes, we'd have gallery talks in the Cultural Center, and people want to know exactly what—there are people who are just into that whole sort of obsessive level or detail, which it's okay. I mean, that's important, but it's not the whole thing. And that does attract a certain level of obsession, too. And he's of that school.

So I thought you were going to say something about him printing it because his standards were so high. I mean, he would probably reject some negatives because they weren't—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Perhaps.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —they weren't to his standard.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, luckily mine was okay, I guess.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you passed muster with the master. Muster with the master. That's weird.

So in terms of like—well, we were talking about the early '60s, late '50s and early '60s. Again, this period of time things changed quite a bit in terms of photography. [01:10:00] There weren't—I mean, now there were only a couple photo galleries. There aren't that many in town now even. But back then there weren't any photo galleries in Chicago, were there?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Not until about 1970 or so.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you weren't really showing in a gallery in town.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: There was Edward Hoch.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Hoch, yeah, that's one.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: He was pretty early.

LANNY SILVERMAN: He was showing Blue Chip. He was showing historical photos from what I remember.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And since then there have been a number of photo galleries. So you didn't really have a—did you show in New York at all or did you try to show in New York?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: The Light Gallery. It started in 1970 I think, and shortly after I did bring work there. They selected a few images, but I was in the back room, you know, not one of their stars.

But there were other galleries that started showing photography, and I would go to those galleries and show my work. Usually you left the work off, you know, and then picked it up.

LANNY SILVERMAN: They give you a response very formally, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And they didn't have to tell you anything.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that awkward moment because I've done the thing where you pitch something and they say, "Oh, not today. We have too many of these. Never mind." It's a dismissive kind of awful awkward moment.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I quickly learned that a lot of these gallery people are just very wealthy people that don't have to be nice to anyone.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, that's the thing, particularly in that era. Galleries in the art world is largely a class system. It was largely upper class, people that didn't need these—even people that worked in museums. Not me, but there were people that came from a different class and they didn't need the job. They could, you know, it's a whole different sensibility when you don't need to make the sale. And actually there are still galleries that are run like that.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But what helped me a great deal was Szarkowski. I met him through Hugh Edwards in the early '60s. And at that time I was sending out photographs [01:12:00] for season's greetings kind of things, you know, Christmas. So I sent him an image I had made of my son with my shadow over him. I don't know if you know that image.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I don't know if I know that one. I'll have to check that one out later. I'm curious.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But he really—he put that—it got there without being creased for some reason. It was like a postcard. I sent it through the mail. And he responded saying he put it in the collection. It was one of the cheapest acquisitions.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's great.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And then he published it in *The Photographer's Eye*, which was I think '64.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You weren't in the big show of his, the *Shadows and Mirrors* thing were you?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You were? *Mirrors*. I thought maybe you were because—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: *Mirrors and Windows*.

LANNY SILVERMAN: *Mirrors and Windows*. Thank you. It's been a long time since I looked at it obviously. I had a feeling maybe that's where I first saw your work. It probably was maybe before I came to town. That's right.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And it helped me a great deal to be published, and also to be in a MoMA collection.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Definitely.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Really helped my career. I mean, it—

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's a big deal.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Because I found a lot of museums and book publishers, they're very resistant to publishing anything, but if they know it's been published by like MoMA or published by some other well known—

LANNY SILVERMAN: This is the way capitalism works in general. It's the same thing with film. You know, they don't go with new—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: They have to take a chance.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You don't go with new untried things. You just do the same sequel or the same three ideas.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And that was bothering me because pretty soon I was known for maybe five photographs. And they weren't interested in looking at new work, you know. These other people had published them so we're going to publish that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that's probably—maybe before I came to Chicago that's probably the photo that I saw in there was probably the one with the boat. That's probably the proto-typical, you know, Ken Josephson. [01:14:00] That's probably where I saw that before here, I'm thinking, because somehow or other I think when I saw it I was, "Oh, this person lives here. This is a Chicagoan."

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, the one they published at *Mirrors and Windows* was the photograph of Matthew holding the Polaroid in front of him.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh yeah, that's sounding familiar now that you say that. I should check. I haven't looked at that book in ages. It's been a long time.

I saw him speak and he was wonderful. He was talking about the sort of dialectic idiot setup. I thought he was wonderful. Szarkowski.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, he was a wonderful writer. And the way he would make creative analogies about things to explain the process of photography or the aesthetics was just wonderful. And he had a gift.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I think that's why I mentioned him. I think he had a lot to do with opening up photography for people to see, for curators in art world to see that it wasn't just documentary or street photography, and it wasn't just abstraction, that there's so much more you can do with it as a medium that I think it came into its own.

And then of course there was some big collectors and things that happened where, you know, it gained in monetary value as well, and that's when—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Can I take a break?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh sure, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And would you like something to drink? Would you like some juice?

[Audio break.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: I don't know where we were, but I guess let's resume.

I guess I'm interested to know a little bit about what the Chicago—I mean, we talked about Edward Hoch. There weren't many photo galleries. There weren't many photo opportunities at the point in time we're talking about, the early '60s and '70s. There were galleries. Marianne Deson showed in some galleries, didn't she? Rhona maybe, Rhona Hoffman.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Rhona started in the early '80s.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That would make sense. Okay, that's what I thought.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It was Young Hoffman.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, right. She was with her husband. That was what I was thinking of, yes. That's a whole story, too. [01:16:00]

So you actually did have a dealer in town?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Right. From—yeah. From—it must have been like 1980 on with Rhona until I went with—I was with her a long time. And then I went to Daiter Gallery, I think in '07 or so, somewhere around there.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But Stephen was generally speaking focusing more on the Blue Chip and less on the contemporary. I think that grew, and the contemporary stuff grew.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, it did.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Was that because the market grew for contemporary you think, and that's why he opened up?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah. And he was very interested in ID photography.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Of course. And you mentioned Sinsabaugh. Doesn't he show, Art?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Sinsabaugh.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, because I think he actually did a catalogue of ID work. I seem to remember that, yeah.

So even though there's a Chicago that doesn't support its own, there was a certain kind of support for Chicago photography at least through Stephen Daiter, but—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah. I remember Callahan. I think it was before he went to RISD. It must have been in 1961 or so. He had an exhibition. It was on Ontario Street. I can't remember the gallery. It was—I just vaguely remember going there.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Was it a photo gallery or just a general gallery?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I think it was a general art gallery.

Anyhow, he didn't sell a single photograph.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, selling is a whole different matter, which I was going to ask you about, too. As far as I've been saying, it seems like it became more of a commodity and people were buying it. [01:18:00] Especially there was a major collection that was—this is not even MoMA. This might be Arizona or something. There's some major sales—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, you mean the Center for Creative Photography at Tucson?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. There's some major collections—yeah, that's what I'm talking about.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It's a huge collection.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, I think that may be what happened at a certain point. Certain things opened up the buying market for photography and MoMA and people taking it seriously, and we've alluded to—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, this—Crane sold the bulk of his collection to the Getty.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Okay, yeah, the Getty has a huge—yeah. There's another photo collector in town I was going to ask you about. Ruttenberg, is that his name? David Ruttenberg?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: David, yeah. He's passed of course.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I knew him. Yeah, his son's still around. They have a foundation.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, he was a wonderful person.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, they came to NAME Gallery when I was there. And actually I had good dealings with him.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, yeah. And he encouraged a lot of people. He bought work from me. He also sponsored me to go to India for my second trip.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's great.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: In exchange for so many photographs, but I was able to go there because of him.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So there has been support in town for you? I guess that's why I was asking about it just in terms of like the sales end of it. Obviously since you were teaching you didn't have to necessarily sell things, but it's always nice to have an audience, to have a viewing audience as well. And you've also published books, yes? Catalogues and books?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I have some here.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you've managed to have some sort of success in terms of getting that kind of audience. Is that something that you struggled with or came easily or just happened as a result of exhibitions?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It just kind of happened. But early on I just saw the value of having your work in print and exposure.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's your legacy.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: [01:20:00] Exposure as opposed to having an exhibition. The number of people that come in contact with your work is just huge through books or any kind of publications.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure. And it's funny too because for many artists that's really the legacy. I mean, how many people come to collectors' homes or see things? If you want an audience you want it to get out there in the world. And unfortunately books and catalogues are possibly an endangered species being replaced by being online, which you well know in terms of someone who practices the craft of illusion and appearances, things look very different online than they do when you're—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I think book reproductions is a close facsimile—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, it can be done well.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —to the photograph.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I find it difficult to look online at images.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, for functional purposes to just identify something or just to see what it is—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But I do have a book coming out in spring, a big one, about 250 photographs, Texas University Press. Lynne Warren wrote the introduction, or essay rather.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's great. She's a big supporter. That's great. That's really wonderful. And actually as I say it is getting hard to do books for the reasons I think—I don't know what's going on in terms of—it's the salability. The problem is marketing. There's so much free stuff out there and circulating. And not only that but writing wise, too. It's not just creative content, but its academic content out there online for free that's hard to monetize it and make a book any more. You can print them cheaply now, and you can digitally print in ways that are—make it more efficient, but not easy.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But I like the feel of a book, the weight of it, just the act of touching it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Even what you mentioned, you mentioned an artist book that you'd done earlier, which we're not on tape or whatever, [01:22:00] but just audio, but you showed me something where it was pieces of bread that were meant to be facing images. There's an act of opening and perusing a book and experiencing a book that's very different from seeing bam, bam, bam, a whole bunch of images. So even just that sequential sort of narrative that you build up, you could do something, but it would be different than seeing it in a book where you physically open it up and close it.

So, yeah, there's an object-ness of a book that's very different than, unfortunately, than—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, there's things about the new technology that you can't do in any other way, and I think that's interesting.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, we'll talk about that. I want to save that for tomorrow because I want to talk about, like, how you've changed in terms of your working methods and whether you have a whole bunch of digital technology to my left, stage left, but it doesn't matter. I mean, I think one of the things is that you're still involved with the process of making the stuff. There are people that—you mentioned darkroom, the magic of the darkroom from early on. You still do your own darkroom printing?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, I have a darkroom here.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Okay, I didn't see the darkroom. That's kind of interesting, too. And so we'll talk about digital stuff, which you don't have to deal with the chemicals anymore. You mentioned the fixes and all that stuff.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I rarely do digital work.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, really? So you're still pretty old school.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It's all silver prints.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Silver prints.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Because all the galleries I have, maybe with the exception of Yancey Richardson in New York, want silver prints. They'd rather sell those than digital.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's an interesting question. I'll bring that up tomorrow probably because I was going to ask you about Vivian Maier and some of that craziness that occurred there because that has a lot to do with whether they were digitally printed. And she died. Her work is printed posthumously. [01:24:00] Whether or not the print choice was digital or silver print, whether or not they're full frame, there's all those issues about who does it and who controls it. Speaking of the art world craziness. It's quite a story.

That's one probably—in terms of the craziness in my latter years at the Cultural Center—that was probably the craziest thing I've ever seen. But that has a lot to do with showing you the value of marketing through, you

know, that kid John Maloof who got it going because he put something online, and didn't know what he had, and he got responses from even Joel Meyerowitz and some other heavies. But then it spiraled. When they say something goes viral that's really what happened. It went viral and it became huge, and now there's lawsuits and ugliness and Academy Awards. It's gotten out of control. We'll have that conversation tomorrow.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It's like in Nebraska, all the relatives.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, once there's, yeah, once there's something to be gotten. And that's what I was saying about the art world. This was maybe off mic. But, yeah, when there's not very much to be gained, you know, like in academia, and there's a lot of people that want it, all a sudden it gets ugly. It may be beauty in art, but on the other hand, it can be very primal and ugly in terms of the politics.

So, yeah, we've both survived. So we're doing okay.

So Chicago, in terms of critics, at the point in time, when we're talking about, '60s and '70s where we were kind of roughly located, there was a new *Art Examiner*. I don't think there was *Dialogue*. I don't think there were many art magazines or ways to get—and there were some writers that wrote for national magazines.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Artner.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Alan Artner, yeah. Very good work.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: He liked my work a lot, and he wrote several times about it. I really appreciated that. His writing's quite good.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I liked Alan. I actually liked his writing, too. Even if you disagree with him, it was interesting. And he was a Francophile too, so I have a feeling you had some things in common. He liked—I think I remember he studied either French literature or theater or something like that. [01:26:00] He was an interesting man, too.

So he was one of the only games in town. There were some other writers, but he was the main one. So that's kind of important in terms of audience. How did you feel about the response to your work since you were getting—you were, I guess started asking when you were talking about Rhona and some other dealers, did you make many sales through them?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Not a lot, no. Rhona was very good. She'd always give me a space if I wanted to show work.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So she was supportive?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: She was wonderful that way, but there weren't a lot of sales through her. Some, but not very many. But then she directed me to Yancey Richardson in New York. And of course New York, the sales are much better, you know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, there was more of a—and a lot of Chicago—we were talking about Chicago collectors. A lot of Chicago collectors born in New York, even a few Chicago artists. Some of it had to do with tax breaks.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So, yeah, then Daiter directed me to Gitterman Gallery in New York, and he sold a lot of work. And he's had a couple of exhibitions I've had there.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's great.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And then there's one other person on the West Coast. What's his name? David? No? Trying to remember his name.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's probably on your sheet.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm not sure. I mean, Los Angeles—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Koch, his name is. It's in San Francisco.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, San Francisco.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Robert Koch.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, Robert Koch. That sounds familiar.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, and he's shown my work a couple of times, two exhibitions. [01:28:00]

So with those galleries, you know, I get quite a bit of exposure.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And you're still with Daiter, because I've seen—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Daiter's home base, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's the home base.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: The other galleries have to work through him. If they want a print they have to contact him to get the print. He gets a small percentage.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, they usually share—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: The sale, but very little he gets from that. Enough to cover the cost, I guess.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And he does catalogues and does some other kinds of wonderful things in terms of support. I mean, he's a good guy.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, I've done two little books through him.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And actually—I think that's, you know, one of the things—I mean, the old school system of galleries is also changing as well because nowadays a lot of sales and things are done on the internet. They're not even—I mean, I guess you still want people to come in and see the actual work. I would be really sad if that didn't happen, but a lot of stuff happens on the internet now.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah. He was talking about that, that the tenants for galleries—art openings have fallen off a lot. People tend to look at the images on the internet.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's sad.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It's a different experience, but it's the way things are now.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, there's even collectors.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: People are not having enough time to do things.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Now part of it is time, and part of it has to do with just changing perceptions I think. Even for me, watching a movie on a small screen, like on your mobile phone or something, that's just—other than maybe for just pure functionality, if you really had to see something. But in terms of the art of it, even just the experience of being in a darkened room. It's like we were saying with books. It's a very different—in a social situation, it's very different. And the things that are being given up in this digital age aren't always that apparent to people. And I think it's sort of sad if they just sort of slowly fade away and people don't realize what they missed. [01:30:00]

And being in front of a work of art is very different, any work of art, is very different than seeing it on a computer screen, which isn't all bad. There are things you can get out of it. Yes, for my research purposes, it's great. I can look at your work and I can see, "Oh, yeah. I didn't know this nude series. I didn't know this." I can see things I couldn't see.

But even with photography and even black and white photography, it's different in pixel form. And actually there are things you can take advantage of, and we'll talk about that, too, I guess.

So in terms of the Chicago art scene, did you hang out with any of the other sort of the Art Institute crowd? Since you taught there, I thought maybe—I noticed whenever there were shows at the Cultural Center, there's a very tight knit group at the Art Institute. They're very supportive of each other, and they tend to hang out together and support each other's openings. Did you hang out with the Art Institute people when you were teaching there? Did you have a sort of coterie of friends and colleagues?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: A certain amount, like Ray Yoshida, I was friendly with and hung out with him somewhat. Some people that had left already. There was a painter named Douglas Craft that I used to hang out with a lot. And Ray Martin, the printmaker.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I know Ray. I did a show with Ray. I like Ray a lot.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So Ray came the same year I did to the Art Institute, and he also came from ID So you

did something with Ray?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. Did you see the show we did at the Cultural Center?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: When was that?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Ten or 15 years ago. My memory's a little fuzzy.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I don't think I did see it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's sad because it was really neat. It was a really nice show. And he didn't show very much, I don't think. I don't know why. In town, at least, I'm not sure.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: No, I don't think he did show a lot.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No. It's one of the reasons why we did it. And actually he was a delightful man. I really liked him.

And we did a show with Art Paul too at about the same point in time, 10 or 15 years ago. And he hardly ever showed his own work. [01:32:00] It's sad because he's now got a show at the Ukrainian Museum, but he's very shy about promoting his own work.

So there was a crew of people you hung out with? When you mentioned Barbara, who you knew better from the —

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, and the other people in my department, like Joyce and Frank Barsotti. And so I would hang out with those people.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, because that's one of the things that's kind of—there's a little bit of, it's not quite a clique, but there's pluses and minuses, but there's a strength in sort of that support system that they seem to have at the Art Institute. It's a major sort of player in town in terms of the art world.

In terms of what you've seen and in terms of changes in the Chicago photo or art worlds, what do you notice in the last—you've been here for longer than me. When did you come to Chicago?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: In 1958.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yeah, that's a lot longer than me. So you've seen the whole spectrum of things. What have you seen in terms of changes in the art and photo world?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It's getting better. There's more galleries. I think the quality of the work has improved considerably. I think there's some exciting shows that happen, like at the Museum of Contemporary Art.

It's a little spotty, but I like some of the shows, like Dan Flavin.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It was just a gorgeous show. I mean, I still can see it in my mind.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm glad that you're not—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: The way it was presented.

LANNY SILVERMAN: We've see so much stuff, so much art that I'm glad that you still can be wowed. [01:34:00] I liked the Doris Salcedo show recently. That really wowed me a lot, too. So it's nice that—you get so inured to seeing the stuff and there's so much shtick and stuff that you get tired of, it's nice when you do still see something that you love.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And the Magritte show that came from MoMA that was very different, I understand. I didn't see it at MoMA, but it's very—the presentation was quite different here. I liked the presentation, all those dark, small rooms, and it opened up to like a whole row of images, you know, in that large gallery.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's also part of the experience of seeing something in a museum. As a curator, I got to say that's part of a joy of putting together a show. There's exhibition design and there's ways to lead someone through an experience. It can really greatly affect what you're seeing and experiencing. The way it's presented is very important. And, you know, sometimes artists have a say in that, and sometimes, you know, and sometimes they don't care. But still, it's an important part of it.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But I think, you know, there's a number of photography galleries, and I'm not always interested in what they're showing, but I like the variety of all the work.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's some decent younger photographers. I've seen some decent work in town. And actually, it's kind of sad because I think one of the things that happens with the whole Hairy Who and Imagist thing is people don't realize that we've got Conceptual artists. We've always had, like you, Conceptual artists, photographers, sculptors. There's a lot of other things in Chicago than maybe you would first be aware of.

But there's some very, very interesting photographers. We showed a fair amount. I'm very interested in photography, as you know, and so we showed a lot of interesting. [01:36:00] And before me Ken Burckhardt showed a lot of very interesting things at the Cultural Center, too.

So was there any younger—as long as we're still talking about changes in the art world. Are there any names that come to mind of younger photographers? Someone just won the MacArthur Foundation genius grant, a photographer. Toby just read out the name to me, it was a woman's name. I didn't even know who it was. Can't think of the name right now. So there's apparently people that I'm not paying attention to all that they do. Any names that come to mind?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: A lot of names that come up I don't recognize.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's what I'm saying. I didn't recognize this one, and she—uh-oh. That was pretty funny. The news was kind of surprising because generally speaking I think, you know, of the level where they get the genius grant you would think you would know the name, but it must have been a younger photographer.

Any of the Chicago artists or photographers in the last 10 or 15 years that excite you in terms of inspire you?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Morell, I think his name is.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, I don't know.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I have his book. Well, maybe it's upstairs. He's a Magnum photographer, but I like his work.

And actually I had a contact with him. He was a student at Yale when I gave a talk there, and he remembered me in terms of what my work was like. He said it influenced him a lot.

Anyhow, I like his work. I don't know if it's because of the influence or what.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Maybe it goes back and forth both ways.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But I like his work a lot. I mean, he's not terribly young, but he's younger than I am.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Let me see, there's another person. I can't think of the name right now.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, maybe you'll think of it tomorrow.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: There aren't—you know, [01:38:00] there aren't a lot of young people that I see often to remember who they are.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. Well, when you were teaching you probably got students that you'd see student work and that probably was another way to stay current with what kids were up to in terms of the latest. Did that actually help in terms of your own work, seeing other ideas and people moving things forward, particularly the whole digital age?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, yeah, it was wonderful, just being around people like that. And you could see how they were developing, you know, their ideas. A lot of them amazed me. Like, I would kind of give up on them as artists, and the next year they'd blossom. And it wasn't because of me necessarily. It was something that happened in their life.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that happens with art. Some people do crap for quite a while and then all of a sudden it just starts—it's amazing, transforms.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It never fails to amaze me. I experience that a lot with students.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you can't write someone off too early.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: No, it's true. I learned that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's interesting, too.

I think we're pretty good in terms for today. I want to save some things for tomorrow. We'll take more about some of the specifics of your work and how you developed ideas and what your process is like. And maybe a little bit on some other things, too. It should be pretty good for starting point.

Let's see. I'm hitting stop. I guess so.

[END OF joseph15_1of2_sd_track02_r]

This is track three.

LANNY SILVERMAN: This is Lanny Silverman representing the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. I'm interviewing Ken Josephson at his home—

MR. JOSEPHSON: Kenneth.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Kenneth?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Josephson at his home and studio and it's September 30th, 2015.

[END OF joseph15_2of2_sd_track01_r]

This is track four.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So I guess some of the questions I had were to follow up on yesterday's—talking about your, sort of, career sort of things—career issues. One of them was, you started the Society for Photographic Education.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I was one of the founding members.

LANNY SILVERMAN: One of the founders of that?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Can you tell me a little bit more about that? Because I didn't really know that.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, there was a gathering—we saw a need for dialogue between institutions that was—were teaching photography on a higher level and just, you know, like auto mechanics. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, more practical, functional things.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah. Vocational.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Vocational, there you go.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: That's the word I was looking for.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, yeah, vocational photography.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So anyhow—and also, there was an organization for professional photographers; it's called Professional Photographers of America. And they were pushing aesthetics that were diametrically opposed to ours and we thought there should be another influence—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure, why not? More voices.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —going on, another society that could present books, and history, and a discussion of the teaching of photography on a college level. So that's the reason it was formed. And it was curators, photographers, photographers who are [00:02:00]—were also teachers that were invited initially to this first meeting in Rochester, New York at the George Eastman House. And it was probably—I'm trying to think of about how many people were there and it could have been, like, 40 to 50, perhaps.

LANNY SILVERMAN: When did this start?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: 1962.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, so that's a pretty long time. Is it still going on?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yes, it is, and it's grown to—membership is in thousands now.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Wow. Is it in Cleveland? Or was it in Cleveland?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I think their—I think their main offices may be in Cleveland. I'm trying to remember who I communicate with when I do. But they have national meetings once a year and regional meetings. The regional meetings are, like, in four areas of the United States. And so, at these meetings, they're given—some people are given awards; people make presentations about new ways of using photography and projects that they've done. So it's usually about a three-day meeting. It was in Chicago a couple years ago. It's going to be in New Orleans this year, I think.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That would be fun.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So they go—sometimes it's in Albuquerque. It's all over—San Francisco, you know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you're still involved with it but less so, perhaps, than when you started?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I'm not very much involved with it anymore.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, I can understand that. [00:04:00] I think right now you have other priorities. I also didn't follow up on some of your, sort of, background. I know that you got a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship and—what else? Maybe there's a—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: There were two NEA grants—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, NEA grants, too. How did that help your work? Did you use that to travel? I think maybe you mentioned that, perhaps.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, every grant I got I used to travel and photograph.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And actually—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And—

LANNY SILVERMAN: —that came up with India, maybe?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: They were extremely helpful.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And they were unrestrictive. It was kind of like, "Just give us your address where we can send the money." I mean, they were just very—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's wonderful.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Guggenheim and NEA were just very uncomplicated once they awarded you the grant. And then Ruttenberg gave me a grant—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yeah, and we talked about them enough. I don't know if it was on the record or not about the collector.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: And speaking of Ruttenberg and collectors, I saw that you had done a piece that incorporated a hologram and I can't think of her name. There's another—there's a collector, Susan, and there's a couple that do those 3D—those holographic-ish, kind of, three-dimensional photographic prints. Do you know who I'm talking about? They also have a photography collection. You don't know I mean. I should have looked that up.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I think I know who you mean but I never—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Carl's done one. Carl had one in the show. They're these, sort of—it's somewhat analogous to a hologram. It is—and it's a process. And I should have looked this up. This is sort of [inaudible]. I knew there was something I forgot that—so you haven't—because I thought maybe since you expressed some interest in

the 3D aspect that you were talking about not just collage but in hologram piece I saw. So that was a one-off kind of thing that you did, the hologram piece. You didn't get too involved with—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I don't remember doing that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, really? Let's see if I have a note on there. I think I do. I did take some notes when I was looking. That's the thing about Google: I can find things that you can't remember. [Laughs.]

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, okay.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [00:06:00] I don't remember what it was but it was in probably one of the gallery sites. I think I marked down—and actually, I think I marked down what it was. I think I did. We'll find out, won't we? [Laughs]. I don't see that just off hand. Well, it's—we can move on. That's too bad because—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Because three-dimensional things I mentioned were—

LANNY SILVERMAN: It was a collage that had a—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —objects, like, sculptural things.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, but this had a—this was actually a collage but it also had—and it said hologram in it, too. And again, since it's online, you can't really tell what's going on there.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, I did make a—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Maybe a truck image?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —collage that incorporated one of those printed ones.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, it was, like, one of those—yeah, I know what you mean, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I did that one time.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, okay. That's probably what that—so that wasn't one off.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It was of the Buckingham Fountain.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's it. That's which one it was. It was Buckingham Fountain. Because yeah, that was a deconstruction, so to speak, a taking apart of all the facets of it.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that's the one that I saw. Yeah, I guess I didn't write that down.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, okay.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So I guess that's a lead-in to maybe talking about your work more. Specifically, you mentioned a couple bodies of work. It seems like your work can be organized around bodies of work. You mentioned *Evidence*, which was, sort of, wonderful, the sort of traces and memories of—physical and otherwise of things. And we talked about the *Pictures within Pictures*, which we'll come to in a moment because that's, kind of, the one where I first—and a lot of people, that's probably the first entrée into your work. And we talked about *News* which we'll get back to, as well. Are there any other bodies—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And then *History of Photography*.

LANNY SILVERMAN: *History of Photography*. Are there other—any other bodies of work—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: *Archaeological series*.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, you mentioned that with the rulers, too, with the—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: The meter sticks.

LANNY SILVERMAN: The meter sticks, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: That was interesting because as soon as you would put the meter stick next to some common object, it somehow—the viewer sees it as important because—

[They laugh.]

—[00:08:00] just for the fact that you put that measuring device next to it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And this probably also hearkens back to what you said yesterday about some of the commercial photography, the jobs you would have, the gigs where you had to put something to scale next to it. [Laughs].

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Right. People would have their hands pointing, you know, so—

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Laughs.] Yeah, which is a funny, sort of, I don't know, trope. It's a funny kind of, like, stick or something or other. But I guess it does serve a purpose.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So then the other, sort of, collage. And then this—images of books that I did was a series.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I saw some of those online, too, where there are very much abstract, beautiful patterns from the side. They turn into abstractions.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: What else? Any—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I think that's all of them.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, so do you purposely organize them by—in other words, do you set about to do a series or do you happen to just be obsessed by a particular bunch of stuff and it sort of comes out that way?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I'm attracted to certain ideas and I, you know, look at my work and I see that I'm making images about that idea a number of times. And then, so I turn it into a series. And then I have all these series going. So when I'm out looking for things to photograph, I have all of these to draw on, you know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. And you come back to them? Do you exhaust—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I come back to them, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, so you don't just exhaust it and move on. You sometimes—it's sort of, like—sort of, like with Art Green. I was talking to him about his visual vocabulary. He works and goes back over—that would be helpful, too.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Here. That's kind of the list.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, cool. That's very nice.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: That's the only copy I have of that—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, you've worked in SX70 which I talked about. I don't think I've seen any of that. So you actually are aware of your, sort of, visual vocabulary and you sometimes fool around with this sort of thinking, "Oh, this fits." You see something—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: [00:10:00] It fits into the history or—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Fits into the—

Kenneth Josephson —something like that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, or one of the series. I was going to ask you but you just answered the question before we started recording: you showed me the series that you did on Matthew, your son. I was going to ask you if you ever did more extended portraiture and apparently you had, at least in that case.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I've done quite a few portraits of my partner, Marilyn, more recently and that's turned into a series.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Are they done fairly straight in the—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It's collaboration because we work together on making these.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Is this more like Cindy Sherman where there's some sort of persona?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well there's, like—a lot of them have references to Marilyn Monroe.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's the Marilyn Monroe thing so—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, so—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, so the ones that we're looking at that were around your studio, were you the photographer of those or is that—?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I'm primarily the photographer, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, I thought she had maybe photographed them. So that's a collaboration. So she's doing the persona; you're doing the photography.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Right, and—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's cool.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's a nice combo. Yeah, and I wasn't sure—as we said yesterday before we started recording, I wasn't sure what was going on there because apparently she does have a resemblance but it's kind of fooling at that—seeing her with that—holding a camera is sort of fooling with it in another level, too. And I guess—I did see—the one self-portrait I saw in looking at your work was a rather lovely and humorous one of you with—in front of the T.V. set.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, this is a recent one I did of Marilyn. That's not a reference to Marilyn Monroe but it's more of a reference to her.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Okay, so it's more specific to—oh, I see. And there's—yeah, and I'm going to ask about the nudes in a second before we get—leave this subject. I did see the one self-portrait, and it's probably in here, too, of—it's of you in front of the T.V. set with your feet—just your feet which reminds me of John Coplans who I worked for briefly.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: He did a whole series of his feet which I thought was amusing.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, he had—

LANNY SILVERMAN: He took some photos of me when I—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —his imagery [00:12:00] was very unique and very surprising.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, after all those years of being a curator and a director—and the director of *Artforum*, then to see that or—he had some photographs of me. Maybe one day I'll see something—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, really? [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, because I actually had worked for them and then I had to come in to give a—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, you did?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, I worked for him at the Akron Museum briefly and—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, what was he—

LANNY SILVERMAN: He was brilliant. He was the director.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Was he the director of that?

LANNY SILVERMAN: He was the director before Michael Danoff came which was a real letdown, off the record. I suppose it's on the record now. But it was—because John Coplans is brilliant and did amazing photo shows, amazing shows in general.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, I'm sure he was.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, and even in terms of knowing how to set—how to, you know, make the work really look

good, he was—in that sense of connoisseurship he was the old school one. And I've also worked for Sherman Lee. I've had some, you know, amazing bosses.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, and his depiction of an older body to make it look interesting was pretty good.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Speaking of sculptural: incredibly sculptural and it's, like, aging in a very advance stage all of a sudden becomes fascinating. It's kind of—yeah, it's interesting, the transformation. Did you know Tom Garver? I also worked for Tom Garver. He did some—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Sounds familiar.

LANNY SILVERMAN: He did the book on his—he worked with the photographer who did the trains, the slow-motion, the stop-motion stuff. I've forgotten his name. It's a famous photographer.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Trains?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, trains, Winston—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Winston Link.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, Link, yeah, right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, he was—he was either his assistant or worked with him closely, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, yeah, because those were very curious photographs. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: And I think—yeah, and Tom was a pretty fast—I—some of the curators who we were talking I think off the record about some of the sordidness of the art world. But some of the people I work for, the ones who made it through [laughs], were fascinating characters. I've worked for some interesting ones. So getting back to the self-portraits, did you do anything else other than that somewhat perverse one of you—[00:14:00] your feet in front of the T.V. set [laughs], the glowing screen?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, I did—I did a lot of self-portraits but they're, like, my shadow or—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yeah, I know those, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I did another one of my crotch with a pepper in front of it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So those visual puns that you do—that you do with the female nudes, too, right.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, it's Weston kind of thing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And in Europe, I discovered these people who would use paper in their camera at tourist areas. They would expose—they would make an exposure on paper in the camera which would come out a negative, right?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And then as you were wandering around the site wherever that tourist area was, this person then would—and he had all the chemicals underneath in a light-tight area to process the paper. Then he'd put the paper on a paddle and used a different lens or the same lens, I can't remember, and make a copy of that so it'd come out positive on paper.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And so—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And you would tell him ahead of time how many copies you wanted, you know, and he'd make them. And then they'd be ready for you when you came.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So how did it end up differing from traditional photography?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, there was no film involved.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Just—it was a, sort of—not contact but there's a direct print kind of thing, almost like a photogram kind of—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, a paper negative.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, like a photogram almost.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But it wasn't—it was photographed rather than printed through.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Right.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Like a contact print. So it was like a forerunner of Polaroid in a way.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yeah, that is.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Only it was extremely slow.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

[They laugh.]

Not the one-minute thing. I guess—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So I did a number of [00:16:00] photographs dealing with that and I would photograph the contraption and these people working with it. And they were kind of fascinating and I'd bump into them all kinds of places in Europe.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Laughs.] That's pretty fun.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I mean, they're in other countries, too, I'm sure. I'm just not—didn't visit those.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I guess what I was going to ask you about—this probably relates much as to the portraits and the self-portraits but also perhaps to the nudes. I know there's a sense of, a wry sense of humor that you sometimes bring to some of those visual puns and things like that. But what do you think you brought to the portraiture and to the nudes that was different than maybe some of the people you studied with? You know, I know Callahan did some exquisite things and you mentioned Steichen. What—did you consciously try to do something different with either nudes or portraiture then, or did you do some straight—you did some that were fairly straight, I think.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah. Well, I did a kind of portraiture that incorporated some of the series I did. I can show you some of the—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, rather than that—because it's going to be hard for people to—on—off the audio, it'll be hard. If we describe them and just tell me what they are it'd be quite the better for the moment. So you did some—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I photographed, like—I had a boot, bronzed, with a woman's shoe. And the woman's shoe is—the heel's going into my—into the bronze boot as if it was either intentional or a dance mistake. [00:18:00] And I have my high school portrait in a gold frame, I guess it is, sitting there with the boot. And I don't know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you've layered some of the ideas, as you said, some of the sort of tropes or sort of visual vocabularies I've been calling them. Some of those things fit in. I saw that some—like some of them are visual puns or pictures within pictures where, sort of, displacements—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, I did another with a mat—an open mat, right, cut mat with my hair coming out. I'm holding it, you know—

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you're coming out of the frame, literally and figuratively.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah. And like, I have another one with boots again with my pants falling down over the boots, you know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, so—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Just those kinds of pictures, I guess. And if you look, I photographed, like, my wife in the bathtub when she was—

LANNY SILVERMAN: I saw that, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —pregnant where her stomach breaking the water—

LANNY SILVERMAN: So it's water in water.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But they're scattered through there—through there.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Affirmative]. So there are visual puns and there are pictures within pictures. So you've—but you did—I did see—what was curious to me to—when looking—I see the boot things here now, too. That's why I didn't—I wasn't aware. I guess I scanned through them pretty quickly. And some of these things are transformed through your sensibility. But there was some straight, sort of, photography that you did, even some street photography. I was going to ask you about it when I was looking online. I found a couple things that were kind of curious to me. There were two women on—in a dark background and some Chicago sort of street photography [00:20:00] that you did.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: [Affirmative.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: And what it reminded me of which is actually backwards because it's probably—almost certainly the other way around—were you familiar with Gary Stochl? He was somebody that Bob Thall—he's another one that came before Vivian Maier discovery.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, okay.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's—she wasn't alone. Everyone thinks that that's—and after her there were all kinds of people calling up and saying, "Oh, I've got all these pictures I've ordered."

[They laugh.]

You can imagine what that's like. Well, before that, a year or two before, Bob Thall over at Columbia had met with some strange photographer who was—he had no—I don't know if he was functionally—he never had the job—he was the caretaker for his parents. He was a stay-at-home, self-taught photographer.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I think I know who you mean.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And he did—they did a book and it's—it—there's a couple photos of his that look very much like yours. As a matter of fact, a very dark sort of play of light and shadow—it's probably—it could be Aaron Siskind. It could be other things that he was familiar with. Or Ray Metzger you mentioned. It's probably more like the Ray Metzger stuff.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, he photographed in the Loop quite a bit and I remember those. They're interesting images.

LANNY SILVERMAN: They were. I thought they were quite good. Now, Rod Slemmons thought they were just, you know—they were no Robert Frank or Gary Winogrand or whatever he was comparing it to, and I think Lee Friedlander. They weren't, but they were quite interesting. And he taught himself—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, he's self-taught, you know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: He was self-taught. And he, again, just like Vivian Maier, he clearly had a knowledge of not just international photography but I have a feeling he probably looked at some of the Chicago people were talking about, if not yours.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, I'm sure.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Because those—there were a couple of specific ones that—not just the one with the two women that just looked awfully much like things he had done. I wonder if that's—if I ever see him again, he's still around, he was one of those flames that went up and then I think he was—the Art Institute bought some pieces and he had some shows and—for the first time in his life. And then—and then he just disappeared, whereas Vivian Maier the stuff still goes on, the lurid stories of, you know, who's going to own them and all the—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, he probably didn't have a very, you know, large body of work perhaps. I don't know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Probably not—nothing like—nothing like Vivian Maier. [00:22:00] And actually—so you did some straight street photography, I guess, getting back to you.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, yeah, I did—

LANNY SILVERMAN: You did do some—and you did do some straight nudes in a way that looked very much like some of your mentors. I can sense their influence—where you didn't strain them through your Ken Josephson

mentality. [Laughs.] So what made you go back to the—were those earlier pieces that were more straight, both the street photography and the nudes, or were those just some type—playing around with different ways? You don't always work the same way.

[They laugh.]

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: That's a hard question.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I don't know, I just—it's kind of curious because I see you going back and forth in style.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, earlier there's more straight images and documentary things which would fall into the category "street photography."

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Like that book I did for my undergraduate project on Front Street in Rochester, New York was purely documentary and there are a lot of portraits in that one.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you developed this—oh, I guess I should probably say something here, too. In some senses, it's really important to, you know, to mention that many regard you as perhaps, you know, the father of Conceptual photography in a way. And I've seen that maybe online. It's not my assessment, I think, it's an outside assessment. And there were probably people working, as we said, in some similar modes before you. I don't think you're the first but you certainly were—do you—how do you deal with that particular sort of— [laughs]. I know you're humble and not necessarily would tell—you wouldn't say that, I'm sure, but—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I let other people say it.

[They laugh.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: You let other people say it?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Like Lynne Warren.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You're proud of it though, I would think, because—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I'm very proud of it, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Because I think if I look at it in terms of, you know, how you stand out, it's—there wasn't a stuff like this and it certainly was very different. I mean, Duane Michaels came after you, didn't he? He's sort of a different branch.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: No, I think he came prior to me. I started working on those series of—

LANNY SILVERMAN: I was going to ask you a little about that, too—[00:24:00]

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —sequences that he did.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, I was going to say you've done some sequential photography as I have, too, so I'm very interested in that. I was—being a curator, I'm very structural so—and I did something almost like a film, a sequence of people moving through a—the same space in a mall. And so, it ends up being, like, a narrative thing. Have you ever done any narrative sequential photography? He usually adds text. That's one of the things I don't think you usually do. Have you done anything like that either?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: The cover of the museum—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Underneath here.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Underneath there, okay. That's a sequence.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yeah, yeah, I saw that one, the light bulb, sure. And actually—so you have done some sequential—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And also that parking lot image, the collage where the people are—the shopping carts, they're repeated.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you have done some narrative—so were you—I guess the question then is since he—I'm now finding maybe it was a little bit before you. Were you aware of his work at the time or did he get the—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Michaels?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, Michaels.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, yeah, I was aware of Michaels' work, sure.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that was probably an influence then, too, perhaps.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, in a way. Actually, I did *The Bread Book* as—I thought some of his sequential things were kind of dumb.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Laughs.] Oh, really?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And I thought, "Well, I could out-dumb him, and do this Bread Book," you know, which is pretty—[laughs].

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, it's sort of—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It's like—

LANNY SILVERMAN: —deadpan.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —real simple and kind of—kind of dumb in some ways. And it's very unique in other ways, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, it's much more—his work is more about dream life [00:26:00] and sort of psychological—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And fantasy.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —fantasy, psychological, uses—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, those don't—that—those subjects don't interest me.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Those don't—that area doesn't—yeah, I was going to say you have a more deadpan sense of humor.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Like I hardly ever watch a horror film and I hate, like, sci-fi movies, and I hate cartoons.

[They laugh.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, there's—well, some of them have a—that sense of humor. There are cartoons that have the wry sense of humor and there's some that are probably—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I don't like to sit through them.

[They laugh.]

I really enjoy reality when it's presented—you know, it's film reality, of course.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, of course.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But it's, like, something believable. And I'm not interested in fantasy at all.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's interesting. And actually, that's pretty unusual, too. So I'm thinking in terms of—well, let's go back to one of the—speaking of, sort of, foundations of Conceptual photography. And there was—how did—in terms of—let's first put it into the context; we're talking probably early '60s roughly. There was Conceptual art at that point in time. Were you aware of—because I—at that point in time, it wasn't quite the hot—I mean, at the beginning, it probably wasn't a big fashionable thing that it became and now there's post-Conceptual or whatever. Were you aware of Conceptual art in other fields, in other—?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: No, not until probably at the first, maybe 1970.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Okay, yeah, when it broke, when it became—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I saw, you know, Ruscha's—I'm sorry, maybe I'm pronouncing it—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Ed Ruscha, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —Ed Ruscha's work and several others. And they were artists using photography. [00:28:00] And it was—like me, I think idea is the most important thing. But if you can create it in an interesting visual way and—that's kind of the challenge but the idea is paramount. And that's what's true with these other untrained photographers in that—in a way.

LANNY SILVERMAN: They were using it for different reasons.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: They were using it in a Conceptual way but they weren't—they weren't very knowledgeable about the medium.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, they weren't that visual in their sensibility. They were more about ideas. Some of them more so than—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: The idea was really that—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Really important. As a matter of fact, so much so that part of that was dematerializing the whole art thing and making it less a commodity. That's probably a political kind of act that the later people came up with. I don't think yours—you may have sympathy with that but that's not what you were trying to do, I think is what you're saying.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, yeah, around 1970 someone said, "You know, your work is very conceptual." And I said, "Well, what does that mean?" And I wasn't sure because I wasn't thinking Conceptual art, just doing it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You were—you didn't put labels on it or—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I didn't have a label.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Even within these different bodies of work, you were just doing the work. You weren't trying to necessarily categorize at the time or make it into a body of work. It just—this is what interested you and you followed that along. So that's kind of interesting.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, or they said, "Your work is, like—it's a performance." Like I was describing, like, the film I did with the—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, which we talked about, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And I said, "Well, what do you mean by performance?" Because I didn't know about [00:30:00] performance art, you know?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Or if me including myself in the photograph, like holding things there, whatever—it's a kind of a performance. Yeah, I'm performing in front of my camera with parts of my body or whatever—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But I wasn't thinking about categories in the beginning.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It just happened. So I guess here's the question for you that may relate to that: where do you get your ideas from? Do you—do they—just let's say some of these bodies of work, does—something just—do you think about it first and come up with an idea or does it just—do you take the photographs, and then you realize what it is, and then you—then it developed?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It goes both ways.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It goes both ways.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There isn't a one-way process. Sometimes the process dictates the discoveries.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, it goes both ways and I'm never sure which way is it going to go. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, how did you come—I guess the—I told you I'd come back to it. Sorry, this is, like, the thing that you were talking about, being typecast, the things that you are perhaps the most famous for, the photographs—the one of the juxtaposition of the picture of a boat on a picture of the ocean. You know, those displacements and, sort of, visual sort of puns and deconstructions of what's real and what's illusory. Did that—did you just—I mean, you had to have a photograph of the boat at some point. Did you happen to hold up a

photograph of a boat in reality next to some water or did you—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, earlier, I had—like, I had done that sequence of a tree I was talking to you about yesterday. That was very early. And also, I photographed my roommate who was a painter, and he's depicted doing a drawing [00:32:00] and he's reflected in a mirror because he's doing a self-portrait. And then you see his drawing. It's in there.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'll take a look in a moment, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And I did that in '59, I think.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So early on you had this idea—and you mentioned the tree piece. That's very early on, this sort of back and forth between photo and real and what's photographed in layers of—cumulated layers of photography and—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Like when I was in the Army, I was in Germany and I—in 1954, I think it was, I photographed some children playing with a ball on a street with these posters with, kind of, dancing children for an ad for bread or something. I don't know what it was. So I was, like, at that time combining reality with—

LANNY SILVERMAN: With depictions of reality by way of whether it's a poster—yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: With depictions, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So that layering has always interested you, those juxtapositions.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, from the '50s on, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I mentioned Walker Evans; if you look back further into the '30s and '40s there were people who were visually aware—had a visual sensibility—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, yeah, like Margaret Bourke-White that—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Margaret Bourke-White, yeah, there's people that have done that before you—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —image about America being—there's people lined up in a—for food and they're all black people, I think. And they're in front of an outdoor—an ad with a happy white family in an automobile saying, "America's the greatest," kind of—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, sure, there's a history of photography of looking at visual, sort of—sort of, ironies and juxtapositions.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, that was very ironic, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, there's people that have done that and were—usually it was more—yours were very formal, too. I guess that brings up something—you were talking about the performance of the camera. I was going to ask you a little bit about, oh, in terms of technique. [00:34:00] You—from talking with you yesterday I had the feeling that you're not so persnickety about, like, which particular camera, or what particular means you get there, or even in terms of, like, street photography. There's a school of—there's a whole school of street photography that's a decisive moment, the Cartier-Bresson stuff. You're not so interested in that I take it or is that something that—you've tried that? You're talking about some of the street photography you've done. You've tried a little of that but you're not so much interested in that as in, sort of, constructing an idea and representing it in a photograph. Is that a good characterization?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, that's a pretty good characterization. Like that photograph of a man passing across—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, we won't be able to—people won't be able to see it anyways so—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Anyhow, there was this Red Cross truck and it was a parade. And this man was passing by and I thought—I was looking at this cross and I thought it would be interesting to combine that image that cross, that symbol with someone or something. And this man came by with a, you know, hat on, and I photographed him. And I didn't know exactly what I was going to get because you do it very quickly, you know. And—but when I printed it, like, the brim of the hat lined up with part of the cross, you know, and his face was against the middle part of the cross. And it all just was, like, a wonderful design that was kind of a gift because I wasn't—I wasn't out to make it so precise like that. It just happened.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, I've had those experiences. Those decisive moments sometimes can be provided by the

outside. There's a sort of magic. I was taking a photograph in India [00:36:00] and I was interested in a lot of Walker Evans, a beautiful horoscope—astrologer's sort of pitch. It was, like, his sign and I didn't even see it. In it there were photos of all the past customers until I looked later. But he wasn't in the photograph, the guy, he—his bicycle was. And I was taking a photo of the—of the poster. He runs up, puts himself in there, and then as it turns out I'm looking at the composition, his arm is turned the same way as the bicycle. All it—it just all lined up as if I had—you know, this so-called decisive moment, it just all got thrown together.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: As if you had posed it or something, huh?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, it just had nothing to do with—it wasn't conscious. And even—we talk about Gary Stochl, I mean, he talked about the sort of—I asked him how he got those beautiful compositions. He just—he stood and waited—very passively and waited. This may be true of Cartier-Bresson or some of the other masters—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, it is—it is true, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —as being sensitive to light and seeing when they—all the things line up. "Oh, this looks like it's the shot." But sometimes it's, as you said with your example or mine, it's—it just—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, there's a Cartier-Bresson image—I love his work and I looked at it a lot. But there's this image of this staircase with steps going down in a—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, I think I know—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —kind of a semi-circle. And then there's a person on a bicycle passing. And I'm sure he stood there—

LANNY SILVERMAN: And waited.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —and waited and maybe photographed other people or other vehicles. But the bicycle worked out the best.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, well, sometimes it's not—well, that's another—that brings up another question I had for you. I mean—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And I've done that. I've waited.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Waited for the moment, for that—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —so-called decisive moment or whatever. So I guess maybe the difference between a Gary Winogrand and me or some other hackers at photography is when he shoots a roll or shot a roll of 36 maybe, like, 24 of them are gems whereas I have the eye so I can know which ones are the good ones. Do you edit? Do you—do you toss out a lot of photos?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you're looking—again, it's your eye. You're not so interested in being the performer that comes up [00:38:00] with this perfect thing. You're more interested in what you can make of what you get.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, and I often know if I've put something together and, you know, really deliberately, you know, lined things up or whatever. I know I'm—that's going to be successful. But when you're out doing street photography, you're working so quickly you can't see everything and how it's going to come together.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, it's chaos.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And I think Winogrand said something very much—very interesting. He said that he photographs to see how things look photographed. And I think that's a real valid reason for making photographs.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And there are—there is a different—I mentioned this yesterday: I think there is a real clear difference in the way—not just some—it's perception—it's not even just wavelengths and things like that but—and it's not even framing and perspective. There's a lot of things that are different about—people are—you construct a reality, just like you were saying about your photographs. You also construct real reality in the sense that you don't realize how much of that is based on assumptions and your cultural history, all these other things. It's different than—when a camera sees it, it's very different. And I think that's some of what happens when people from so-called primitive cultures see the—their photos. They're just—they have no idea what they're

looking at.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Right, right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Because it's so different, a way of looking at the world. Do you do a fair amount of darkroom work? You do some—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I make pretty much straight prints. I like to make a rich print that has a very rich dark black and—

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you do like that tonal range a la Ansel Adams even if you don't necessarily—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, I like a full tonal range [00:40:00] because I think that's—I think people can concentrate on the idea rather than the print quality.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you don't want—yeah—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It looks like a normal print, you know. It's not high-key or low-key. It's, you know, it's showing pretty much all the information necessary. You know, you're seeing into the shadows most of the time and the highlights aren't all blocked up. You can see into those. So the print looks average, kind of. And I think people can get the idea that you're trying to get across, your visual idea, better.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And where you throw them through the loop is through the ideas and the—and the juxtapositions, and the content. And that's what's [laughs]—that's where it's all at for you.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And so, I have a lot of gifts, I call them, like what I was describing about that man and the cross. There's another photograph—I was photographing these pigeons that were at this cement factory. It was a very bizarre place. It seemed like there was a man who would come and periodically open the door into where this cement was mixing or the ingredients for the cement. It must—it must have been clumping up or something. And he had a shotgun and he'd shoot into this room.

[They laugh.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Geez.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I guess to break up things. [Laughs.] It probably wasn't metal, it wasn't pellets. It was some kind of—something that wouldn't interfere with the making of cement.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I guess.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But every time that happened, these pigeons that were—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, right.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —roosted up would all take off, you know. And so, I photographed and it was, like, a number of windows that were broken [00:42:00] in some places. And I photographed these pigeons as they would fly up in the air. And when I looked at—when I printed it, I saw that there were some shadows from the pigeons onto these windows and some of the broken windows resembled shapes of pigeons.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's kind of—yeah, again—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So they were both black and you didn't know which was which but—and then these pigeons were, you know, fixed in time in various positions, you know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Because that was a fast exposure because you did a—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, so you could capture—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And so, I see that as a gift because I couldn't put all that together.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's what we were talking about. That's the magic. Some of these things just—reality is hard to, you know—and nature are sometimes—is hard to compete with. So you see your ideas in the outside world and sometimes they just happenstance—just puts them all together at the right time and place.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sometimes.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But I think, you know, you're—you have an idea that—of making a picture, but you're not sure because of things that are changing all the time exactly how it's going to turn out.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You can't control nature.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But you have kind of an idea.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, you can't control the—that flux that you were talking about.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Right, right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: But on the other hand you can be on the lookout or aware of your key ideas and see them reflected in the world. So do you sometimes manipulate—well, you don't manipulate in the darkroom. But do you ever—like, we talked about setup with Francois Mechain. Do you ever set things up or try to manipulate the world or try to control it to make it into your idea or do you—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah. Early in my work I would, like, be in the woods and photographing the light illuminating foliage, you know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And you—and I was—you know, in the beginning I was pretty slow with my camera and I'd be using a—like, a view camera. [00:44:00] And by the time I'd be set up the light had shifted and what I wanted to photograph was no longer visible.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Laughs.] I know that experience. Trying to capture reality sometimes is a drag.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah. So I decided to paint things like as if they were illuminated by the—by shafts of light. So I went into the woods—and it had to be overcast, no wind, and light enough to make an exposure. So I—it had to have all these conditions to make it work.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And so, I did a number of those where I would paint the leaves and—

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's almost close to—I was asking you about if you had done stuff like Francois. That's almost like what he does in terms of—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: In a way, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: In a—it's parallel, at least.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Uh-huh [Affirmative.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that's probably before you aware of his work, I'm assuming.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, it was.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So that's kind of interesting. There was a sympathetic chord there. I had a feeling that somewhere there must be—in your body somewhere where you fooled around with nature in sort of a, you know, setup kind of way like he did. So that's an example of that.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, and I have these painted backgrounds that studio photographers use for portraiture. And I got a bunch of them and had a choice of landscape, or library books, or the American flag, or you know, and they were all hand-painted. And I used to buy those. And so, I would take them out into nature and juxtapose things with that as the background. So I would mess with nature that way, too.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Okay, so there were—there's a bunch of things where you're fooling around with that sort of—I guess I haven't seen those, that's interesting, either. I'm trying to think of some other things I was going to ask you about in terms of technique. So you don't—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well—[affirmative], go ahead.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You don't generally fuss that much [00:46:00] with the—it's not a—it's not an attempt to try to master the technique of making the perfect photograph. That's not so much what your work is about. I sort of covered this a little bit before. Do you—you said you throw away a lot of stuff. So some things—how do you

decide—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I don't throw it away but I just don't use it.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You don't use it, oh, I see.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Earlier I threw things away that I regretted I threw away.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, really?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So I save these things but I don't necessarily print them.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, so you don't—oh, I—there's some questions I had—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Because you never know when you might have a use for something.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's true. It might—it might turn into another idea. You could use it for another context.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You talked about Ansel Adams—not Ansel Adams—what was the exhibition that you had somebody printing—was it Ansel Adams?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It was Ansel Adams printing it. Generally speaking, I saw that the things that were online, that image of the women in the dark—the very rich black background, that was part of an edition that was printed. You generally print things yourself; they were advertising that. But you said you don't care as much about—sometimes you'll hand it off to other people to print which is true of a lot of photographers.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, only when an image—they need to be larger than—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Okay, so it's more—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And with Ansel Adams, that was a special—

LANNY SILVERMAN: That was an unusual instance.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —unusual. It never happened.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you really are involved with the darkroom techniques and you said you had a darkroom here. So you do get involved with that old school process.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yes, I do.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that leads me to something that we touched upon yesterday in terms of digital stuff. You're using digital cameras these days?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: No.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You still don't use a digital camera?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: My girlfriend does but—

LANNY SILVERMAN: And actually, do you have any interest in digital—like, Photoshop manipulation because that's a way to fuss with ideas?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: No, not now, no. [00:48:00] I like to putting things together, like, physically, like in a collage. But I'm not interested in manipulation like Photoshop, what you can do with Photoshop.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's interesting.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I like the reality of the unmanipulated print.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Do you see some of that more current? There's a lot of—now everyone has a camera, unfortunately, even in museums and places where they probably shouldn't be photographing in terms of flash, everywhere. What do you make of some of the younger—I'm talking about the selfie generation stuff. What do you make of some of the current crops of digital sort of work? Are you somewhat disappointed by what—I mean,

like any technology, it's what you do with it not the technology. Have you seen any of that digital kind of work that interests you or are you not too—not too keen on it as a whole?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I think it's a whole different category.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It is.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It's like—I see it as pretty much electronic and not much hands-on. But I think people who don't understand traditional photography or who haven't ever done it are missing a lot of ways of using the camera that they're just not aware of it because they've never gone through the process of making—exposing film and—

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's a whole—and there's a whole history and a whole, sort of, context for it that's very different. Actually, most of the context for the selfie stuff and—that I'm talking about is, like, with the iPhones is a very narcissistic culture.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It is.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And it's social purposes are very—[00:50:00] it's whole purpose—this is why we were talking about the difference going to a movie theater and seeing it on your—on your cell phone. It's a whole different context for visual sensibility. Do you think there's a visual illiteracy? There's certainly a verbal illiteracy as a result of digital cameras. But do you think people are so facile with pictures and the language of pictures that they—that they've lost the sense of what you—what you're looking for is those juxtapositions and those formal compositions and things. Do you think people are less aware of that in this younger generation?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I think so but I think they're visually astute because they get most of their information that way. So I think—

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's a lot more visual—yeah, there's stuff out there.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: They're astute but I don't think they use that visual knowledge in exciting ways. I don't find that. And you know, selfie—I've discussed this with quite a few people. Our society is narcissistic. The younger people in our society are very much narcissistic and they—it's a problem, I think. You know, the older generation always finds fault with the newer generation.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm there. I mean, I'm in a curmudgeonly place with you. I'm younger but I have the same feeling.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But I think it's more of a serious problem this time around.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, that's what our parents probably told us, the same thing. "Yeah, things are so much better. You kids, you don't know nothing."

[They laugh.]

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I think being so narcissistic isn't a good trait.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, there's an entitlement, too, that comes out of the current generation.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, I—that entitlement, too.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's as annoying as the—as the narcissism. It's both the idea that, you know—oh, and that everyone just thinks they're a curator or an artist. They throw these terms out—or artisanal. There's certain words that just make me cringe.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: [00:52:00] Yeah. Well, I think one of the things is I think people are not very aware of the history of art in general.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Or of anything. You mention Kent State; they say, "What's that?" There's things that people—kids just don't have any sense of, like, 20 years ago, or the present, or—things that they're concerned with, which is maybe what we were like but I can't really think that. [Laughs.] I would like to think that there was some sense of history and what went before but maybe we were there, too, when we were young. I don't know. There's a—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I was always interested in history from an early age so I don't know what it'd be like not to have been.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I agree. It's kind of a strange place to just be so concerned with just—I mean, I think I'm from—I'm a little younger and I come from the boomer generation where there was a certain kind of—it wasn't the same sense of entitlement but there was—there was a me generation thing. But I think it's gone—I agree, it's gone way beyond that now to the point where you just have to wonder what the future holds for people. You have kids, yes?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Are they in—this just came out of the blue. I'm thinking—are they in the art fields or other fields completely different?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Completely different. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's interesting.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I think they saw me as a—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Was that a—[laughs.]

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —not—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Signpost of what not to do.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It wasn't a very profitable professional.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, there's a way—if you want to be rich, famous, or get love and attention then there's much easier ways if you're bright enough.

[They laugh.]

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's kind of interesting. I guess in terms of looking at—I was starting to mention the younger generation. Are there current photographers—younger photographers, their current work that excites you? I think I touched on this yesterday.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, you asked me that yesterday and I don't know how far we got into it but—

LANNY SILVERMAN: No. And I did look up the photographer who won the MacArthur. You should look her up, too. I didn't think it was very interesting work. I wonder about why she was selected.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: If you look up MacArthur Genius Grants, she's from Chicago, Tija—I don't remember her name but whatever it is it was kind of like a disappointment.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: [00:54:00] Yeah. There's a couple people—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, you mentioned someone that you were going to—yeah, that's right. You had mentioned somebody that—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: This person, Morell, I think his name is.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I need my reading glasses here so hang on a second. Huh, I can see how that would be—wow. So M-O-R-E-L-L.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And then Lorie Novak, she was a student of mine, actually. And she's—

LANNY SILVERMAN: I know that name.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: She's one of the people I gave up on and suddenly she blossomed. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: And then it became really interesting work. Was she at the Art Institute?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And what she would—yeah, and what she would do is she would project images onto, like, trees for long periods of time.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So long exposures.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, and those were—you know, they're kind of fragmented because of the leaves, you know—it wasn't solid, you know, but you could put the image together.

LANNY SILVERMAN: How do you spell her first name? I'm looking for it here.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Lorie.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's a lot—is it L-A-U-R? I'm looking for that here.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, here it is. Here, let me show you.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That will be helpful for transcription, I'm just thinking because I know that name. Maybe I'd seen a proposal from her at some point that—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Okay, Lorie Novak.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, so it's—oh, it is an unusual spelling. I had a feeling it might be.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And this person, Morell.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, no, that'll be easy to find.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Those two people, I really like their work very much.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So it's L-O-R-I-E and it's Abelardo [Morell].

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: They're not extremely young but they're a lot younger than I am.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you're still engaged with contemporary photography. I guess that was kind of my question yesterday is the—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, sure.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Even though, yes, there's a certain disappointment perhaps in a lot of the digital stuff which is a very different [00:56:00] way of photographing, and seeing, and even processing—making photographs is even very different. It's so much—I don't know if—we were talking about this—you talked about this at ID discussion. Sometimes restrictions are what make things really wonderful whereas—just to be able to just pop a button and do it instantly, this instant gratification kind of thing. You don't have to think about it or do anything. You can just—the photo just comes out. It can print and do whatever you want to. You just stick it in a printer, print [laughs]. One button.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, I think it started with Polaroid—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, which I—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —this instant gratification. And I think one of the driving reasons for Polaroid was for pornography because you could bypass the photo—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, you didn't have to go to the photo shop, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —the photo processing. And they used to confiscate pornography—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, so-called pornography because that's—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Or so-called—yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Because there's famous cases—and this happened with a woman who photographed her family. She's taken a lot of abuse, the famous one, photographed her kids nude in the forest. I've forgotten her name.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Sally Mann?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sally Mann, yeah, she's taken a lot of heat for abusing her kids and there's—I don't think she had the issues—I think she probably printed stuff herself. She didn't have those issues but just the issue of whether that's pedophilia—or child abuse or not, I mean—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, that's a very—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Very strange, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: My girlfriend went through a year of—she photographed her child romping on the bed after a bath or something. And someone found those photographs and turned her in, and the police came—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, God.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —and went through all her stuff. And for a year it was miserable.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [00:58:00] That's—there's a history of that happening. There's a lot of people—there's some famous people. There's the guy up in New England; I've forgotten his name, too. A photographer that—I think he used to be a curator, too. I met him. Anyways, he—there's some people that—there's a whole—and Larry Clark. There's a whole bunch of people—I mean, there's people where—with Larry Clark it was probably more consciously—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: —exploitative. I mean he was probably interested in shocked and the profanity of it.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, yeah. [laughs].

LANNY SILVERMAN: But there are a lot of people that do it very innocently, too.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, right, family—and they just—

LANNY SILVERMAN: And the context—and unfortunately, a prurient mind reads into it, [laughs] the fundamentalists and the people that are so obsessed with this stuff. They read in the context. That was Sally Mann, for example, was nowhere near—not only her intention but even her kids' perceptions. No one bothered to interview them. I mean, they—people called, like, child services and then, you know, it's like—then it becomes a bureaucratic procedure [laughs] which is—we're so overly sensitive about. So yeah, that's a whole issue. You haven't gotten—you've done some fairly racy things and some things that were somewhat provocative but you've never had issues of censorship.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I've never had a—no.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And I was kind of testing things, like I'd photograph a photograph of a body part, you know, genitals or whatever. And—but I was photographing a photograph. I wasn't photographing directly.

LANNY SILVERMAN: From so-called reality, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And so, I was kind of testing, now, could that be construed as pornography or not. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, that's what I'm saying, yeah, what's art and what's—I mean, that's that whole—I mean, they—in terms of literary things from the James Joyce case. They started to open up—the 20th century opened up a lot of doors in terms of sexuality and franker discussions and visualization of it. And yeah, what—community standards, I think is what they came up with. Well, which community? [01:00:00] In a religious community anything is just about—I mean in a Muslim fundamentalist community it's obscene to have a woman's hair showing or, you know, things that we don't even think about.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So I mean context is everything. It's kind of—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, like I have that photograph of—the Polaroid of the crotch.

LANNY SILVERMAN: *Pubic Hair* I think is the one.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: *Pubic Hair*.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, I know that one.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And I see that as kind of a triangle, you know, like in this space. But I know what it is, too. But it's like—

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's a part.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It's not pornographic. It's not, like, intended to—

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's not meant to—yeah, it's not—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —stimulate or—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that's what I'm saying, in terms of intention is everything. How do you read an artist's intentions? I mean those are difficult things to get into.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And it's like this thing about teenagers thinking they have x-ray eyes or something, you know, like that myth, you know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

[They laugh.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I mean, I think again if you're obsessed with—if you're a teenager you see it through the eyes of somebody that's, you know, obsessed with different things. Then as we get older we look at it very differently and the different communities see what's, you know, provocative or lurid very differently than others.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah. Like the NEA, they rarely give out individual grants anymore.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, that's as a result of that censorship, that huge case, the—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Mapplethorpe and Serrano [ph].

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, and Serrano's—I know someone who actually interviewed him, an art sociologist, and did a book about art censorship. He's in New York. He's at Columbia. And he interviewed Serrano and he actually was a fairly—his intent was actually fairly religious which is the really peculiar part about it. It was a traditional—it was just—if you get so literal that you can't put piss and, you know, crucifix in the same context, you lose context of what spirituality is. It should be—it's a body—it's the body. [01:02:00] I mean you could look at it is being equally sacred as it is profane. That's just a matter of how you look at it. So that stuff is really—just really strange.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, it's like this senator, I think, he would pick up a glass of water that the Pope drank out of. Did you hear about that?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yeah, that's—oh, yeah, I just—that's getting made fun of all over.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And someone said, "Oh, that's Argentine backwash."

[They laugh.]

That's not—that's not holy water.

LANNY SILVERMAN: We'll be watching Steve Colbert—yeah, I think it was Steve Colbert. I was watching that, too.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, Steve Colbert. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, yeah. Well, the thing is its context. It's holy water. What makes it holy water? Well, the Pope wasn't really blessing the water but he was considering it blessed water and he was treating it as such. Yeah, its context is everything. Well, you've been through a long period of time in the art world. What do you think in terms of—we talked a little bit about this in Chicago. Things have gotten easier and perhaps there's a lot more galleries and avenues for expression although right now there are hardly any art magazines. I think the *New Art Examiner* has been brought back, although barely, and *Dialogue's* gone. So there aren't really as much in, like—it's not like New York or L.A. There aren't too many mags that are going to really get word out and I don't know that we have as many stringers—Jim Yute [ph], is he still writing? I mean there were some people that used to report for *Artforum* and *Art in America*. It seems like we're not—Chicago is still fairly isolated from the hoopla, the art world.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I agree, I agree, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you think that's true? So do you think it's easier in other ways? How do you think things have improved as—for you as—I mean you've probably matured and gotten more comfortable in your skin and maybe that's different but—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I liked being in Chicago because I've been in New York for some extended times but—and there seems to be kind of a pressure to [01:04:00] have new, and produce, and you know, get on the bandwagon. There seems to be a lot of pressure for an artist because of the atmosphere there and, you know, all the galleries and the museums. And I like Chicago because it doesn't—you're not pressured like you are in New York. And also, like, a lot of artists are in New York because they do these huge paintings or sculpture. I mean it costs a fortune to ship those things around and to get someone to look at it. If you're not in New York it's more difficult. And I could, you know, ship photographs inexpensively—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Sure.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —and send them to whoever I wanted to. So I didn't have that problem of—

LANNY SILVERMAN: You no longer—yeah, you no longer have to be in New York. I think that's much less important than it used to be. And you talked about, like, the cost. The cost of having a studio to make big work in New York, who can afford—it's people even moving out of Brooklyn. It's now New Jersey or upper New York. It's beyond that. So it's more affordable here so it's very comfortable. How about the Midwestern sensibility? We didn't talk about that very much. There is sort of a Chicago sensibility that isn't as fast-paced, or high energy, or success driven as you were saying in New York. Do you like that sort of Midwestern climate in terms of—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, I like the—say, the climate of ID and the Bauhaus philosophy which is, you know, you worked hard. I mean you really immersed yourself in work. And that was a good—[01:06:00] very good attitude which I've tried to continue after studying there. And I don't think that's necessarily true of a lot of the Midwest. But I think people who have tasted that, kind of, way of working and producing art, there's a lot of those people still around, I think.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's also—I think, what I think matched Chicago in terms of what came from German was the sensibility of art being practical, and sort of blue-collar, and part of everyday life. There was a sensibility from the original Bauhaus. There was a sense of trying to fit things into—not the pretense of the highfaluting work.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Right, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's something—I think that probably fits in with your sensibility, correct?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, it had so much to do with design, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Design, yeah, it was design for better living and it was meant to be—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Better living, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, and it was meant to be something that was—you could live in and around and it wasn't meant to be, you know, distancing like a lot of art had been in the past. I think that's one of the—and that I think matches the Chicago sensibility. I don't think it's an accident that it—that they came here or that they landed here. I think there's—it's a good fit, I think. So you've enjoyed the Chicago—other than the weather, perhaps. [Laughs.] Do you get away in this—in the winters? Do you stay here in the winters?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, I'm here most winters but I don't mind winters very much.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You just hunker down. [Laughs.]

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, I can do more darkroom work in the winter—

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's what I figured, it's a good time to work.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —or studio work.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that's the time to work. You hunker down and make the work. And you're still—here's a question I meant to ask you, too: how has your work changed over the last couple years? What are you most currently engaged in and does aging or physical, sort of, limitations as we talking about in your studies, are there limitations that change your work or—I mean you eyesight's good which is really kind of critical, I'm assuming.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Your health has been up and down, I know, but you—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It's pretty good. [01:08:00]

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's pretty good now? That's good to hear.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So has that changed your work or what are you working on these days? What's—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I still collaborate with my girlfriend.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I've seen some of those around here.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: We adopted the name spouse equivalent.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Laughs.] I like that. That's good.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Because neither one of us—neither of us want to get married. I've had enough of marriage.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, [Laughs.]

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But I'm continuing my series. I add to that and I collaborate with Marilyn, doing portraits and—

LANNY SILVERMAN: What's Marilyn's last name, just for the record?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, her real—her actual name is Zimmerman but she's going to change it legally to Zimmerwoman.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Laughs.] That's a lot there. That's pretty fun. That's interesting.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And so, I'm still working on collage ideas and objects. I don't produce as much as I used to. I—you know, you don't—

LANNY SILVERMAN: You slow down a little.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: You slow down somewhat but I'm still active. And also—

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'm inspired by, you know, people working—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —I look—I looked through my past proof sheets and there are things that I've—ideas that I hadn't developed because you're always more interested in what you're doing in the present time. And so, there's a lot of things I bypassed and I've gone back to look at images that I never considered before.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Does your sensibility change?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And I've been making prints of things I made 20 years ago.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So your opinion—your sensibility might have changed so that something you may have—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, yeah, right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —may have edited. We talked about your editing process. [01:10:00] Something that you bypassed before maybe now you see maybe more value.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Sure, you change and—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, you change your point of view.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —you see the value of something that you hadn't previously.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, that's kind of nice.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So I'm doing that, too.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So you're glad that you haven't literally tossed or burned some of the—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, no, I don't do that anymore because you never know.

[They laugh.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: And as you said, you change and then maybe something—and that's also interesting in terms of the art world, too. I know you don't pander to the art world sensibilities. But something that's in today could be completely out, you know, in 10 years or whatever is now the current fad may just be crap—considered crap in the future. Who knows how history looks at it? So how do you—how do you want—in terms of speaking of history, someone's listening to these or reading transcripts of these 50 years from now, how would you like a future viewer or audience to view your art or what you've accomplished? How do you—how do you wish to be seen?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I would hope—because this is just verbal information.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I would hope that they would look at my photographs—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, yeah, [Laughs.]

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —be inspired or be made curious enough to look at my work.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Of course.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: That's what I would hope from this interview.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And actually, that's—you know, that's what I was talking about in terms of, like, whether or not there are papers or other things that had to accession to—or works—it would kind of be important—I think one of the uses, I think, of this particular interview would be for someone who is, like, a curator in the future trying to figure out what does this all mean. And actually your work, as I think you've said, is meant to be fairly—you're not elusive or trying to hide content. You're hoping to make something that's apparent to people. This is that ID training that we were talking about.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You're not—you don't have—and you mentioned psychology or fantasy. You're not interested in some strange [01:12:00] obscure kinds of stuff. It's usually pretty right out there in the picture plane.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, and I like to just demonstrate how the picture's being made, you know. Like you know—no, just very straightforward about how I've produced the image, you know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I—sometimes even though it's probably very apparent I sometimes look at even the—you know, the—is the image of the boat—is that a photo that you took? It is a postcard? There's still—there's questions there and there's things that, I mean, you generally don't use—you have used some found objects and things, for example.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yes. And also, I've put in false information just to play around a little bit.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, so you are messing with people's heads some?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, yeah. I've photographed meter sticks or rulers and I've reduced them in size.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, so the scale is actually off.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So they look like a ruler. They're on—they're photographic paper, actually, but they look like they're wood. And I place them in certain scenes to make things gigantic, or appear gigantic when they're really not. So I've done a little bit of that. It's like playing, playfulness, you know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, there's a playful sense of humor that I think characterizes your work. I think that's something that makes it not—some Conceptual art can be pretty dry and just nearly pure idea. There was some attempt at even that, you know, just stating an idea and then that's it, you know.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Your work has a physicality and a formality, you know, a visual formality and playfulness that I think makes it much easier to digest than just an idea.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: That's one of the things I felt that—I discovered that, like, you can get people's attention with humor and [01:14:00]—more easily than if you're—if it's just purely serious. But after the initial humor—feeling of humor, hopefully a person then can look at what they first were struck by, humor, as something more

significant.

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's important, too, I think. Yeah, because that's the hook. The humor's the hook to get people to look.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: The hook, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, it's the hook to get people to look further into what it is that's going on and then maybe question—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And that's something serious, you know, like Carl Chiarenza, in one of my catalogues, titled his introduction or essay of me with, "The Seriousness of Humor."

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, it's one of those dialectics or contradictions that sometimes—yeah. I mean actually, there's a lot to that. Yeah, and sometimes the—what's seemingly funny can also be very—you know, the sadness of the clown, kind of that whole sort of thing. So I guess—we're getting pretty close to the end of this. Are the things—as we talked yesterday—when we—when we stopped the recorder there were some things that you continued on with. Are there some things that you—that we left out that you would like to cover that—I know what we left out that I would be curious about coming from Philadelphia: you only spent a brief time in Philadelphia. What was your—what did you make of that? You can be completely honest. I left as soon as I could so I wasn't [laughs]—I'm not that taken with it as a city. But you taught at Tyler for a while?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, yeah, I taught at Tyler. That was interesting. I thought Tyler was really—the students were [01:16:00] real serious about making it big as artists. I mean, they were really intent on being famous, I think. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, really? Well, that's more current—that's, like, what we were saying with the current generation. They seem to be particularly—they seem to be stuck with that—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I enjoyed discovering certain things. There was a women's college called Beaver College.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I knew that, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And I got a lot of postcards and sent them to my friends because the entrance was circular, arch.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yeah. This was in the suburbs somewhere, wasn't it? Like—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, it was—

LANNY SILVERMAN: I've driven by that entrance. I think I know that visually, what you're talking about.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, and I even had a sticker in my rear window and people would pull up and start laughing. I could see them laughing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yeah, the visually—the pun—the verbal pun there.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that's pretty funny.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Anyhow. And then, I was kind of interested in all the rowhouses. I never lived in a place that had so many rowhouses.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, we lived in a semi—you know, like a—whatever, it's, you know, two in pairs along that street and I—yeah, I—that's what I grew up with. It's very different.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Because I never really shared spaces like that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, it was out of the city—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I had but not, like, a whole block of rows.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, I didn't realize that that was unusual until I left the—for the Midwest and saw there were other ways. [laughs].

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I like the market—that Italian market, I think.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yeah, South Street or somewhere around there, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So wonderful. And then I discovered Portuguese bread. There was—I lived in an area that was a lot of Portuguese. Was—it was out Broad Street—North Broad. So I enjoyed a lot of aspects of it. Well, also in one theater there was this [01:18:00]—that cult film, *Pink Flamingos*, and at midnight on Saturdays they would show a film clip of Divine having been at that theater.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, great.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —before they showed *Pink Flamingos*.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's kind of fun.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And so, I thought that was interesting because I—

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's probably—it's the art house theater that was in, like, Germantown, it might be the one I grew up with. I used to go to—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I forget which one it was but it was an art house.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, there aren't that many in Chicago—in Philadelphia. There's probably one I grew—where I grew up from, you know, my love of foreign films. As a teenager I started getting excited about—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, and the Philadelphia museum offered quite a bit. I liked that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Good Surrealism, good Duchamp, and some really wonderful—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, Duchamp room, great. So I thought—I enjoyed it and I made a lot of trips to Washington because we were very close.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, the East Coast is kind of nice in that regard.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And so, I'd—on weekends I'd photograph in Washington.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And in terms of places you've lived, you've lived in a number of different places. You're perfectly happy with Chicago? Is that your favorite—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, yeah, I'm real happy here. It offers everything I need, I'm sure.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Fortunately, it's a well-kept secret. It's more affordable for studios and places to live and it's got a lot of culture and things that other big cities—for a big city I think it's one of the most livable and it's got the lake. I mean—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, and it works. I mean the services are really good in the city here.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Don't talk to me about potholes and other things.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, potholes, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah. Do you drive still? Are you still driving?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, yeah, I drive.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, you know what I'm talking about then. Because on the other hand it's that versus my pension so I guess it's—

[They laugh.]

And that's the same thing I was thinking about with this thing at the city, them going nuts on tickets. I guess Rahm [Emanuel] is in trouble for the violence of Chicago, too. I think that's what's really—I think—in terms of dysfunction right now it's getting a lot of national attention. We're unfortunately getting—our art doesn't get attention [01:20:00] but the amount of murders we have is getting the—getting things.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, it's terrible.

LANNY SILVERMAN: This is a quiet part of town and relatively gentrified or made—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, I haven't had any problems here. I think where Damon, and North, and Milwaukee

come together, that area, there's street robberies every once in a while but—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, this used to be a more—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But not down here.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, this—there was a sort of gang—before this got more gentrified there was a more gang presence and a—unfortunately, sort of, the mixture, you know, of the—when artists, and musicians, and people start to move in there's a clash between—you know, and the Latino cultures that were here—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —there's that weird thing that happened but I think it's probably settled out by now, or no?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I think so. I was hit by graffiti a few times in the past. It hasn't happened for a long time so that's quieted down.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, oddly enough, Chicago's really very segregated. I think it's considered to be one of the most segregated places in the—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, it is.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And that's sort of sad because, I mean, there's so many—there's so many wonderful ethnic enclaves and there's, what, more Polish people here than any city in Poland.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: In Warsaw, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: In Warsaw. And so, yeah, there's these wonderful enclaves but they don't necessarily speak to each other. Do you—do you enjoy the sort of ethnic communities and go to the restaurants and stuff like that?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that's kind of one of the things I love about Chicago. Again, we shouldn't tell too many people this or they'll all come move here but—[laughs]. No, that's one of the great things about Chicago is you can get great food and everything else in any other big city and it's far more affordable than—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, actually, On Division just a couple blocks from here there's a Polish restaurant. And the Smithsonian rated it the best ethnic restaurant in Chicago.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, really? Is that the Big Apple—Red Apple, something—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: No, it's some Polish name which I—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, I don't even know that one.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Unpronounceable. It's between Ashland and Milwaukee. [01:22:00] There's a park there, you know. The Blue Line is over here and there's a park. And then just across from the park is this restaurant.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, I know there's some great food. And actually, I think there's better Thai restaurants here than in New York. It must be the rents or something being so high or we just have a lot of Thai and Vietnamese immigrants here. They probably do in New York, too, but I get better—I get better food here than I do in New York for a lot less, especially for ethnic food, a lot less money. If you go to fancy restaurants it's another story but—I guess, well, we're just sort of chatting at this point but—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, [laughs].

LANNY SILVERMAN: —anything else that comes up in terms of, like, your life history or sense of what you'd like to see on the record?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I think I would have liked to have traded more people for photographs or artwork than I did because I could have—I could have—I could have amassed a pretty good collection.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You've got a nice collection as it—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I have a fairly good collection.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, you have a nice—what you have is quite nice and I actually know what you're talking about. For me it's a little difficult because there's some ethical constraints that I have to be careful in terms of

collecting and how that influences, you know, the market or anything else. But there are—there are curators and people that don't care. But as a photographer, yeah, an artist, that's one of the joys of, you know, being able to—maybe you can't afford it but you can afford to trade if you—if they're friends. You were friends with a lot of very—I mean, or mentored by a lot of very famous people and some of whom are reflected in the collection. Are there—are there ones that got away that you particularly would love—as a collector I got to ask this: are there particular ones that you were thinking, "Man, I should have really traded with," what, like Minor White or something or—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Gary Winogrand.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Gary Winogrand, oh, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Or of Friedlander.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You mentioned—I think you mentioned Robert Frank or did you not? Maybe you didn't.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Robert Frank would have been really good but Robert Frank was pretty difficult about that, I think. But I never had contact with him. [01:24:00] I had contact with Winogrand and Friedlander a certain amount. Actually, Friedlander sent me a photograph from Storyville. They have those Bellocq photographs.

LANNY SILVERMAN: The Bellocq things, yeah, I know those.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, he bought the plates.

LANNY SILVERMAN: What did you make of the movie that was based on that, the—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I never saw that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: *Pretty Baby*.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: *Pretty Woman* or whatever it was.

LANNY SILVERMAN: *Pretty Baby*, I think. It had what's-her-name as a—as a kid. It was kind of—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I heard it wasn't terribly good.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, I don't think it was but I think Louis Malle did it. He was quite an interesting filmmaker. He was a famous filmmaker. I think it was Louis Malle. It was the model, whatever her name is. She's gone on to—she's very beautiful but, yeah, it was kind of a disappointment. Did you see the movie about—I'm sorry, we're chatting a little more but I'm curious. I kind of liked it, the movie about Diane Arbus, the one *Fur*, or something. You ever seen that one?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Mm-mm. [Negative.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: It's sort of a fantasy based on reality, you know, because it's got, like, the freaks and the—it's got some of the real—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, that's another person I would have like to have traded with. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, yeah. Oh, I can—yeah, I love her work. And actually, what I was curious about with Vivian Maier, one of my researches—one of the things I was most fascinated by was to look at—she—you know, Vivian Maier lived in New York and she obviously had access to—she saw museums and she had—I've seen her collection of books. John Maloof has a lot of them. So I know that she was very educated and very sophisticated in her sensibility. But—and she had to have been by living in Chicago, seeing some of the IIT stuff and some of her work plays off of that directly. And what I didn't understand—and I could see some touches of maybe Lisette Model. There aren't that many women in the photographic pantheon either. But there's some photos of hers that look like Diane Arbus but they were done before Diane Arbus—before she was certainly publishing or showing her work. So she wouldn't have known them even if they might have been at the same time and that fascinates me. There's some things that the sensibility—because one of the things about Viviane that's so curious is that she had a number of styles. [01:26:00] She did abstract photography; she did some street—a lot of street photography; her landscape and travel stuff didn't interest me at all but—and she also did some conceptual things where she was tracking on the ground scraps of paper that had something to do with, you know, news stories. A lot of them had to do with black stuff or with assassination—the Kennedy assassination. There were strange little almost—for lack of a better term, they were kind of conceptual and yet Maloof didn't include those. He wasn't as interested in that. He didn't show them to me until later. But one of the things that I couldn't get it whether or not—sometimes things are just in the air. This is like what you were talking about with Conceptual art.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, yeah, right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And I just wonder, is there some things of hers that she might have been even ahead of the curve in terms of being able to assimilate and having the eye like Gary Stochl, we talked about. Being able to look at stuff and then spew out something maybe in an original voice, maybe just a combination of a lot of people you've seen, is one skill. But to be on the forefront is a whole other thing. I don't know. You haven't seen those—did you see the show at the Cultural Center, the Vivian Maier show? Oh, it was kind of—kind of amazing and it's turned to—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I've gone through some books of her work.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, there's a whole bunch of books right now. So you've seen the images and you probably know what I'm talking about.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I just saw some at Dempsey Gallery.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, Corbett versus Dempsey.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And they were tiny contact prints so—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, she didn't print very well. That's a whole other thing in terms of—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, I don't think she hardly printed at all.

LANNY SILVERMAN: She was a very sloppy printer. There was a lot of—I even talked to Rod Slemmons about this: there's people that weren't particularly interested in printing. I think that's true of Gary Winogrand, too. And there's—sometimes they just—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And Cartier-Bresson.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, there's a lot of people that sort of job that out and they weren't so interested in that. That's probably why I asked you that. But in terms—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, Winogrand, too, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, yeah, that's what Rod told me about that. He was giving me stories because he's worked intimately with—even he knows those people and Lee Friedlander he knows pretty well, too. So in terms of her work, though, we didn't include very many in our show of her actual prints, the ones that either were printed by [01:28:00] the place on Clark—on Wabash or I think State, Wabash, whatever it is.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Central Camera.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Central Camera. She had some things printed and she did some herself. Actually, a big issue for this whole subject is who prints them and how. I've seen the silver prints. I haven't seen the, what John [ph] has shown. I've seen some of that—in another gallery at the one on Superior. But I've seen some of the silver print ones and they're nicely printed. But I actually think a lot of that is who chooses them how—and the digital prints—and even Rod who is very skeptical of Gary Stochl really—he thought that prints were really very beautiful, the digital prints. You can do it in super-high resolution, and get incredible tonal range, and do some—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I mean, you can do some very beautiful stuff digitally.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, you can.

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's nothing wrong with the technology. But a lot of it is an issue of editing and, you know, I—because I think the fact that when there are 100,000 prints, it's the same issue I mentioned before: there's got to be some really wonderful ones in there. She was pretty consistent but she had a lot of different styles and there is a—there is a voice in there somewhere. There's somethings that's distinct. There's a little bit of Lisette Modell and a little bit of, you know, a lot of people that are very famous that she's clearly been influenced by.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I think people edited her work like people edited Weegee's work. I met Weegee one time—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, really?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —before he died and he was showing work that was really not very interesting—or very—it's corny, is the word.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, no, I can see that in his work.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And—but if the people who edited his work and pulled out the really strong images which he necessarily wouldn't have done, he wouldn't have chosen [01:30:00] those particular images, were really strong pictures. And the same thing is true of—who else was it that—oh, Lartigue.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I love Lartigue, yeah. One of my favorites.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And those really early works, you know, I think they were—whoever selected them—even Museum of Modern Art did a show—

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's that book that originally—yeah, that show—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —and I think they cropped some and made them much stronger as a whole image. But those were very exciting. But he didn't really do that selection or—

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, that was—I guess that's—this is an interesting—I guess as much as—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Because he was still alive when that show was going.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, this was when he was alive and actually, yeah, I like the early stuff best, the autobiographical things that, you know, the women and the—suspended in the air, and the objects and race car, stuff in his family.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that just—I just love that whole—that book you're talking about is just amazing. So yeah, I think that has something to do with the subject—somehow or other we're coming around to the question I asked you in a roundabout way, which is how do you wish to be seen? Really important how things are edited. As a curator I'm very aware of this. Certainly, I felt a great pride in going through, like, I only went through 5,000 images. There were many more and who would have the time to do more?

But I think the selection was very different than the—what the historical society did with—this is with Vivian Maier. And so—and also the issue of John was printing them full-frame, I'm assuming. But we don't know what Vivian's intentions were. She never really took the care to show them to other people or to view them as art or something that was valuable in that way. She clearly saved them all. She was a hoarder. She had a whole bunch of collections, too, which makes the story also more lurid and fascinating.

[01:32:00] But the editing process how you choose to print them, how you choose to—whether it's full-frame, all this stuff. I mean, in your case that won't be an issue. But how you're edited, or context, and all those things are really critical, I think. It's just a lesson in that because there's a huge difference between the different shows. And I've also spent some time with Jeff Goldstein who has another bunch of the photos, a much smaller cache of stuff but—and he's printing them—he's having the guy—I've forgotten his name but he's having them printed silver print. I've seen a number of those. And there's a book of that, too. But even though maybe it's very hard to read an artist's intentions, especially after the fact, how things are viewed in the context can really determine —

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, it's—I agree with you. There was one other thing I wanted to add about ID: their attitude there was very interesting. They felt whatever work you did, it didn't really matter how you arrived at the imagery or the final product as long as it worked. And by worked, it meant that it was really successful in terms of interesting the eye or the idea. If it worked, the process didn't make much difference as long as you arrived at something that was really strong visually and I liked that attitude very much.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So that's influenced your whole way of working for—throughout your career.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, [affirmative].

LANNY SILVERMAN: That's been kind of important. What do you think would have happened as an alternative if you hadn't gone to ID, if you'd had a different kind of training in photography? Do you think you—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I don't know. I—at one point [01:34:00] I was thinking of applying to National Geographic.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, really? That would have been a whole different—[Laughs.]

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It would have been an interesting career, I'm sure, with a lot of travel and a lot of—

LANNY SILVERMAN: And there it's colors, very—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —situations and—but that didn't come about.

LANNY SILVERMAN: It also would have affected your work as they almost always—color was very important in terms of, like, getting people's attention.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, I would have had to learn how to use color.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Which is a whole other phenomenon. Going back to the color thing, we touched on that yesterday, you did—you mentioned you've done some SX70 stuff.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, I did a number of SX70s, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: What are those like in terms of just brief description of it? And you've also worked in color sometimes but not too often. What draws you out to make color work? What gets you excited enough about—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Things I can't see in black and white, you know, like—

[They laugh.]

—the way you can arrange dissonant colors to—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Make attention?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —work together, or—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Or—oh, work together.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —clash, or whatever.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Or clash, either, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I did objects and landscapes with color. I did portraits. I did a number of things or—and I liked them as color I just, you know, when you—most of my ideas worked best in black and white. But when you work in black and white you work with value and separation, things that can be separated one from another, plain or whatever, surface. [01:36:00] And—but it's all to do with value. In color, color is the dominant thing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, it's hard to avoid. It's, like, what hits you.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And you think in terms of color, not—and value's way down on the list.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, now, I mean, you mentioned Lartigue. I think the book that I have is missing. Have you ever seen the—I think he did some mono-print, some sort of color process stuff, too. Have you ever seen that, the—one of the—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I don't believe so.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I think one of the—maybe it was a special edition of the book. The one I have, they're had to find. They're out of print.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: So women, kind of fashionable things?

LANNY SILVERMAN: This was in the early—it was—yeah, it may have been the *Parisian Women*. It may have been that series. I'm not sure. I've seen—at some point I had a copy way, way back that I've lost track of or who knows what. But there was a color process, some sort of really—but it was a very—I'm not sure what kind of process it is since I haven't seen it in 20 years. I looked online to try to find them. But he did some color work but it was very Impressionist, and very delicate, and sort of—it fit in with the sensibility whereas I think of him as very strongly black and white. It's partly the era and the—and the—all the things that went along with that era, the cultural context of, you know, airplanes, and racing, and all that stuff. It seemed like a very black-and-white thing, so color can be a shock when it's not something you associate with it. But it kind of worked.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I recently read a book on the Wright brothers. What's his name? Oh, it comes to me. That famous—he did a book on Theodore Roosevelt and—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, I think I know who you mean but I'm blanking out, too.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Anyhow, it was very interesting because the Wright brothers, they did document some of their flights and—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, early photography, really?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, and—

LANNY SILVERMAN: At Kitty Hawk. I think I've seen a photo at Kitty Hawk.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —even with that documentation [01:38:00] they weren't believed in America.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's funny, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And—but France really came to their aid and they—and they spent a couple years there. And that's where they demonstrated flight.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, that's kind of interesting.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But they weren't—their own country didn't recognize their achievement until—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, there was—well—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —the French did.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I know how widely, you know, widely disseminated those photographs were and who knows? And at that point in time there were a lot of things in terms of photographs, in terms of anthropology, like Edward Curtis, a lot of those things were kind of staged, too. So it was hard—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Photography was a bit of a trick in the beginning and you look at Méliès in terms of filmmaking, you know, trips to the moon. A lot of things were, like, what's the difference between fantasy and reality? Even though photography made documenting reality a huge leap into the future, you know, in terms of way beyond what it had been—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And it didn't question it, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —you still questioned it, which is what your work's about, too. It's about the magic and about the construction of reality. So we go back to it; we've done a circle here. So some of the questioning of photography occurred early on and I guess people—yeah, you could see a photograph but who's to say that's real? And there are still issues today lingering about, you know, how documentary is the most documentary work? How much can you absent a point of view, and editing, and all those things that you bring to it. So there's never—objective reality? What the hell's that?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, it's never pure but it's close.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [Laughs.] It's close.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And it gets you—it's made a lifetime of work for you to get you to examine just what it is and what games that are going on inside.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, because I was very impressed with documentary films, Flaherty's films.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I just saw—again, I hadn't seen *Nanook of the North*. They had a—they had an Inuit throat singer from the world music festival do a live soundtrack to it. It was wonderful. I hadn't seen the film which is very—speaking of constructed, very staged, even more than Curtis, perhaps. [01:40:00] So you like that early stuff, too.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, and Riefenstahl, that *Triumph of the Will*, that was—

LANNY SILVERMAN: You seen her photographic work?

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: I have those books there, the new—there's other things—there's something kind of creepy about it. I mean—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: They are creepy, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —as a Jewish person who doesn't necessarily practice, it gives me the creeps to have those books on the one level, but they're just gorgeous. And there's something kind of weird about the fact that this beauty, this ideal—it was, like, German Aryan version is what she started from but she—then she starts to appreciate black beauty which is a whole—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, right.

LANNY SILVERMAN: —irony beyond ironies for an ex-Nazi to—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Anyhow, *Triumph of the Will* was, like, so slick and well—it was very well done for the time.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: But I mean, it—like I know—I heard about things like they'd have the same group of Stormtroopers march around the block are reappear.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, so it's constructed, too.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It's constructed. I mean, it's not like there's endless columns of these soldiers.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, I see.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It's the same ones coming around the block.

[They laugh.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, you got to—that's propaganda. That's how you do it. I mean, let's face it, staging—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, it's very—

LANNY SILVERMAN: —is everything.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —propaganda, yeah.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, you know, Chaplin [ph] took that whole idea of staging, you know, the idea of being the one-upmanship when he's playing Hitler and whatever, *The Great Dictator*—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, that is hilarious. [laughs].

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, the height thing, yeah, in terms of staging, yeah. Staging is everything in propaganda, how you set it up. Even if you're five feet tall you make sure you look tall where you're—whatever shoes—the lifts in your shoes.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And the way *The Producers*—

LANNY SILVERMAN: [01:42:00] Oh, yeah, that's also wonderful, yeah. Well, I have a recommendation for you, too. This is just chat but I just picked up a copy. They've restored footage from the original Curtis film that you've probably seen some of the scenes with the—from *The Potlatch* where they—and the guy in a bear suit in a canoe. There's some famous film footage that you probably—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, I've seen some of that.

LANNY SILVERMAN: You've seen some of it but they've reconstructed the whole fictional movie—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Oh, really?

LANNY SILVERMAN: —and you can buy it online. It's kind of wonderful and it's been hand-tinted. Which I think it was originally. I don't think the versions I've seen were necessarily tinted but they've restored and it's kind of wonderful. It's not, you know, a great movie in the narrative sense but in terms of just sometimes the content—and there's an issue in terms of staging that he couldn't really find the traditional stuff. I've studied a lot of anthropology and I started out in that field somewhat and I know this. And authentic, what's authentic? Well, he was trying to recreate authentic as best as he could at the time so he probably took older things from another era that they weren't necessarily valuing but he did maintain—it's the only history—the only record we have. So—and again, you could look at how, you know, you want—view it through modern eyes of how you want it to be but this is all we have. And in a way, you know, the same thing with Flaherty in terms of *Nanook of the North*,

you know, you don't have a record of that. It's kind of—kind of still—it seeps through, whatever the reality is that culture—that's what's left of it. It's still kind of amazing and it's worth seeing even if it is very theatrical and staged. I mean, yeah.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: One thing I was impressed with: I remember—and I can't quite remember—I think it was something that was painted on canvas and—was like a quarter of a mile of the Mississippi river—going down the river.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, geez.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And it was on—it was rolled up—the canvas was rolled up and it would go across the stage and be rolled up on the other end, you know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, it's like a performance, yeah, becomes like a—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: And it was like prior to motion pictures, as far as I know.

LANNY SILVERMAN: [01:44:00] Well, they used to have these big theaters. I work with a Conceptual artist who was very interested in it. There used to be at the time of, like, Bierstadt and the nature thing, they used to have these, like, 3-D theaters that they would do giant painting at.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, Daguerre, it was like—

LANNY SILVERMAN: Yeah, there's a whole—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: —what's that called?

LANNY SILVERMAN: There's a name for it.

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It'll come to me.

LANNY SILVERMAN: So they had these—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Yeah, where you go from daylight to darkness and it was all—these scrimms of—

LANNY SILVERMAN: This was before movie theaters so this is a form of entertainment. So this is, like, where painting became—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, that's why Daguerre was interested in illusion, that photography.

LANNY SILVERMAN: Oh, that's interesting. And I think these painting things, I think, were sort of a bridge between theatrical kind of painting of landscapes and, like, Barnum and Bailey sense of spectacle, like Disneyland. You know, this is how you animate a painting or you make it—yeah, I didn't know about the rolled painting things but this artist that I work with was kind of really interested in that. And reconstructed something like that in the Cultural Center. It was kind of pretty wonderful. He was—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, I'm thinking of diorama but that's a different thing.

LANNY SILVERMAN: No, it's different. There's a name for these theaters and things that I—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: I know and I'm trying to remember what it was.

LANNY SILVERMAN: And it's funny, too, because—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: It's on the tip of my tongue but I can't get it out. [Laughs.]

LANNY SILVERMAN: I'll look it up afterwards. I'm kind of curious. But no, I think—[Laughs.] I mean, we're more chatting than I think we are doing a formal interview but I think that gets interesting, too. And we got to some points that are very interesting. I like that we recycle back about the—

KENNETH JOSEPHSON: Well, you're going to edit this, right?

LANNY SILVERMAN: Well, I don't know how much they edit out. The end—this part is probably more chatter than anything else. Maybe—hopefully it's edited. But there are some interesting things. We recycled back to the whole notion of the magic of photography and the—creating an illusion and we're even talking a little bit about that now with Daguerre. And so, I guess, yeah, I should probably—I think we probably—

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]