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Oral history interview with Mary Miss, 2016  
July 18 and 20

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**Contact Information**

Reference Department  
Archives of American Art  
Smithsonian Institution  
Washington, D.C. 20560  
[www.aaa.si.edu/askus](http://www.aaa.si.edu/askus)

# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Mary Miss on July 18 and 20, 2016. The interview took place at the home and studio of Mary Miss in New York City, New York, and was conducted by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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

## Interview

ANNETTE LEDDY: This is Annette Leddy interviewing Mary Miss at her home and studio in New York City on July 18, 2016, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number one. Okay, now we can begin. I'm going to put this closer. All right, so I don't know anything about your early life—your childhood—except—and verify this—you were born in 1944 in New York City. Is that correct?

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And then after that your life was a series of wanderings till you came back, it sounds like.

MARY MISS: Yes. My father was overseas in the South Pacific during World War II, and my mother was living here in New York with her parents.

ANNETTE LEDDY: They had met before that?

MARY MISS: Yes, they had—my mother was an Army Nurse, and my father was a—you know, he was in the military, and they met in California, I think.

ANNETTE LEDDY: While he was—was he—

MARY MISS: They were both in the military.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Was he a professional military guy, or was he just—he—

MARY MISS: He ended up in—after the war staying in the Army.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, but he had just signed up for the war.

MARY MISS: But he had probably been drafted or something.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, drafted, yeah.

MARY MISS: I don't—I don't really know, but—

ANNETTE LEDDY: He didn't enlist like so many people did out of patriotic sentiment?

MARY MISS: I really don't know. I think he was in the—what do you call it? Like some version of the ROTC or something. No, is that what it is? Anyway, he was in something that then, when it was—the war started, he probably joined.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, that's it. That's it.

MARY MISS: The Army Reserves.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay.

MARY MISS: And so he and my mother met in California. They were both stationed, I think, at Camp Pendleton, and my mother was training—well, she was working there in, you know, a hospital, but she was training—they were training nurses to fly planes to the South Pacific because they didn't have enough pilots. They wanted to use the pilots for doing the fighting.

ANNETTE LEDDY: They were training nurses to fly the—wow, that's an interesting fact.

MARY MISS: And there was this—there was a great picture of her in this—

ANNETTE LEDDY: That sounds like a documentary in itself, doesn't it?

MARY MISS: Yeah, and so she had on this fleece, leather, big thing—this outfit—this funny picture of her. Anyway, I think as—at that time, if a nurse got married, she had to get out of the Army, and so she got out of the Army, and they—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And that would have been in 1940 or something?

MARY MISS: '40—I don't really know, maybe '42 or something like that. I know that they were on the East Coast for a while because she was—there's a photograph of them on the coast in maybe North Carolina or something, and then he was in Alaska at a certain point. She was living in California with some friends, so I'm guessing they were married—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, was he in the Navy as—

MARY MISS: He was in the Army.

ANNETTE LEDDY: He was in the Army.

MARY MISS: And—but I'm guessing they were married for a year or two before I was born, and so he came back when I was about a year old.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, you were born while he was away—

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —in Alaska.

MARY MISS: No, in the South Pacific.

ANNETTE LEDDY: In the South Pacific.

MARY MISS: But—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, did he see action? I mean—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, really?

MARY MISS: So—and when he went to Alaska, that's—they were married, but that was before he went—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —to the South Pacific. So, he was in the Philippines, and it's something that really marked him, I think. You know, obviously—

ANNETTE LEDDY: World War II.

MARY MISS: World War II.

ANNETTE LEDDY: He was in combat.

MARY MISS: In combat.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And he was not wounded?

MARY MISS: Yes, he was, but it was not a very serious wound. It was—and he also had malaria because every once in a while, he would come down with malaria.

ANNETTE LEDDY: He would relapse, yeah.

MARY MISS: You know; it keeps coming back—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Comes back.

MARY MISS: —over the years.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, he came back. Your mother had you with her—when she was with her parents—

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —in New York City.

MARY MISS: So, they were living on Lexington Avenue, about near 32nd Street or something like that in a building that's still there. It's funny to walk by it and say, "Oh, that's where I lived my first year." My grandfather was working as an—in advertising for Canada Dry or something like that.

ANNETTE LEDDY: He wrote ads?

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: He was an adman.

MARY MISS: Adman, and he was a poor, Irish orphan kid, and my grandmother had been this—from this very well-off family in Ohio, and they took off, so it was this other part of the background.

ANNETTE LEDDY: They took off—they met in Ohio, and then they came to New York, and he—

MARY MISS: No, they went to—I don't know where they went. First, they ended up in California during the Depression. He was there. He was working for Goodyear, and then during the Depression they lost their—lost everything, and my grandmother moved with her daughters—two daughters back to Ohio to stay with her parents, and he was trying to find a way to make money again, and at some point they ended up in New York City.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And he did find a way to make money, which was pretty good, I think.

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, they were there, and then what about your father's side of the family, his parents?

MARY MISS: My father's parents—my father was born—it's—his father was a mining engineer, and his mother was a nurse, and his father was an eccentric kind of inventor, and my father was born in [South Dakota and spent time growing up on a homestead there -MM] next to the Rosebud Sioux Reservation. So, he had a kind of itinerate childhood, as well. They were there for a while, and then my grandfather was trying to—great—no, grandfather was trying to invent insulation by using refuse, like corn stalks or—you know, but he was trying to do this kind of—invent prefabricated paneling. They lived in Vermont—no, New Hampshire, I think it was—Manchester, New Hampshire. Isn't there one—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: New Hampshire, and I think he was doing something with whatever agricultural refuse there was around there, and then they were supposed to go to the Soviet Union, and he was going to try and do things there, and that fell through.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Because he was like a communist worker type or—

MARY MISS: I don't know what his political—but can you imagine anybody deciding to go to the Soviet Union in the '20s? I mean—but they did not go, but they ended up in Hawaii at a certain point, and there are pictures of my father standing with his Hawaiian friends and their surfboards.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

So, but a lot of his experience—my father's experience was about living in the West and being very, you know, knowing how to take care of yourself, and my grandmother was—the whole time I knew her, my grandfather was already dead. She was living very modestly with what little money my father could give her in North Hollywood in a small house, but she made everything. You know, she canned, she grew vegetables, she made rugs of rags that were in—made into hooked rugs, made—our Christmas presents were always these beautiful handmade dolls' clothes, like handmade smocking and coats and hats and wrapped in the funny papers for the wrapping paper, so—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, kind of a real resourceful—

MARY MISS: Frontier.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —and adaptable family on both sides.

MARY MISS: Yeah, but it was like this real frontier feeling was still—you know, that homestead—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right.

MARY MISS: —in South Dakota was—I think my father's best friends there were the people on the reservation, the Native American guys. He would tell us stories about them, and so—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, he is in the Army. He's in Camp Pendleton, meets your mother, who's a nurse and also a pilot.

MARY MISS: No, she wasn't—she was like—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Training to do that.

MARY MISS: —training to do that or starting that training, and I think one of her great disappointments in life was that she didn't get to have this adventure.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, didn't have [laughs]—right.

MARY MISS: And she had also been a nun for awhile.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, gosh.

MARY MISS: And I didn't find that out until I was a teenager. My cousin told me, but when she was 70 she went into the Peace Corps. She was, you know, a nurse, so—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Strong, yeah.

MARY MISS: So, she did public health nursing in the Peace Corps, but I think she was ready for adventures still a little later in life.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, they met at Camp Pendleton, then he goes off to the war, and she comes back to New York, and she has you, and then a year later, your father joins her.

MARY MISS: And then—where did we go? I can't remember, but I know that I moved every year until I was about 13.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Really?

MARY MISS: And we lived in—early on—in Texas, in El Paso, Texas, and I have vague memories of taking my bath in the galvanized—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Tin.

MARY MISS: —tin tub out in the back yard.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right.

MARY MISS: And—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Why did you move—so you moved not just from house to house, but from town to town, and what caused that?

MARY MISS: I don't know. I mean, he decided—I guess because he had a family—he came home with having a family, he decided to stay in the Army. He hadn't—he had started college, but he hadn't finished college.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, he was stationed in different places—

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —and were these like promotional opportunities, or just—

MARY MISS: No, I don't think—I mean, it was kind of unusual, and I'm not quite sure why he—usually people stay places two or three years.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, tour of duty is two, yeah.

MARY MISS: Yeah, but for some reason with the kind of work that he was doing, he was moving every year.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And what did he do in the Army?

MARY MISS: I don't really know except that he was—towards the end of his career, he was stationed at the North American Air Defense Command—NORAD, which is in Colorado Springs. It's that place inside the mountain.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, yeah.

MARY MISS: So, he was probably dealing with missile installation or—I don't—who knows? I have no idea.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, so it was kind of secret.

MARY MISS: It was—I never knew what he did, and he never talked about the war—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Never talked—

MARY MISS: —and what happened in the war.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And he never watched those endless documentaries on TV about the war?

MARY MISS: No, and he—if he caught us looking at anything—like he had this—I know that he had been in hand-to-hand combat with somebody, and that person died, and he had this flag that had blood on it, and we found it in a trunk once, and he was very upset.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh.

MARY MISS: And he was extremely, overly cautious about us seeing or knowing about anything to do with violence.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, that's so interesting for a career military person.

MARY MISS: So, I think, you know, like he didn't like us to watch television programs that had—not that we had a television very early. It was very late, but—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, when you say "we," you had siblings?

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You were the eldest—

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —and then—

MARY MISS: So, then I had a sister four years younger, a brother six years, and another sister 12 years younger.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh.

MARY MISS: So, I know that I was in Kansas—this very small town in Kansas—when—you know, in those early years. I was in Texas. When my sister was born, I was four years old, and we were in Monterey. My father was at Fort Ord I think was the thing—the place—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, Fort Ord.

MARY MISS: —that was nearby, and other places I remember—East Chicago, Indiana—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Were you on the base always in these places?

MARY MISS: Almost never.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, okay.

MARY MISS: The one time we lived—and it was something that he really wanted us to be out, you know, in the community—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —and we lived at Fort Sheridan on the base for a short period of time. That's near Chicago, and in Germany we—you had to live on the base.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, how did you—how did you like all this moving?

MARY MISS: You know, when you're a kid you don't know anything else. I've been watching "The Wire" recently. You know, we—I don't have HBO, so I'm always years behind.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I haven't seen it yet, so—I have heard about it.

MARY MISS: But, you know, in watching these, a lot of it focuses on these children who are in—you know, on the streets and leading these very hard lives, and they don't know anything else, and I think that's kind of—not that I'm comparing it to that street life, but I—just to the fact that kids don't realize, you know, what—

ANNETTE LEDDY: know people who, you know, had itinerate childhoods, and they said how painful it was to leave your friends, that you'd just make friends—

MARY MISS: That was hard, yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —and then you'd have to—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —and then even with school, sometimes, they felt they never knew—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —what was going on because they—it—you know—

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —even foreign service kids, for example, often talk about how you just can't put that education together, so—

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —very disjointed.

MARY MISS: It was—it—I think, you know, I look back, and it was—you know, one thing that's very funny is I'll see, you know, various characters around the art world or other places like—or there's this great woman who died recently, Zaha Hadid—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, yeah.

MARY MISS: —who—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, architect.

MARY MISS: —I—

ANNETTE LEDDY: You knew her.

MARY MISS: I just knew her a little bit, but Zaha wanted people to look at her all the time. She was like a real exhibitionist in, you know, many ways. I've always been just the opposite. You know, if I can fade into the scenery, that's what I wanted to do because this thing of going into a new place—and I always was taller than anybody, and I had pierced ears, and my—I had these long, black braids, and was kind of—everybody else was blond and blue-eyed wherever I went, and so it was like trying to be not visible, and it was impossibly, you know, but that was the way I dealt with it. I kind of tried to—you know.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But you had siblings, so sometimes that makes it—I mean, at least your social life kind of travelled with you in a way.

MARY MISS: It does. Your family—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —is your social life. I wasn't particularly close to them because this is—my sister was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Younger.

MARY MISS: —four years younger, and then she had partner with—my brother was two years younger than her,

but at least, yeah, it was still, you know, you had your—the family, you know, and I would usually find somebody to be at least one friend each place that I went, but it was—it was a strange life, yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did you like school?

MARY MISS: I did. I kind of remember being bored a good bit, partly because, I think, there was never a chance to get into things, you know. You know, then you'd be moving again, and so you didn't have a chance to really explore places or people or school or—you know. It was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Hard to feel grounded—

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —maybe, focused, although, you know, probably most American children you would talk to would say that school was quite boring, and so—

[They laugh.]

MARY MISS: Maybe it's just everybody has that experience.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right, at least at a certain kind of school, but yeah, well—and so what would be—if you want to share - something that would be a key memory of that time, of your upbringing.

MARY MISS: I always think that it's being in the back seat of an old Chevy moving from one place to the next and looking at the landscape out the window, and sometimes you got to places where it was really hot. My parents would put, you know, wet towels on our heads to keep us from totally passing out or something, or they—you know, with the fights in the car, you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: When the car gets stopped and everybody gets threatened with a spanking if they don't—but really, I mean, that sense of the land and—you know, it was—it was really an important thing, kind of seeing it and crisscrossing, you know, from Midwest to West and Northwest to Southwest to Midwest to South to Florida to —back and forth.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Now, were your parents at all interested in art, or was there any early exposure to art?

MARY MISS: No, my mother had been interested in ballet when she lived in New York. I remember she had books about ballet, and I thought they were really interesting with—but neither of them really knew about art.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, what was your first experience of art would you say?

MARY MISS: Really, I think, it was maybe making some plaster models. You know, getting some molds. There were several things that I had to do that I got to do when I was young that I really loved, and one was making these molds. I would even—they were figures, but I don't even remember what they were, but the idea that you could pour the liquid plaster in and peel this rubber off and have that three-dimensional thing. I really loved that, or there was—somebody gave me once—oh, somebody—a friend of my mother's had to make a model for her bridge club, and I helped her, and we made a scene around a pond on a piece of mirror, and I loved making that. So, it turned out anything that—where I was making something, I really loved doing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But your mother didn't—or your—you had this grandmother who made those things, but your mother didn't make things.

MARY MISS: She made all my clothes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, she did?

MARY MISS: We were—we didn't have very much money ever, so it was always passing things down or going to Goodwill or—and moving so often, we would kind of—that was normal. You'd go to Goodwill and get some new furniture for the new place. There were a few things that got moved, but you fill in the missing parts and get clothes and get things from my cousins.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did you know how to sew when you were young?

MARY MISS: I did. I learned how to sew, and—but I did like sewing once, you know, I was old enough to start doing that.



ANNETTE LEDDY: And did you have art class in school, like elementary school.

MARY MISS: Not that I remember. Probably the first art classes I had were in high school, and I found them to be very interesting. I really liked it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, where was that?

MARY MISS: In Colorado. In Colorado Springs.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, it was—so, that—you sort of settled after age 13. So, your high school years were all in Colorado Springs?

MARY MISS: No, we moved for one year to Florida. So, I lived in the outskirts of Colorado Springs for a year after we came there from Germany, and I moved into town, and then I was there for a couple of years, and so I was moving most of the time until I was 13. Then, I had a couple of years of—maybe seventh, eighth, and ninth grade, but I think ninth grade was part of high school there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right.

MARY MISS: And then 10th—no, wait, I can't remember.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Tenth would sophomore year, normally.

MARY MISS: No, so it was seventh, eighth, and ninth was junior high—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —and then 10th was high school, and then 11th I went to Florida, and then I came back to Colorado for just the last year.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And then Germany, how was Germany?

MARY MISS: I really loved it because we were living on the base, which was really boring because everybody's in these apartments, and—but every chance we got, my father would—and mother would take us out to see things and go exploring, and so I really—I thought that was interesting.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And so when did you start thinking that your direction was art? How old were you?

MARY MISS: I think it was probably in high school. You know, I was—well, I don't know that I felt my direction was art. I was taking art classes, and I really enjoyed them, and then in college, I was interested in English literature. I was interested in history, but I took a sculpture class, and it's that kind of lightbulb going off, like with the plaster and the mold, you know. I really liked that three-dimensional thing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And now—you went to UCSB, right?

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: And what drove that decision? How did you end up there?

MARY MISS: My father was—my father was working in—he had gone to Florida to work for a company. He had retired from the Army. He didn't like that, so he went back to Colorado Springs. He worked there for a while and then went to work for a company in California, but he wanted to see if it was going to work or not, and so when I graduated from high school, I applied to UCLA because the tuition was so low in California at the time.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Free, I think, actually.

MARY MISS: Practically, and then I'd never been to UCLA, and I went out. My mother and I drove out for a visit, and it was so busy and right, you know, in the middle of LA, and we drove up to Santa Barbara just for something else, and I got to that campus, which was very funky at the time. It was—a lot of old Army barracks were still there. There were only a few new buildings, and I really liked it. I thought it was interesting. There were people that seemed interesting to be around, so I transferred my application. I had already been accepted in school, but I asked if I could transfer there and ended up going there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And so then you discovered sculpture there. What—and were there particular teachers who you worked with?

MARY MISS: You know, there were, but they weren't that interesting. There was a guy—Howard Warshaw, who was this California artist kind of in the vein of Rico Lebrun.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Rico Lebrun, yeah.

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I know his work.

MARY MISS: Yeah, and I couldn't stand that, and there was a very nice guy—Robert Thomas—who taught sculpture who had studied after the war on the GI bill with—what's his name?—a French sculptor—Zadkine, and he was a very nice guy, very low key, but it wasn't because of a teacher, really. It was because I really liked making things, and I kept studying English literature during—I was pretty serious about that at the time, as well.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And then—but then you went right away to graduate school, right—directly finished?

MARY MISS: Well, the—I guess one of the important things was that I went back to Colorado Springs. I think my father had gone back there, but I was able to stay—P.S. I never would have been able to go to college or graduate school if it was today because the amounts of money people—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Too expensive.

MARY MISS: —it's way—I mean—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, that's—yeah, so sad.

MARY MISS: It's so sad. I never would have gone to school.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, just think of—you know, if you read just biographies of artists, the number of them that went to school just in New York alone on the GI bill. I mean—

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —huge number—I mean, all of the American artists of the basically '40s and '50s that—

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —were all GI bill.

MARY MISS: Yeah, like my teacher, yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: They just wouldn't have existed, you know. It's amazing.

MARY MISS: Right.

MARY MISS: Right, but I went back to Colorado during the summers and took a summer course at Colorado College—a sculpture class—and there was a man there named Herman Snyder, who I took a course with, and I think maybe the next summer I did as well, and he was—I mean, Robert Thomas and people in California were these traditional—traditionalists, you know, bronze casting, marble carving, and Herman Snyder knew what was happening in New York and, you know, was a really interesting artist himself. He was inviting people—I don't know if Cage actually came. People came during the school year as visitors that were of this—of the time, you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —in New York.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yes. This was—what—1963?

MARY MISS: '63 or something like that.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Something like that.

MARY MISS: '63, '64.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, these were people who would really know about Fluxus or they would know about—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —what was really happening in New York.

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MARY MISS: So, it was so eye-opening that it wasn't just, you know, that—you know, the whole concept of art was—I was introduced to a really different way of thinking that was extremely appealing to me, really interesting, and so that was a very important thing, and also during that time, I met the person who was going to be my first husband, Bruce Colvin.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And how do you spell it? Bruce—

MARY MISS: C-O-L-V-I-N.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, I don't know who that is.

MARY MISS: So, he's not anybody who's been visible, but he was Snyder's first—or, you know, kind of top student and very smart guy, very—he was a bike racer, and the biker racers were like outlaws, you know, at that time. It wasn't a popular sport, but anybody who was serious about bike racing was in Colorado because of the mountains and the hill climbing that was possible. And so that was like a really important connection through Snyder, and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's kind of great. It's how—it just seems like your parents just kind of had nothing to do with any of these decisions. They just let you lead the way, and you just—

MARY MISS: And actually that's the other thing that I feel not only that there was free school, but I was off in California. My grandmother lived in Los Angeles. I saw her maybe at Christmas and Thanksgiving. My mother would give me a stack of postcards, self-addressed, so that I would put a postcard in the mail. I was supposed to do it every week. I did it once in six weeks, maybe. There were no telephone calls. They had no clue what I was doing. I was just off—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Running wild.

MARY MISS: —[laughs] off on my own, and I feel so sorry for these kids that have their telephone connection because—

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's a new era, definitely.

MARY MISS: And Santa Barbara was really an interesting place outside of the school because a lot of the old beatniks—not hippies but, you know, the old crew that had come down from San Francisco. They were poets and people—

MARY MISS: —was there, but there were—these were, you know, the remains of that period. Dancers—so, I could be—you know, I was able to be with this—I really related to that kind of marginal group.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. And that's kind of interesting, being kind of from a military family that that would be your—how do you explain that?

MARY MISS: That's a good question. I have—I'm not quite sure.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I mean, maybe there's no causal relationship there, but I don't know. I mean, I—

MARY MISS: Well, I think exploration was always just part of my thinking because we were always moving, and you had to be exploring a new place every time you moved, and my father's family had been exploring new places, and my mother was, you know, really a—somebody who—you know, as I said, was in the Peace Corps at 70 and did lot of travelling afterwards, and I think was just waiting to get these kids out of the house and so she could have this life that she had missed. So—

ANNETTE LEDDY: It was just another kind of adventure in a way, right?

MARY MISS: Yeah, it was just—I was just really interested in things.

ANNETTE LEDDY: It was a—it was kind of counter-cultural. You didn't feel part of kind of a political—

MARY MISS: Political stuff was—still wasn't coming up then, you know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: I—maybe it was two years after I left Santa Barbara the Bank of America burned down, but it wasn't a political place at that time. When I got to New York is when I kind of became more politicized, you know, by

what was going on in New York, but there it was really a cultural—I knew that I didn't like the sorority kids or the surfer kids, but I liked the poets and the writers and the artists.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And so then say something more about the interest in literature and writing. How did that—what direction did that take? What writers did you like?

MARY MISS: I was looking at poetry pretty seriously, you know, really trying to read Elliot and Pound and those guys. Reading was just—it was like that—this other way of thinking about the world, and

ANNETTE LEDDY: Because you mentioned that in some of the other interviews that—just relative to your work—that you make these references to Hitchcock or to literature, and I kind of—it's interesting. You know, you wouldn't—for example, that wouldn't be the first thought I would have on looking at these early works, right? But obviously it was a part of your creative process.

MARY MISS: Right. Also, there were films in Santa Barbara. Seeing these fabulous early Italian films, or—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Kate Le Havre [ph] or all sorts of—

MARY MISS: Yeah, *La Ventura* or—

ANNETTE LEDDY: *La Dolce Vita*.

MARY MISS: What is the French film?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Truffaut.

MARY MISS: That—yeah, Truffaut, but—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Or Godard. No?

MARY MISS: Jack—who's the painter? Ellsworth Kelly's kind of contemporary? Jack Youngerman's wife, Delphine Seyrig—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Seyrig, yeah.

MARY MISS: —was in the film. What did—is it really?

ANNETTE LEDDY: "Breathless."

MARY MISS: "Last Year at Marienbad."

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, I loved that movie.

MARY MISS: I loved that. It was just great.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: I have one friend now from that period who was a marine scientist, and he was my botany lab teacher, and he's the only person I know from the period, and he's such a good friend still. He's now 80 years old or something like that, and I think, "What was I like then?" I mean, you know, here I was. How—what was I doing? And he said, "You were just like you are now" [laughs]. You know, that's no help, but you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right.

MARY MISS: —you're kind of curious trying to recreate—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Totally.

MARY MISS: —but I was curious about things all the time. That's all I can say, and don't ask me coming from this nonintellectual family, somebody described me early on as an intellectual. I—what's that name? I was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, somebody, you know, driven by lots of curiosity and—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —it just seems like there's adventure that can happen in physical space, but in your case it got translated into this creative and intellectual adventure.

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's kind of—that's kind of amazing, but—so then, so—and I'm also getting this feeling that Colorado Springs in a way feels like home—the most like home.

MARY MISS: That was—that was the most like home—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Most like home.

MARY MISS: —and my mother continued to live there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: My parents lived there. My father died. My mother stayed there until she was in her 90s.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And that's also where you had this great experience—

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —about discovering realsculpture—

MARY MISS: Right, I never went—like later on, I didn't spend time there, you know. After—well, I did. No, that's not right. So, I went to graduate school in Baltimore—

ANNETTE LEDDY: At like—

MARY MISS: The—Rinehart School of Sculpture, and I went because there was no tuition if you got accepted at Rinehart. There were only 10 students. You got materials paid for, and they took, I think, maybe five students each year, and my future husband was there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: This is the—Colvin.

MARY MISS: Bruce Colvin.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh.

MARY MISS: And I had heard about it from him, and we weren't exactly—it's not like we were together then, but I was hearing that this was a good place and that it was, you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So—and, you know, I gather from looking at these books and everything that really the work you did as a graduate student is what's called your early work.

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: I mean, it was exhibited and is still—

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —referred to as your—so it was, you know, very precocious, right? I mean, you found this kind of aesthetic so fast, really.

MARY MISS: You know, it's—so, there I was in Santa Barbara and people were doing all of this figurative stuff and bronze casting, and I was kind of doing the things I needed to do to, you know, pass my classes, but I wasn't—it wasn't my interest any longer, so it's like I got there, and I was—and it's not like everybody there was so interesting, and the person who was the kind of artist in residence/teacher, Norman Carlberg, came out of this tradition of, you know, you take a form and you repeat it over and over and—I mean, it wasn't anything—but he was a really nice guy and, you know, could—got to do what he got to do, and my conversations were a lot with Bruce, and he was very interested in not only contemporary art, but contemporary music and had been very involved in jazz for a long time.

So, I think our dialogue was, you know, one of the most important things, and I just wanted to use like really simple materials, and so I started making these things, but I was not getting any support from the school.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, when you were at—

MARY MISS: Rinehart.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —Rinehart, there was no—there was no support for that? It was like what—

MARY MISS: Again, it was more like doing steel, welded steel—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see.

MARY MISS: You know, sculpture with a big S, capital S or something.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But maybe it was, at least, what we call Minimalism, or—

MARY MISS: It wasn't really.

ANNETTE LEDDY: No?

MARY MISS: So, what was interesting to me was that—I worked for that first year, and we had a student show at the end of the year. I had these pieces like made of string and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And you did that screen that goes like that?

MARY MISS: Screen—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And maybe that one that's like four by fours—yeah.

MARY MISS: Right, that one—

ANNETTE LEDDY: You know, I was looking at them, but I can't find them in this book now, but I know which ones you're—they're in—

MARY MISS: This cone covered with tar.

ANNETTE LEDDY: The cone, yeah. Yeah, I had—this is a very good book, too. It's a little heavy for me to bring, but, yeah, this one. Yeah, you know, so it's not—

MARY MISS: Yeah, so this.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, you did all of these as a graduate student?

MARY MISS: This.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh.

MARY MISS: Now, wait a second. This might have been the second year. Yeah, but I was a graduate student.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: I can't remember which one and which year.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, it's—

MARY MISS: —and this—I had done this one, and so I probably had this, this—

ANNETTE LEDDY: You're covering the phone here. We've got to move it.

MARY MISS: Oh, I'm sorry.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.] That's okay.

MARY MISS: No, maybe not. I don't know when I did that one.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, this says '66 or '67 on it. I don't know if that's accurate.

MARY MISS: I can't remember, but anyway, so Robert Morris came as a visiting artist—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh.

MARY MISS: —and I was being given a lot of gas because Norman and other sculptors who taught, didn't think this was really sculpture or art.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh.

MARY MISS: And Morris came, and we went into—the whole group went with him into the exhibition space of the

student show, and he talked about my work and focused on it, and it was like, for me, gee, you know, somebody —

ANNETTE LEDDY: Somebody really important knows about it.

MARY MISS: Somebody appreciates what I'm doing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right.

MARY MISS: And so I decided—this man, Herman Snyder, died in a car accident in Colorado, and Bruce was asked to come back and teach in his place, so he—Bruce was finishing his master's. There's more over there if you want some, and I had just done one year and had a second year to go. So, I decided to go with him to Colorado and take the second year out of residence. I said, "I'll come back at the end of the year with work, but I don't want to stay here" because I wasn't getting support, and so they couldn't very well say no because it wasn't like I hadn't done—I had a lot of work. So, I did the second year out of residence. We lived in Colorado Springs for that one year and decided we didn't want to live there. We wanted to be in New York because we had—during that year—taken trips up to New York to visit and look at galleries and things.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And so what did you see in New York when you went on those trips?

MARY MISS: We would stay in Sal Scarpitta's studio near Union Square, and I can't quite remember what I saw then or what I might have seen when we first moved here, but I'm thinking of a show that Castelli had that was way uptown. He had rented a space, and Rafael Ferrer had, I think, leaves in an elevator, and I saw some early things of Eva Hesse. That wasn't so early for her, but—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, yes.

MARY MISS: I can't remember. I can't remember exactly which things I was seeing, but, you know, some of Morris' work.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right, so that was all in the—in the—

MARY MISS: Yeah, so it just seemed that there were—Colorado Springs was really boring, and it was really much more interesting in New York.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And someone like, say, Donald Judd or—

MARY MISS: I was reading Donald Judd. I remember reading about—reading his articles in magazines at the time.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And what about Robert Smithson?

MARY MISS: I was kind of reacting against the Earth artists, or I didn't feel sympathetic to them because I felt they were doing these gestures out in the desert, and I knew what the desert was like and that it could swallow up anything, and so I didn't believe it when I saw a spiral, no matter if you had to do it with bulldozers or the double negative. I didn't, you know—I didn't understand why you would do it that big because even if you did it that big, it was going to be small.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, the performative aspect of it didn't appeal to you, I guess.

MARY MISS: No, I thought it was too much like using the desert as a canvas, you know, and gestural. What interested me in Morris' work or Andre or some of Judd's was—more than anything was the relationship of the viewer to—the role of the viewer. I—that really got me thinking about how you as a viewer come to the work, and I started wanting that to be really emphasized, the experience that the viewer had. I felt like those early pieces of Morris were demanding something of the viewer different—in a, you know, in a different way than sculpture had before. I wasn't exactly satisfied with that relationship or that experience, but it really made me be thinking about that.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And did you continue to be in contact with Robert Morris after that visit to the—

MARY MISS: Not really. I mean, we saw him once when we moved to New York, but he was off. You know, he was kind of at the peak of his—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Although he did put you in that article that was in [inaudible], you know. He—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: The Nazca one.

MARY MISS: But I didn't—I didn't really have contact with him. It's been strange to see his demise in a way or lack of visibility because I think he was really important at the time.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So important to everybody close to him.

MARY MISS: In kind of thinking and the positions—I think he was really—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, I guess things have kind of shifted. Critical opinion has shifted more towards Smithson, right, as the—since they recognized some of the same things, at least, and—I don't know. One doesn't know how —

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —those things happen exactly.

MARY MISS: But—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, all of that was happening when you were in graduate school, and you were just taking in all these influences, and you were—

MARY MISS: Reading.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —reading, and you were—

MARY MISS: Reading about the Russian constructivists. I really loved reading about them and kind of becoming more aware of their—the role that art was being given in that context.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You mean, as a kind of part of a political vision?

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And that's how you were thinking of your own work?

MARY MISS: I was curious. I hadn't—I hadn't come to maybe articulate that, but I was interested in—I was always interested in more than just the—David Smith never really—I could never get interested. I always felt like I was reading a road sign, you know, and it was not going to be that—

ANNETTE LEDDY: You mean his sculpture didn't interest you.

MARY MISS: His sculpture.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: Yeah. The pop artists were just interesting to me in the way they were pushing boundaries, but the work itself wasn't that interesting.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But these people make sense with who you mentioned, like Eva Hesse and Carl Andre.

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That—you know, that kind of more poetic and—sculptural but still—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: I just saw this Eva Hesse movie recently.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, what is it?

MARY MISS: I forget what the title is, but it's the only movie I think that's been made about her. It's called "Eva Hesse" probably.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, I think I heard about that. It sounds intriguing.

MARY MISS: Yeah.



ANNETTE LEDDY: What was—what did—what struck you about it?

MARY MISS: Also, Ana Mendieta was a friend of mine—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Really?

MARY MISS: —and I guess whether it's a man or a woman, any dead artist—they—you know, you go for a certain take, but it was disturbing that it was like she was being defined and her work was being defined by these kind of tragic events that happened in her life—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh.

MARY MISS: —that I don't think necessarily defined the work, but—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —you know. It makes a good story, I guess.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I guess. Raises the prices also, I think, but, yeah, that seems to be the way it plays out. And Diane Arbus—you know, with this new show and new books and new novel. It's like an endless industry. I mean, her work was amazing, but it's like the—

MARY MISS: I know.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —the mythology is so much bigger.

MARY MISS: The mythology.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You know, and it really seems without end. I mean, it's—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —how many years have passed—you know, since her death. I feel like she's having a run, and it's—how can that still be like a new thing slowly coming out, you know?

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, okay, well, I just—okay, so here's the other thing I wanted to know. Now, these early pieces were right away taken up. They were shown. They were reviewed. They were raved. I mean, you had a—

MARY MISS: No.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —Mercer Gallery was your first show.

MARY MISS: No—

ANNETTE LEDDY: No?

MARY MISS: —these pieces were—they were just really important to me, these—

ANNETTE LEDDY: But I think they were shown at—forgive me—but Mercer Gallery I have as—

MARY MISS: Mercer Gallery other things were shown.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, so they didn't—

MARY MISS: I may have shown this piece at Mercer—55 Mercer.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see.

MARY MISS: And I may have shown—yeah, I might have shown a couple of these pieces. I can't remember. So, these were done during the second year of my graduate school while I was away.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And *The V* [*V's in the Field*] was also graduate school.

MARY MISS: So—no, I think that's when I first got to New York. So, this is the one I always—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, actually *Stakes and Ropes*, Colorado Springs, 1968.

MARY MISS: So, that's while I was in graduate school. That was my year of—out of residence.

ANNETTE LEDDY: *Window in the Hill: A Rectangle of Reflective Material*.

MARY MISS: This one, yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, those were the first ones on your CV on your website, but then other places list this 55 Mercer as the first show, but I can't quite figure out—

MARY MISS: I mean; this was in a graduate show at—I guess—is that why they're there? I don't know. I guess it's an outdoor work, so I listed them as outdoor projects. Maybe that's why.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Maybe so, yeah.

MARY MISS: Maybe that's why they're there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: They were all different CVs in all these different places.

MARY MISS: This book probably has another one, as well.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. So, this says Mercer—55 Mercer, 1971, so that was after—so these ones were done when you were in Colorado Springs still in graduate school, yeah?

MARY MISS: These—this one was when I first came to New York.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And then when you came to New York, there was the Mercer—55 Mercer.

MARY MISS: That—well, '69 I did this project, *Ropes and Stakes*.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right, with the—

MARY MISS: These are all early New York. I mean, that's not—where's *Ropes*?

ANNETTE LEDDY: You mean the one that's connected to the shore, kind of?

MARY MISS:

Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, they didn't—

MARY MISS: I don't know where that is.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I know what you mean, though. I've looked at it. I don't think so. This one's also so nice, yeah.

MARY MISS: But the *V's in the Field* and the *Stakes and Ropes* and—were probably '69, and then I was working in my—this basement studio I had on 96th Street. We had a tenement apartment on 94th Street and Second Avenue. Sal Scarpitta lived in one of these places. Do you know who he is? He was a sculptor who showed at Castelli for years and did these very interesting wrapped pieces like sleds and various—and paintings that were wrapped.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Sleds like Joseph Beuys?

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, Scarpitta—

MARY MISS: Yeah, but a long time ago.

ANNETTE LEDDY: S-C-A-R—

MARY MISS: P-I-T-T-A.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —P-I-T-T-A, and first name, S-A-L?

MARY MISS: S-A-L.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And how did you know him?

MARY MISS: He came as a visiting artist to the Maryland Institute regularly. The other person who showed up there regularly as kind of an invited artist—not as often as Scarpitta. I think Scarpitta came once a week or so—was—what is the painter? It was such a scene. Clyfford Still.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh.

MARY MISS: Because he'd show up with his wife and daughter in this kind of big limousine. They lived in Baltimore, and he was like a preacher coming. I mean, he dressed in this suit, and he like didn't really want to talk to anybody, but I really liked his paintings a lot, but I never talked to him, or if I tried, I didn't get any [laughs] response, but Sal was just kind of this wild man who was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, then we really are already to New York right?

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: Where we're kind of—do you feel like we've covered the first 20—what, 23 years of your life?

MARY MISS: I think so.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Your education, upbringing, done. So, then you moved to New York with your husband—at that point you were married?

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: And—

MARY MISS: We're living in this railroad flat. It does have its own bathroom—a bathtub instead of being in the kitchen like other friends had, and we had a studio on 96th Street, and I have a pit bull, and there are drug addicts in the building and on the streets, and I always let the dog out the door first to kind of scare the guys out so I—can go downstairs, and then I'm with my pit bull going up to 96th Street. It's a rough neighborhood, and I—we go to the Metropolitan Museum, where somebody we know in Colorado Springs knows someone in the conservation department to see if we could get jobs doing something, and here we have our master's degrees from Maryland Institute—both of us. We come in, and they hire my husband—hire Bruce as a fulltime conservator for a reasonable salary, and I get hired in the—to be a file clerk in the photo studio for like \$1.10 an hour.

[END OF SD01, TRACK02.]

MARY MISS: Or something like that. So right away, I'm like, "Hey wait a second," you know, "why?" But it was lucky, because mine was more part-time, and I really had time to be in the studio.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Speaking of photo, who took these photographs of these early works?

MARY MISS: I did.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You took them. So these are really good. I mean, were you trained as a photographer, or just -

MARY MISS: No, I've always photographed my own work.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Your own stuff. Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: I just had to learn whatever.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. I see.

MARY MISS: The next thing was, that you have to do.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: Anyway, so my job in the photo studio was really interesting, because I would get the numbers on negatives, and go and have to check and make sure the negative was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: You know, the right—

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's like an archivist's job, yeah.

MARY MISS: But it was fabulous, because I got to go into the textile department and open drawers, and go through things, like the musical instruments or—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: It was just—it was really wonderful to get to explore the museum like that. I had to do a lot of really boring stuff in between, but—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: I did get—that was the treat.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: So I really loved that part. And then we had this basement studio on 96th street, and—very rough space, and I would go down there and work and read.

ANNETTE LEDDY: What would you read?

MARY MISS: [Laughs.] I was reading *The Brothers Karamazov*.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MARY MISS: As I can remember in this basement. It's not a cheerful place [laughs]. I mean I'd read, and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So did that inspire this piece, or?

MARY MISS: [Laughs.] I don't know. I was reading the Russians at that time. I remember that.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: Anyway, I would put these pieces up and take them down.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. And did you have a gallery?

MARY MISS: I didn't have a gallery at this point.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: So this is—we moved here in maybe the Fall of '68, I'm thinking, and I did the project on Wards Island. I was using this rope, you know.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And I used that for the Wards Island piece.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. And was that commissioned?

MARY MISS: No, it was Charlotte Moorman. Remember who that is?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Yeah, yeah.

MARY MISS: I was organizing a—this was the thirteenth annual Wards Island art festival, and she'd get friends of hers to put things around. And in the meantime, I'd gone to—somebody at work had given me the name of a doctor whose wife turned out to be an artist, and he said, "Oh you have to meet my wife." And she had been studio-mates with Eva Hesse. And so this is '69, and her name was Evelyn Honig. Actually, E-T-H-Y—E-T-H-Y-L-Y-N, something. No, E-T-E-N—E-T-E-H-L-Y-N, yeah. Ethelyn. H-O-N-I-G. And just one second.

So I said, "Oh I'd love to meet her." But she was already sick, so I never got to meet her.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But what was your circle, when you first came to New York?

MARY MISS: I had no circle.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You had no circle? It was just these few people that you knew from graduate school.

MARY MISS: I knew Sal Scarpitta. I met Ethelyn Honig, and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And you had your husband, and you worked at the Met.

MARY MISS: And he worked full-time at the Met, so I was really kind of very isolated. But Ethelyn is the one who connected me with 55 Mercer.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: I think it was just starting at that time, probably.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: But that wasn't until maybe 1970 or something. But somehow—don't ask me how I found out about this Wards Island Festival. I don't know if it was through Ethelyn or—but also there were the anti-war demonstrations that were happening, the Art Workers' Coalition.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: So I started going—so it might have been at a place like that, that I heard about that, and said I wanted to do something.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: That's more likely. I just started—

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's funny, because I don't think of Charlotte Moorman as being a political activist.

MARY MISS: No, but I might have—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Met her somehow that way? Yeah.

MARY MISS: Yeah. Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. I don't remember even meeting her. All I know is she organized the whole—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And did you know other Fluxus people? No.

MARY MISS: No. I didn't know her. So however it was, I ended up doing that project. I started going to some of these demonstrations, but I didn't really meet people. I mean, I didn't know people at that time. But somebody told me that you had to invite dealers to your studio. So, I remember going into the first person I ever went to see. I liked the work in his gallery. It was Klaus Kertess at Bykert Gallery. And I got off the elevator, and this woman was saying "you have to come to dinner next week," and he said, "Thanks." She was just leaving, and he said, "Thanks, I'm busy, but"—and she said, "Well how about the following week?" And she stood there and kept saying, until he finally, you know, after like five or six times—I don't know, I mean it was embarrassing to me. And it was Jeanne-Claude, Christo.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Really? [Laughs.]

MARY MISS: And so I should have learned early that this is how you get [laughs]—

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MARY MISS: It was really like a remarkable first experience [laughs].

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MARY MISS: Anyway, so there was a guy, there was a gallery. Le Giudici Gallery, at the time.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: Maybe that was a little bit later. But I invited—I think Klaus Kertess came over. Anyway, somebody—maybe he didn't. I don't think he ever came over. But they told me—how did this happen? When was the first Whitney Annual that I was in? 1970? Whitney Annual. So somebody told me about—that they were looking for women to be in the Whitney Annual.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, it was 1970.

MARY MISS: And so this is probably '69 that I'm hearing this.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And so somebody—I don't know if it was Marsha Tucker. Somebody came to my studio. I ended up

showing this piece in the Annual.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And so you knew Marsha Tucker.

MARY MISS: I didn't know her well, but you know, our paths crossed.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Crossed, yeah.

MARY MISS: And you know, so there was all this demonstration that was going on around not only the anti-war stuff, but it was in '69 that also I moved down to Jay Street, down here.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And there—it was an old herring plant, and actually I think Bruce was working to earn money. At this time, he had probably—I guess he might have still been at the Met. And so I kind of re-did the place. Part of the kind of pioneer-ish part of the background is that you just figure out how to do it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: So I figured out, you know, how to do that loft. But it always smelled bad.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And so when this building became available—it was a nut company.

ANNETTE LEDDY: The whole building?

MARY MISS: The whole building was empty, and the landlord, Bazzini, Mr. Bazzini, asked us if we knew anybody who wanted to move into these—into this building, because these buildings were just sitting empty all around down here.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So you moved in here like 1970?

MARY MISS: 1970.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Unbelievable, and you've been here ever since. But just this floor? Or all floors?

MARY MISS: Just this floor.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay.

MARY MISS: And I fixed this one up too, although it's gone through several renovations [laughs] since then.. But once I moved downtown, whether it was over on Jay Street or here, is when I started to meet other women artists. And partly it was through the Art Workers' Coalition stuff that was happening, even though I was just like a person standing there, who didn't know anybody. Like Poppy Johnson was this kind of real rabble-rouser, and you know, firebrand. But I didn't know these people. And once I was in the Whitney Annual, I met Brenda Miller, and Jackie Winsor, and people that—I kept meeting more and more women artists.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And Michelle.

MARY MISS: Michelle Stewart a little bit later. And you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And did you—when you talk about, say, Jackie Winsor—so you know, now of course people think of this almost as a group, like you and Jackie and Michelle. Did you think of yourselves that way then? No, it was just—

MARY MISS: No, we were just kind of—it was really nice to meet some other people who were artists.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: Because you know, Ethelyn had introduced me to a couple of people, like Tom Doyle. And he was, again, this wasn't anybody I could talk to or hang out with. Max's Kansas City was the bar that people went to, but you know, it wasn't—

ANNETTE LEDDY: You didn't go there.

MARY MISS: I did a little bit later on, but—

ANNETTE LEDDY: You didn't feel like you were part of an art scene, the way people—

MARY MISS: I didn't.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You know, like we have these letters that people write when they first come to New York. And they're describing things, like, "Well I just came to town and then today I was playing pool with Jim Dine, and I went to a bar and I saw Rauschenberg, and I"—you know, they describe it as like this endless series of encounters with these people.

MARY MISS: Well you know, it's for some people, probably is. I was really close friends with Hedda Sterne. The, you know, one woman in the photograph. And when Hedda came, she—I can't, I forget how it was that she was introduced to Peggy Guggenheim. But she went immediately into this milieu that—she met everybody.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And she met Saul Steinberg, who she got together with right away.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right, right.

MARY MISS: And Saul knew everybody.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I think there are people like that. They just fall into the group.

MARY MISS: And so she fell into this, and the rest of her life was—especially with Saul, was—whether it's Picasso, there was nobody whose name I would bring up that Hedda hadn't encountered, you know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MARY MISS: Corbusier.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.] Duchamp. Yeah [laughs].

MARY MISS: You know, really.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, yeah.

MARY MISS: It was just kind of—but that was not my experience [laughs]. And you know, as a young woman, I mean there's no—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well you were also a married young woman, which is—

MARY MISS: A married young woman, and also my husband—it was not a good thing that he got that job, which was such a full-time job. You know, I was perfectly willing to be the co-earner, but I couldn't get work, you know, in the way that he could. And so you know, I think that he was a very, a really brilliant guy. Very—I think back—although he didn't have the maybe most obvious signs of this, but I think maybe he had Asperger's, or some—there was something about him that was totally insulated, and that was unwilling to go out. He could be very affable to talk to, but he was really withdrawn, and very cynical about the art world.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And so he never really entered that. And so here I am, kind of on my own, trying to find routes in.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And I'm married, but I'm married to this person that doesn't want to go anyplace or talk to anybody.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: So as I started to meet other young women, it was really, "Oh, here're people I can talk to."

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. I see, so you were kind of isolated at first.

MARY MISS: I was very isolated.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, that's—reading *The Brothers Karamazov*. All those hours in your basement.

MARY MISS: Yeah, yeah. So a lot of time reading, just all kinds—even when I was living on J street. By that time,

or at least mid-way through that time, he started working at Pratt Institute, where he got a job teaching welding, I think.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. So he left the Met, and was a teacher at Pratt.

MARY MISS: Yeah. Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see.

MARY MISS: And then continued to teach there for many years. I can remember going to a gathering in Chinatown. It may have been Tina Girouard's house.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: It's when I first—no, somebody else introduced me to Jackie Winsor, because Bruce and I were going to take a trip to Newfoundland.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And Jackie's from Newfoundland, and so I met her, and I think she told me then, about this gathering at Tina's, and that there were a whole bunch of women there. It was all women. And Nancy Holt was there, Mary Heilmann, Brenda Miller. Lots of people. And it was kind of, too, you know—oh I know Judy Chicago was in town. I think it was because Judy—somebody knew Judy, and wanted to have a gathering for her.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So was it like a women's group at that point?

MARY MISS: Uh-uh [negative]. It was just a gathering to meet Judy, and—I think that's what it was. And somehow Lucy, about this time, I think her show—it was 1971 maybe.

ANNETTE LEDDY: The Aldrich Museum, that one?

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah. Yeah, that's a really key—

MARY MISS: Important.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, for lots of people. And that was where you—1971, [the title of the show was]<sup>26</sup> *Contemporary Women Artists*. And so all those artists who were in there were people who you knew in this circle, then. Or many of them.

MARY MISS: I was just meeting them. Like, I really got to know Brenda better. I didn't really get to know Alice, but she was in it. There were a lot of people I'd never met.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Alice Aycock.

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And other people remember so much better than I do.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And what about Joyce? Was Joyce part of that? Joyce Kozloff.

MARY MISS: I don't remember if I met Joyce there. But we started—have you ever talked to Jackie Ferrara?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yes.

MARY MISS: She, doesn't she have a pretty good memory of these things?

ANNETTE LEDDY: She has a great memory. She has an incredible sense of—she has given us her archive, you know. She's the most organized—

MARY MISS: Organized person in the world [laughs].

ANNETTE LEDDY: She has a compartment in one of her drawers that she built specifically for her report cards



from elementary school.

MARY MISS: [Laughs.] Why am I not surprised?

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's so great [laughs].

MARY MISS: [Laughs.] So Jackie—and she'll tell you who else, but Michelle probably. Jackie, Michelle, somebody else and I did this slide registry. We started having some meetings. Now what was that group called? But I know Lucy was part of it, and I might have met Joyce during that time. And we—what did I do? There was a show. Somebody's talking to me about possibly doing a project about archiving my work [laughs]. I am not Jackie Ferrara [laughs]. I do not have perfect records. I can't remember what this—but there were a group of women artists who were meeting regularly, and I know that's when I met Jackie and Michelle.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. So that's when—and what year would that be? At that point where you start—

MARY MISS: I think it's in the, you know, '71, something.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Around the time of those shows.

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So by that time, you're really part of a circle. You're part of a—

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You found a circle. And then it's still your circle.

MARY MISS: Yeah, yeah. And so, you know, Jackie's building—Jackie Ferrara, on Prince street where the old Dean and DeLuca started out, we did an exhibition of women artists. And I was looking here, and I don't see it, so I think it's not listed.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So that's still the building where Mary Beth is, and Joan Jonas? Is that [inaudible]?

MARY MISS: No. This is Jackie Ferrara.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, Jackie Ferrara.

MARY MISS: Out on Prince street.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh that one. Yeah, yeah.

MARY MISS: On Prince Street.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: We did a show. Louise Bourgeois had this big phallus hanging in the window.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And she was part of this group too? No, she's older, right?

MARY MISS: No. I don't know how we organized this exhibition, but I think it was '71, and I remember Elizabeth Murray was in it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: I can't remember who else.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So in the space where Jackie Ferrara still lives. The one with the tin ceilings and everything, yeah.

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. On her ground floor is where Dean and DeLuca had its first space.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh I see.

MARY MISS: But that's where we had this exhibition.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: Anyway, we were really, really trying to find a different way of operating.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You mean different from the gallery system? Like more collective?

MARY MISS: A different way—I don't know, it was—I always think of it as this time where we were taking everything apart.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: In other words, the galleries weren't available to us.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And when you say "us," you mean to women, young women artists.

MARY MISS: Yes, to young women.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: It was apparent that they, you know, there were so few women that were exhibiting. And you know, if you did go to Max's Kansas City, it was this, you know, guy scene, and just not interesting. And so you know, - are there different ways of doing things? and collaboration, and crossing between dance, and art, and landscape, and you know.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: Beginning to—it was like everything was being—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And speaking of that, were you influenced at all by 112 Greene street? Or did you ever go to those?

MARY MISS: That was a very kind of closed group.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh was it?

MARY MISS: So I knew people within it, like I knew Jackie.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And George Trakas [unintelligible].

MARY MISS: George I didn't know well. I knew George, but—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. You knew Jackie, and Tina Girouard, who's also a part of that.

MARY MISS: Tina was a part of that group.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: That Louisiana group. And Keith Sonnier, even though Keith was married to Jackie, he had this, you know, it was like—very exclusive group that hung out together, and you know.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see. They act like, whenever they talk about it, like it was open to everyone, but [laughs].

MARY MISS: No. It wasn't. It wasn't.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see.

MARY MISS: It was very—it was really this group.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: This kind of—at least I never felt [laughs], felt welcome.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, right. Because I mean your work actually would have fit—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —with the kind of thing they were doing.

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: For sure, so it's—

MARY MISS: And Gordon Matta.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: But it was pretty guy-heavy, you know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, well there was the woman who did the—

MARY MISS: Suzy Harris [ph]?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, that's who I was thinking about. Yeah.

MARY MISS: She was definitely part of it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: But Suzy and Tina, I think of as being the only—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I think they were the main women, for sure.

MARY MISS: And it was a lot about music.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And Liza—

MARY MISS: It was about Dickie Landry.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. That's right.

MARY MISS: Tina was with Dickie. It was the music scene.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's right. [unintelligible].

MARY MISS: There was the guy who had—who was running the whole thing. I forget this—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Landry?

MARY MISS: No.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You mean Willoughby Sharp?

MARY MISS: No, no. The guy who's play—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Jeffrey Lew?

MARY MISS: Jeffrey Lew.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah. Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: Yeah. So anytime I was—that there was the—you know, their coke dealer was there, and it was like a different world to me. I mean it was like—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well they did meet—a certain number of them met a rather sad end from a lot of drugs.

MARY MISS: Yeah. Lots of drugs, and I was just very naive and young, and you know, this straight girl from the West [laughs]. I was like just trying to make some work, you know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: So I was not grooving with this fast-paced crowd [laughs].

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well anyway, I asked you—when you talk about things being taken apart, and you talk about—you know, so sometimes it's hard to get, for me anyway, to get a sense of where the lines are between these different circles of artists, who were here all at the same time, all in downtown, you know. It's a very complex scene, actually, in retrospect.

MARY MISS: It is, it is. And it's not that we didn't know what each other were, you know, was doing. I know when I did the circles descending into the ground—whose name did I just—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Keith Sonnier?

MARY MISS: No. Who died young.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Not Suzanne?

MARY MISS: No, no. The guy.

ANNETTE LEDDY: The guy who died young.

MARY MISS: And his twin died also. Gordon, Gordon.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Gordon, of course.

MARY MISS: Gordon Matta.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: When I did the circles descending in the ground, Gordon really liked that project. And then later he did the circles cut out of the building.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: So there were conversations going on.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, I mean—

MARY MISS: I didn't know Alice that well. There were also people who had money and people who didn't, or at least they had ways of—

ANNETTE LEDDY: They had ways to fund their projects.

MARY MISS: To survive, that I couldn't quite understand. So a lot of my [laughs] situation, was just barely having, you know, resources or enough money.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Did that dictate your choice of materials for the sculptures too?

MARY MISS: Yeah Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Yeah. I used a lot of cardboard. Rope.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right, but I mean the beauty of them is they're, you know, that they're so simple.

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Anyways, so there were—and I started constructing things that were really—as I became more and more interested in the engagement of the individual, like that was—when I talked about, the thing about Morris, and that work being interesting to me because of the viewer, it stopped being so much an abstract thing of the viewer, but how would you walk around these things? And could you make them more complex? And would you walk through them?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And how would you approach? So they became architectonic.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And then, you know, how do they sit in the land? And then, "Oh, could it be embedded in the land?" But it wasn't, you know—it was like the Heizer-Smithson connection was not, never a strong one for me, because I was really curious about the individual's experience. Kind of immediate, not just the photograph of something. And an intimacy of engagement, you know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: But Gordon and Alice and I were, you know, seeing what each other were doing, or what Jackie Winsor was doing, or you know. So you're aware, even if you're not hanging out with someone, if they're doing work that's—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. A little similar. Yeah.

MARY MISS: That relates. "Oh that person saw that." "Oh okay, we'll I'm going to try this." Like "oh," you know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. You know, I think maybe we should stop here for today.

MARY MISS: Okay.

[END OF SD01, TRACK03.]

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay.

MARY MISS: So, I guess we were just beginning to—getting into the '70s.

ANNETTE LEDDY: In New York. And what—

MARY MISS: In New York.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And well, I was just thought, "Oh, I wonder if she would just describe to me the whole art scene in New York when she—in 1970.

MARY MISS: Yeah. Because I thought if you ask me questions, I'll just answer them. But it was such an interesting time. You know, just politically—I forget what year Nixon was elected, but I was ready to leave the country. I mean, you know, the late '60s, that Vietnam period. So, if California and Santa Barbara weren't politically kind of radical—they were culturally radicalizing for me. And somehow—not that I needed it. I was always—I guess, because being the odd person out, always—every school I went to, growing up, you know, you're the odd person out. So, you don't get to hang out with the cool kids or the in crowd—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: But you know, coming to New York, and kind of the—the kind of art that was being thought about—I mean, I think I thought of the minimalists as making a break of some kind. It was an interest in—as I talked about the, you know, part of what the relation is, in that abstract sense, between the viewer and what they're looking at.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: But you know, it was just becoming so apparent that things had to change. And to meet all of these young women that I started to meet in the '70s, and hear these similar stories. You know, my former husband and I both went to the Met for jobs, and I end up as a file clerk, and he has a real job—when he was teaching at Colorado College for that one year, the head of the department was saying in a social gathering that he needed somebody to teach a course. And I said, "Well, I have a masters." He turned to me and he said, "What could you possibly teach?" And you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Wow—

MARY MISS: —it was—and then, you know, at undergraduate school, I really loved this kind of three-dimensional thinking that I was able to do, but the guys were taking their shirts off and pouring bronze—it was a very macho —

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —kind of scene, which, you know—didn't want to take my shirt off, and you know. So, when you start to meet other people who have that kind of experience as well—you know, that can relate to the fact that it's—that you're outside the usual structure, it—although we did a lot of organizing about how to be taken seriously, for me, it wasn't how to get into the structure, but okay, let's invent something else.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: So, it was a really a time of rethinking what's possible, how to operate, what do you want out of what you're doing? And it was over that period that that interest I had in that kind of intimate engagement—emotional, you know, kind of—I'd call it emotional—visceral might be a better word, kind of connection I wanted people to have with things. Not just look at them, but to really have to stop and wonder, "Does that go under all the ground I've just walked across?"—in the Oberlin [College] piece for instance—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: You know, it makes you stop and have to—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —move around through a space, physically. But it was over that period that I really began to articulate for myself this interest in the public realm, and I didn't think of it so much "oh, I want to be a public

artist." It was that I wasn't interested in the galleries. I didn't want to—that didn't seem compelling to me. And so, I—it's like, just trying to invent new territory for yourself, and go out and build things. And you know, I said that [I had learned to sew when I was young -MM]. And so, figuring out how to put things together was not that much different than sewing, or from this background I came from, where you just figure out how to do things, which, I guess, I think of being that early part of the 20th century, that American kind of thing—people being homesteaders, and having to figure out how to—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —do for themselves. That was still somehow part of my language or experience, so it was being passed on—onto me. But just these really—seeing so many people willing to disregard the given—I think the term deconstructivist should've been used in that period. I think after the '70s, through the '80s and '90s, '00s—people could never figure what the '70s were about. It was like there was no longer Surrealism, or Abstract Expressionism, or Pop art, or minimalism. It was like, just that—if you look at that period, to think of the figuration that was coming out of it, or the sexuality that was being—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —addressed, or the, you know, just all these different ways of thinking about things.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And conceptual art, too.

MARY MISS: Conceptual art, yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did that have an impact on you?

MARY MISS: Yeah, it really—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Like who, in particular?

MARY MISS: Well, I think I was interested in Morris because he was a very, you know, he was really a conceptualist—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. What about Bruce Nauman?

MARY MISS: Yeah, I liked Nauman's—I always found him to be an interesting person. So, I—that conversation, particularly with the other women, but you know, definitely whether it was George Trakas or you know, things that the guys were doing at that time as well, you know, we're taking note of, but I feel so lucky to have been a young person during that period. And I think by the end of the '70s, we felt like we had taken things apart. You know, we felt like we had insisted that there were other ways of doing things that the public realm, or being the citizens within our world that—that that was a really an important role for artists.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And what was it that made you feel that you had been successful? What were the achievements?

MARY MISS: We were deluding ourselves.

[They laugh.]

Well, I guess we were successful in not fitting into a neat package.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And it just seemed there was this very—by the end of the '70s, this apparent path forward—I wrote an article called "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," which is at the end—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, I read that—

MARY MISS: —of that book.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yes, at the end of that book.

MARY MISS: And that was written, in its first drafts, in the late '70s.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And so, that was about—was that at the same time as the Rosalind Krauss piece that—

MARY MISS: That came out, yeah—what, in 1981?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. So, after your piece.

MARY MISS: Something like that. So, I had written that—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —before her article came out. It was first published in the Yale Perspective—Yale Architectural Journal. But oh, architects were interested in what I was doing. Landscape architects were interested in what I was doing. Yes, we can cross boundaries.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: You know? So—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —there was a great feeling of possibility. Going into the '80s, you know, it seemed like I got to do my first permanent large piece—project, which was at Governor State University. It was later than most of the men got to do some of their first things permanently. But then, not long after that, I did the South Cove Project.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: We were looking in the magazine because someone told Olivia there was an article about the South Cove—its 25th anniversary.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. But before that, you did the one that was in the landfill, which had such a—

MARY MISS: Battery Park.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Battery Park—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —which had such an impact on so many people.

MARY MISS: Yes. So, I did a lot of temporary projects that had a lot of impact. So, the circles descending was, you know, at Battery Park, and that was really an important project for me and other people. I'd also done the Nassau County Project—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —the *Perimeters/Pavilions/Decoys* which was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Which, the one that Rosalind Krauss mentions, yeah. That's a beautiful piece. And I also really like that one that—the one where you're—it's in Utah, that was also temporary, but that has like—almost like a grid, and different views. And what was it called? The one that was also destroyed by the—it was near the Olympics?

MARY MISS: Oh, up in Lake Placid.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, Lake Placid.

MARY MISS: Yeah. Yeah, that was the one that was really—that—it was just great to have a chance to do these things.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And how did you get that one, for example, how did you get to do these projects?

MARY MISS: Here, by the way, is the one that I was trying—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, yes, the—

MARY MISS: Ward's Island.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. I know. I remember that.

MARY MISS: That's '69. How did I get to do that [the project in Lake Placid -MM]? That was a committee that was choosing work for the Olympics—

ANNETTE LEDDY: There—right?

MARY MISS: No, this is—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, this is the *Pavilions*. Yeah, this one. Yeah. So, it starts here. It's called—

MARY MISS: *A Veiled Landscape*.

ANNETTE LEDDY: *A Veiled Landscape*, that's right. You know, I had all these—so many feelings in looking at this that this whole idea of framing, that something that is a kind of—you know, a limitation of vision and an expansion at the same time, where it keeps being—going back and forth between the two?

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: And just that feeling of, I don't know, like a kind of threatened imprisonment in a lot of these pieces that it's like, it goes away, and it comes back. And that kind of experience is just so—I guess it's what you're talking about. Creating that subjective—almost like a ride, you know what I mean? From a—from a—but in a very artistic way.

MARY MISS: When I use that word, visceral, it's like—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —there's a response, what you'd call it, physical or emotional or, you know, visceral is what I think of. But also, the thing that was really apparent [in *Veiled Landscape* -MM] is that this was [placed -MM] where there was a water line that had been put in. So, there was this cut through the woods that I was building this to frame.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And it was just, you know, keeping you from seeing it, but inviting you out there, making it not possible to—oh, I can't see it. You know, it's veiled. It's kept from me. It's still kept from me. But then I'm introduced, very grandly, to it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I know. That kind of play that you do with the—with the viewer or the participant is really, it—you know, it's really, really interesting. And I'm wondering if you—you know, this is what I'm wondering because I read some interview where you said that Hitchcock and these other filmmakers influenced you. Would this an example of a piece where there was that influence?

MARY MISS: I—you know, what I liked about Hitchcock—what I liked about things that I read are where there are these physical situations. I don't remember which, you know, like—well, the—I don't know which—I don't know the names of the films. I just remember that there's one where they're in a windmill, and the workings of a windmill, and they're, you know, they're trying to escape something, and there's this, you know, wooden—these wooden gears, and it's just so interesting. And the people in relationship to them, or the people on the train and the landscape—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —or there's this Polish writer whose work I loved for a long time, Ryszard Kapuscinski, a journalist. But his writing was always so beautiful to me. And he describes how he was in Africa, and he's writing about the Europeans leaving this main city in Angola during the period where Portugal has given up its, you know, colonial position, and all the Europeans are moving at once. And he said that it's as though you see this city, this stone city, go out—you know, moving out to sea, transforming into wood because there would be all these crates that were—I thought that was such a beautiful image of that stone kind of turning into wood, and floating out—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —out to sea. So, I think language and those—like, I've always loved Jane Austen and those descriptions of landscape, and how they—how people are connected to them, emotionally, and how they reflect, you know, what's going on and—in the story. So, yeah. I think that's—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And is there a relationship, also, to landscape painting that you find in your work?



MARY MISS: You know, it's not something I've thought about. I—you know, I know people love the Hudson River—painters, but I would say, the Siennese painters, you know, I was really—the kind of spaces, constructions within them were interesting to me.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, because they're very architectural—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —and the church—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —arches and all that.

MARY MISS: But the other thing that this—as far as that early life and background, I always kind of laugh at my husband, who's Hungarian, and who's very attached to his childhood that he was—which was very traumatic, and he left during the revolution, but he talks about it often. I almost never do because I think I can't remember it too well. There were too many—it's not like there was one solid thing. But the most potent thing that comes out of that is that being in the car, looking at the landscape. And also, I think my father's really intimate relationship with landscape, and you know, we didn't stay in motels. We could camp as we would travel. And for a family vacation, we'd go out and camp for a week, and if there were another car in sight, that was not a good campground. We did not just go to a national park.

But in that, his kind of growing up and being this—maybe partly through his contact with, you know, the Native Americans on the reservation where he lived when he was young, but he was a very close observer, and knew all the names of trees, and how to chew—pine sap, and turn it into chewing gum, which was no easy task. Otherwise, it's just terrible tasting and crumbly. And I say that—my mother was offering, you know, other things, but that was a really important thing from him that, in all of these outdoor projects, that kind of collision between the land and structures in the land, or how they were meeting, or collision or not collision, you know, thinking about the relationship that the land—and how to get people to notice that. So, this project was really like I was framing this very beautiful view. It was almost like a postcard view—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —and the layers in the distance, but then asking people to really step into it, to really enter it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And also to break it down into those vertical segments.

MARY MISS: Right. Or the—this one [pointing to photo of *Perimeters/Pavilions/Decoys* -MM], getting you to—

ANNETTE LEDDY: This is a little scary, this one, huh?

MARY MISS: This one? Walking—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —over here, you climb down—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —and then there's this space—[a passageway -MM]

ANNETTE LEDDY: [inaudible] little window there they look through, yeah.

MARY MISS: The space—so, this [window is -MM] back about four feet. There's a wall that goes [all the -MM], way around. There was a door on each side, there're four doors. There's a passageway. And in that passageway are windows every other bay, or something like that—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —and it's excavated behind there, but it's too dark to see where the [excavated space -MM] ends. So, you don't know how far back this ground is excavated that you just walked across. And you can't really determine easily what the relationship is of these—so the field—one field kind of has these [towers -MM], which turned out to be different sizes. The other adjacent field has the underground project. What's it like to walk from one to the next?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, and it's so—you know, it seems archaeological, but also like a dream, you know, very

psychological. So many layers, and just fascinating. I mean, I was really sad that that one was gone, that I couldn't go see it.

MARY MISS: So, that—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And when you did these, you did feel—I mean, let me ask you, did you get a response from people that was satisfying to you, that you didn't—

MARY MISS: That—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —that—did you get a response from people to these works that was satisfying to you?

MARY MISS: Yeah, yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You felt like people really received them—

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —and it was, you know, you connected with them—

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —in this deep way?

MARY MISS: Yes. And recently, I met somebody who had seen this piece, who'd lived nearby, and they'd been, you know, really young. They talked about they hadn't been, you know, they weren't artists, architects, or anything at the time, and were just exploring this. And this also comes from that—I mean, as we were traveling around, [we visited -MM] any historical site and you know, I think I've described this a lot of times. These sites weren't like visiting a site in Europe or India or, you know, they would be—this is the site of Fort such and such, and you're looking out there, and all you see are these little—[fragments of structures or mineral remains -MM]

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MARY MISS: —you know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Trying to imagine an entire world—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —around it.

MARY MISS: Yeah. Or then, being in the southwest, and seeing the, you know, the things there. My sisters and I would often go—not often, but every once in a while, on road trips with my dad's pickup, and we'd go exploring, looking for things, and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: What—like what kind of things?

MARY MISS: Down in the southwest, particularly.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, you would be looking for, like, Indian things—

MARY MISS: Yeah, Indian things, or in Colorado, you'd find old gold camps, or you know, the remains—the remains of gold mines, the mine heads, and things like that. But one of my sisters became an archaeologist. I think she and I both shared this, really, this interest in looking at the land, and trying to understand—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Its history, for one thing, to understand—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —the history of the land—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —and of a certain place.

MARY MISS: Right. So, you know, somebody said to me, "I don't understand what you're doing now. You know, your work used to be—I think it was always about trying to make people look, and look particularly at the land, but at their own relationship to it. And as time went on, I guess I just started focusing on much more detail.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, yeah. I mean, there seems to be a whole transition that happened, even in the kinds of materials that you used, for example. And look, I noticed that the pieces here in New York—at least, the one in 14th Street subway station—the color red seems to be—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —really has come into your work, yeah.

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: This is kind of out of historical sequence here, but I am kind of wondering about the red, and how you came to that. It seems so different, the red metal, from these kinds of materials.

MARY MISS: I think we're going to have to work our way up to that.

[They laugh.]

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah. That's really far away, I agree.

MARY MISS: Otherwise, I don't think I can just jump in. But in this case, for instance, the thing that really interested me is that I've got this—

ANNETTE LEDDY: You should say the names, so that when it's on—

MARY MISS: This is the Governor's State Project—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —the title of which is *Field Rotation*.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right.

MARY MISS: And there was this campus in the center of this many acre, you know, old piece of farmland. And everybody got out of their cars in the parking lot, and went into the building, and I'm thinking, you know, how to get people—how do you draw people out into that environment? And so, there's just this slight mound, this field with these level poles—posts that are only about four feet high in some areas, but 16 feet high in others. But [the top are at one level -MM].

ANNETTE LEDDY: It looks very military to me, like a—

MARY MISS: Kind of like a fortification.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: So, I think there's something that has definitely always interested me about being protected, and being exposed.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did you—can I just ask; did you go through therapy? Did you study psychology at some point? I mean, was that—

MARY MISS: I went—I went through therapy.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And do you think—

MARY MISS: And did I study psychology? No. Did I study? No. Just trying to work out my own thing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.] But is that—do you feel like that's a part of these? Because there is something very strongly psychological in these.

MARY MISS: I think that really interested me.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah?

MARY MISS: And one of the things that disturbed me about the culture wars so much, about this fear of thinking and feeling, that you shouldn't be able to feel, you know, you could only think or feel certain ways. I mean—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —that was so disturbing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Very dramatic.

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And destructive, yeah.

MARY MISS: But the psychologic kind of engagement was something I was really relying on—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: You know, which goes back to this very early—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —project at Oberlin. Not sure what section [of the books -MM] it's in, if it's in the one we are in now. This one. You know, it's—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, yeah.

MARY MISS: That was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: That was in the *Ends of the Earth*. I saw that.

MARY MISS: So, this piece has been—almost since it was installed, subsequently as a permanent work, it has almost never been visible because somebody—the story I heard is that somebody had stolen something, and was running, and fell—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh.

MARY MISS: —into this, and I thought that it's too strange to, you know, to like actively work as like a trap.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's right. It's an anti-criminal trap.

MARY MISS: But then, it was covered up, and it's—I'm supposed to go out there next—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Many of your pieces would seem to be insurance liabilities—

[They laugh.]

MARY MISS: Anyway, but the thing that interested me, okay, wasn't—I didn't want to make the big object. I didn't want to make the big thing sticking up in the air. So, how do you make it compelling? I didn't want to make the road sign—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —you know? So, how does it become compelling? How can you get—make it really engaging? And so, this idea of, again, not being able to—even though—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mystery, yeah.

MARY MISS: You know, it seems like it may—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —extend under the ground you walked across. And is it—is that a trap? Or is it just that you've exposed [an extensive underground grid -MM] something that's already there?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right, and you just—almost would think, oh, with something—is it too decorative to actually just be some kind of cover, you know? At the same time, it's so perplexing, you know? If you were just to come across it, if you didn't know anything.

MARY MISS: And the wood was very flimsy, so it wasn't—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —so when it was remade as a permanent piece, the sides were concrete. It was steel, in the same form, but I never liked it quite as much.

ANNETTE LEDDY: No—

MARY MISS: No, it was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —I think it's so great how it looks like it also could be a fence collapsed—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —into the ground, in some other configuration, yeah.

MARY MISS: So, you know, this was—what I started to talk about here, I was looking at the—you know, kind of capturing the ground water?

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, in *Sunken Pool*, yes.

MARY MISS: In *Sunken Pool*. So, when I talked about kind of trying to make a connection with the natural environment, with, you know, this—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —world, out there—and this was very funny because to build a circular structure by yourself with a —not totally by myself, with a hand saber saw, you know—I cut all this out in the studio. My math isn't great, so I'm talking to my sister, trying to figure out—

ANNETTE LEDDY: How to do the curves?

MARY MISS: —you know, what the circumference is going to—you know, how many feet it is so I can estimate the wood, and then, you know, with a couple people, I built this, not realizing I wanted the ground water, but [not realizing -MM] that meant I had to build in the ground water, so we had pumps going all the time. You know, so, it was kind of very impossible to build, but we managed to do it. But then, later in that project that I was talking about at Governor's State [*Field Rotation* -MM], that the ground water—and I'm surprised that I don't have an image of looking down in the center because the center always has water in it—

ANNETTE LEDDY: *Field Rotation* always has water? No, I wouldn't have known that from these pictures, either.

MARY MISS: —they—and that's, you know, like—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. [Inaudible] reminds me of a military target or something, too.

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. So, it's probably 12 feet deep or something.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And if it rains a lot, that fills with water—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh.

MARY MISS: —and then the—this area fills with water, and if it rains really a lot, this area.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And if it rains really a lot, this area.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, I see.

MARY MISS: So, it kind of—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, it's about water, too, yeah.

MARY MISS: —is kind of letting you see that kind of water, that water table, and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And it—the piece itself transforms.

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. I've never been back to see it while it's all grassy, and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Why not? Why haven't you been back to see it?

MARY MISS: I've hardly been in Chicago, over the years. I guess if I had been there for any length of time, I would have gone out to see it. But I haven't really spent time there. But that—this thing is also down in the

ground, at the roots.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And it was something that I meant that you could climb up, and I'm a gymnast, and I really like the idea of being able to climb around things. And when I say gymnast, of course I'm talking about not the Olympic version of gymnastics. The adult—the adult version.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: So, this was before people caught on—caught on to making me do things that were liability to—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, these were all in the '70s?

MARY MISS: This was the early '80s.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Early '80s. So, most of the other ones that we saw were the '70s. So, it was an extremely fertile period for you.

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: And this was after—I mean, it's—you have this circle of friends starting in like 1971—'70, '71. And then mid through—mid '70s, you start to make these, you know, I guess all your—really, a number of breakthrough pieces—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. So, '73. So—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, and do you think that it was being part of the circle that—in other words, was it that there was a relationship between those two things, or were you on your path?

MARY MISS: I think it was a permission. Permission to—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Permission? That's so wonderful.

MARY MISS: —to explore, and just—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And then as we went into the '80s, things became very conservative—much more conservative. And everything was about painting, and began to be about photography. And I had thought, you know, this kind of [exploration -MM] continuing into the expanded field was going to happen. And I think—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And why did you not, do you think?

MARY MISS: And the culture wars started in the '80s—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: You think there was just push back from conservative—

MARY MISS: There was big push back—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —forces?

MARY MISS: —a very strong push back from conservative—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And the rise of, you know, American conservative politics as well.

MARY MISS: Yes, yes. And it was tremendously limiting. And I was really pretty shocked by it. I really felt, you know, I'm not a theoretician in the sense of following Rosalind Krauss, and that group. And I finally don't think she understood at all what I was doing [or what was implied by the "Expanded Field" -MM]

ANNETTE LEDDY: I think it's really strange in that article where she had all those grids—

MARY MISS: The Kline diagram, you know, and what is that about?

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's—

MARY MISS: And somebody wrote a whole book about that article recently, which I have here someplace. And I think because it was so influential in so many ways. But I have to say that that idea of really moving into the expanded field was what was compelling to me, and interesting—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —and once I was really out in that, the art world was completely uninterested.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And I have to say, I was kind of shocked. Oh, I'd been getting all this attention, then—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And is that because there was no profit in it? That there—in other words, there was never a way to sell?

MARY MISS: Look, who can say why that happens, but whether—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —it's because you're a woman, and it's not interesting, or it's because you're not in the—I think it's mainly that you're not in the galleries that—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Because in a way, you know, when you think—I was also trying to figure that out, as I was looking at your work and I was thinking, well, you know, you think, well—people who are doing things in the same—

MARY MISS: But they've always had a gallery—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —they've always had a gallery. They always had that—

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —some objects to sell—

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —or at least, they had the photographs of the objects that sold—

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But you didn't take that—

MARY MISS: Right, I didn't.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —at all—you didn't take that approach. And is that because you didn't care, or because the opportunities didn't present—

MARY MISS: Well, it's not that I didn't take it at all. I tried to show with Max Protetch [ph] in the '80s, probably.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: No. Because it must've been the late '70s, early '80s.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I think that's in your C.V.

MARY MISS: Because I remember Max telling me I was going to be on the cover of *Art Forum*, and that was with the Nassau County Project.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So—

MARY MISS: So, I'd say—anyway, but Max, of course, was pushing me to make things to sell all the time. And Siah, for instance, Siah Armajani or Richard Fleischhner are people who may not be that visible, but they've had—definitely had careers, and had kept showing, you know, in galleries. But I just wasn't interested. I just really [wanted to do the projects out in the world -MM].

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, that was the main thing? You just didn't feel like you wanted to do that?

MARY MISS: I was really interested in this "Expanded Field"—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right.

MARY MISS: —and the implication of making things out. And I'd become, by the end of the '70s, really so interested in the implications of the work that people who saw it didn't know anything about art, but there's this shared [experience -MM].

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Like a democratic impulse.

MARY MISS: —and that the thing was that I realized that there's this shared psyche, this shared emotional life that everybody has, and that allows them—allows somebody to see this project who has nothing to do with art, and really engaging with it. And that's what—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Yeah.

MARY MISS: —that kind of—means of engagement, and the effect that I thought artists could have on our civic life and culture. That's what I was embracing, and really believing in, and that's what I wanted to do.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And so, you—and that's how you go towards public art—toward commissions.

MARY MISS: Right, right. So, during that period of the '70s, we were really, I think, redefining what we thought public art could be. And I mean by that, that [we were -MM] out there doing stuff, outdoors. And it was really during that period, and post '70s, that some many of these—I may be wrong, but it's my sense that so many of these per cent for art programs evolved and really took hold around the country, in cities and counties.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And there was really a sense that, you know, art would be integrated [into people's lives and experience -MM]. But I didn't understand the implications of per cent for art. It seemed like a good idea. And we were talking about collaborations, and coming in early in projects, and not being—coming in at the end, and just putting something in front of the building. And that's why the South Cove Project was so important because—I guess that's in the next section, because that's what happened [there -MM], you know? That I was able to come in at the very beginning of the project, work with an urban designer, architect, and a landscape architect, and I was taking a lead role with this, and making a space in the South Cove that was, I thought, giving people a different kind of access to the water than we were able to have—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —at that time. And different than the rest of the esplanade that the architect had just designed. And I've always been interested in making space for the interior life or experience

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. So that people have a place to reflect, and sit. And do you feel it functions that way?

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. I do.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Because I was there, actually, and I sat there for a while, and I noticed a lot of people coming in, just sitting there, and looking out. And maybe sometimes they have a book or something.

MARY MISS: It's a place that's [of the senses -MM], that's—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —you know, I liked seeing that. The sounds, you know, depending on the level of the tide. The—that end piece that's cut out—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —sounds different.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: Or under the walkway at the north end.

ANNETTE LEDDY: My sense of it was—as I sat there, it just sort of dawned me slowly, once I was sitting at that top thing, was this feeling of being enclosed, and there's a certain security there, like you know—the way it's like, plants and not plants, and then not plants and plants. Or you know, that whole way that it's like, you're enclosed in these circles. There's a—it felt safe, in a way. I mean, in a good way.



MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. I think—at the time that project was not particularly appreciated. The architect, urban designer, Stan Eckstut, who I was working with, who had been responsible for the rest of the esplanade, I think, was seen as being kind of reactionary. In a way, he was. He had done—he and his partner, Alex Cooper had done this, you know, very Upper West Side brought to Lower Manhattan plan. And so, people who knew my work thought, "Oh, what is she doing this very, you know, compromised work with these retro guys?" But to me, it was a very—I can remember saying, at the time, I want—this esplanade is fine, but I would like to kind of explode it at a certain point, and give people a very different sense, and really let them feel the water, and walk out on the water, and smell it, and hear it—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —and have that experience of the senses, and have it be sensual. But it, you know, somebody was talking recently about—to me, about how it has really influenced most of the rest of the water front that's been developed.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Like in Brooklyn, and—

MARY MISS: Like Brooklyn, or on—up the Hudson River, the kind of planting, the kind of—choice of materials. In some places, trying to get out over the water. So, it's interesting, the [impact -MM] that we're seeing over time.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But at the time that it was built, you're saying it was actually a completely new idea in New York to have that?

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You were like—

MARY MISS: This was the first—

ANNETTE LEDDY: You were among the first—

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —to do that?

MARY MISS: Right. And you know, the water [front -MM] just wasn't built up.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: So it was really such a great thing to get to do that project, which also was on the same site as the circles descending into the ground which—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, that's what I was wondering. Is that why they gave that to you because they took away the—

MARY MISS: They didn't realize that it was on the same site.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh.

MARY MISS: And so, after this—after I'd been selected, I said, "You realize I did this project there in 1973?" And nobody had kind of made that connection because in the photographs, you just see this cut out in this sanded—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —you know, area.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did you think of trying to create that circle project in that site? No?

MARY MISS: Uh-uh [negative]. Not at all. With—you know, that was just the—I like thinking of it as being—of having an echo in the city [this work in the way it has affected other projects on the waterfront -MM].

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: It's not—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —so much like, oh, I did this first. But I really—that's what I believe in, that artists should do things

that can help shape cities. And I—it's like—I'm not sure how many people think of it that way, but a few people do. And I think it's important to acknowledge that role, that artists can have—here, I get to do a \$13 million project, collaboratively. I would never have known plants, and the plants—you know, and the trees and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —grasses are what make it—what I knew was I wanted [to see there -MM]—I described, you know, the kinds of things, and Susan [Child] and I—the landscape architect and I, you know, had discussions, and they came up with these great multi-stem honey locust trees that are on that upper level.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And—but, I really got to imprint on the city something that it could benefit from in other ways—kind of continuing ways.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I feel like we kind of got away from—I want to keep going in this direction, on the one hand, but I also feel like we didn't talk about *Heresies*, and all these other things—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —to do with the women's movement—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —so, I'm trying to decide if we should go forward, or go back to that—

MARY MISS: No, I think, go back because that's such an important thing, even though I'm so spotty in my memory of who did what when, but I was trying to remember the name of the show that was, I think, in 1971, in Jackie Ferrera's building, where, you know, Louise Bourgeois insisted on hanging this giant phallus in the window, and we were saying, "Please, Louise, can we move it back there? All these truck drivers, they're hassling us," and she would not move it. She wanted it right there—high visibility. But you know, it was like—I don't know if I had already had a show at 55 Mercer, but it was about the same time, probably. But the—you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: When you talk about all these women who you met, and you became friends with, a thought I had afterwards—well, I wonder what the steps are from that to *Heresies*?

MARY MISS: So, it was about doing things—doing this exhibition, or doing the slide registry, and that came out of our meetings that we were having, and I can't remember the name of the group [Ad Hoc Women's Art Committee -MM], but Lucy was there, and that's where I said I met Michelle [Stuart]. And Michelle or Jackie remember the name of this—I don't know if we had a name. But we were having these meetings, and somehow, I don't even remember—we had the idea of doing this journal. I'm sure Lucy must've been the instigator because it was about writing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, Michelle told me she and Joyce came up with it when they were doing the laundry one day in their building.

MARY MISS: That's likely. That's likely.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And then she said—they came up with the concept, and actually, I think Michelle believes it was her concept primarily. But then, when it was discussed in the group, she said that there was a terrible fight about the title, and Lucy wanted to call it "Pink."

MARY MISS: And I wanted to call it "V," and somebody said, "No! That's the name of Thomas Pynchon novel."

ANNETTE LEDDY: Or "Triple V" as maybe—you know, the surrealist journalist—yeah, anyway. So, that was all—that's all she said about it. But I mean, what I'm wondering is when you—what were your hopes for your journal, and how invested did you feel in it?

MARY MISS: I think it was like another way to—it's like the slide [registry -MM]. Okay, let's do things. Let's take action, you know? Let's go and you know, confront the guy who was doing the next *Documenta*—I forget his name [Harold Szeemann -MM], but there was some gathering at the Museum of Modern Art, and you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Was it—

MARY MISS: In the early '70s—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Harold Szeemann who did *When attitudes become form*?

MARY MISS: I don't know, I don't know that part but really, you know, saying hey, you know, why aren't there any women in this exhibition? I mean, it was just about taking action—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And were you in *Guerrilla Girls*?

MARY MISS: No.

ANNETTE LEDDY: No.

MARY MISS: I never was. And so, this was just another thing, you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: But it was the same time, right? *Heresies*, *Guerrilla Girls*. It was the same—

MARY MISS: *Guerrilla Girls* was later.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —it was a little later. A little later.

MARY MISS: Later.

ANNETTE LEDDY: More like—

MARY MISS: And I wasn't involved in the forming—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —early '80s.

MARY MISS: —of it, but I can't believe Joyce doesn't—wasn't a part of it. I'm sure she must've been.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well—

MARY MISS: We would presume.

[They laugh.]

ANNETTE LEDDY: But I do just think—I'm only asking you, when the posters appeared on the walls of the streets —

MARY MISS: That was later.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, but what was your response?

MARY MISS: Great.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: Great. And funny, you know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: It was so funny.

MARY MISS: It was really nice to see this humor.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: So, it was—and we had our retreat. You know, you've probably seen photographs of all of us at—

ANNETTE LEDDY: No.

MARY MISS: What was it? Joan Snyder's farm.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh.

MARY MISS: And talking about what it [*Heresies* –MM] could be, and you know, trying to work out how it would happen. And so, that part was really—I really liked the beginnings of it, and the, you know, kind of—what as soon as it started to actually really take place, there was all this arguing all the time about—

ANNETTE LEDDY: About everything?

MARY MISS: About everything.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Every article, and every piece of art, and—

MARY MISS: Everything. And I just—

[Crosstalk.]

I think Michelle and I both—about the same time thought this isn't what I'm signing up for. So, really, quite early on, I left.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You stopped participating?

MARY MISS: Yes, stopped participating.

ANNETTE LEDDY:

So, it was more at the creation of it, but then—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —after that—

MARY MISS: Yeah. But it was really important to me to see this—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —happen.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You know, that is a story I hear from so many people—

MARY MISS: Oh, my gosh.

ANNETTE LEDDY: The arguing, and you know, I mean—I went to Mimi Schapiro's memorial—I don't know if you were there.

MARY MISS: I was out of town.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But you know, it was very touching, in the sense that there were so many women who had been so helped by her and everything—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —but—

MARY MISS: But she was a pill, too.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —the one thing they all said was that, you know, just the amount of arguing and fighting and anger—

MARY MISS: It was [laughs].

ANNETTE LEDDY: Maybe that's what it takes for a movement, you know? That was the thought I had—

MARY MISS: But maybe—but maybe—but I also, you know, if you look at kind of—I don't know. It seems like so many good left wing things had dissolved into—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, just—

MARY MISS: —you know, this kind of—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —partisan infighting.

MARY MISS: —partisan infighting that I, you know, I'm not sure it's the—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —best thing to—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —get things to happen, but—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —it's human nature, I guess, or maybe—

ANNETTE LEDDY: To some extent—

MARY MISS: —it's not.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —yeah. It's just a—there just seems to be a fine line between people who kind of want freedom, and then sometimes, you know, those same people, that sort of resentment and bitterness that drives this, you know, the—

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —sort of punitive or vengeful thing. And I don't know. They just can shift so easily.

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's how it feels to me.

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And it just feels a liberating impulse can become—in some way, destructive.

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You know? I just think it's sort of almost breathtakingly easily. And I mean, you lived through that in a way that I never have. But I've, in little ways, lived through it and seen, and observed, and it feels to me that that's what it all comes down to—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —and how do you fix that? I don't know. I mean—

[They laugh.]

Anyway, so, then—

MARY MISS: You—one thing I would like to say, though—but I look back at that period, and there were so many women that were vital to that situation. And how many of them made it to, you know, any visibility? I mean, I'm very fortunate in that I've been able to support myself as an artist, and I've kept working. And I've been practically invisible, you know, within the art context, anyway. But there are people who weren't able to have any support, and what did they do? And that kind of fall out—you know, it's so important to note the lack of—we were making our way, but there really wasn't that much support coming up to us. How could it be that after 1980, I was not worth—almost [being covered -MM] in a magazine again, or many of the people that I know weren't worthy of continuing to have shows?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, I know. It's—

MARY MISS: And—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —so horrifying.

MARY MISS: —you know, I have this friend who I haven't seen in a long time, Charlotte Douglas, who writes about the Russian constructivists—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —and at a certain point, she was going to do a book about the women during the constructivist period who weren't really visible. And she said, there were hundreds of them. It wasn't just—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —Popova and, you know, a few—she said there were really hundreds. And Abrams was going to do a book; the editor died. She never did the book. And it's—I really—I feel like history is repeating itself, you know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: That there was this great rising of, you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: But you know—

MARY MISS: —how it happens I've never, you know, I had no clue. I mean, there's some many people—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Like, if you look at this list, though, that I made of these women who you knew, when you— that you met at the beginning. And you think, some of them, well, here's Mary Heilmann, who's done very, very well. And as with [unintelligible]—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —and you know, Alice Aycock was also—

MARY MISS: They were definitely—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Elizabeth Murray—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —did very well before she, of course, died so prematurely—

MARY MISS: [inaudible]

ANNETTE LEDDY: —and Michelle Stewart. I mean, I know what you mean. So many aren't, but then—

MARY MISS: But yes, absolutely.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You know; you see—

MARY MISS: But there's a difference—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —I mean, you just—

MARY MISS: —afterwards.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —and you just see how it took—I mean, I—you know, how much it took for people to survive that—those changes in all those decades.

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Kind of—actually, that's somewhat true with Miller's as well, where—

MARY MISS: Any artist.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —you'll see, like—

MARY MISS: Any artist.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —oh, wow, this person was famous in 1980, and no one's heard of him now.

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You know, it also does—there's that long distance runner aspect to being an artist—

MARY MISS: Absolutely—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —that it's just—

MARY MISS: —yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —some people don't have that—

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —you know? It's just the crash and burn style of like, a lot of the 112 people. You know, you just—

MARY MISS: Right, right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But of course, it's much worse, and much harder for women. That's so clear, you know? But it —I mean, I don't know. I think, in your case, it's obviously this thing of having moved—I mean, to me, it seems from—as you say, this is an experimental period where everything's open, and every—a lot of different kinds of things are getting attention because in a sense, the whole art world is regrouping, and it's broken down—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —in certain ways and all of that. And then, once it kind of reorganizes itself, like the gallery system seems to be reorganize itself to accommodate these works of art that previously wouldn't have been shown in a gallery or whatever. Then, it all becomes monetized again, and it closes down, you know?

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: And that's maybe just my perspective, but—and then, that just seems to have every decade—

MARY MISS: Gone on steroids, yeah. Worse and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —gotten like, more and more extreme so that, you know, Michael Heiser is at, you know, showing at, what is it—Gagosian when I last—I mean, some, you know, massive space, and it just feels like—

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —so different from the initial impulse, you know? But I mean, I don't—

MARY MISS: It's kind of dizzying.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: But then—as I say, you've got your questions. But then, I'm just acknowledging something that happened that I see for myself. But what I was able to do is kind of find a way to continue what I started in the '70s, which was, okay, they don't want me at this party. I'm going to make my own party. And you know, that's what I was—I was able to find a way to function in this public realm, even though I—it was fairly restrictive. You know, these per cent for art programs—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, talk about the restrictions, and how it affected your work in that subject.

MARY MISS: So, I think that, you know, there were these projects—the Governor's State Project was really like this very open situation. And you know, this open field where I got to do something. These are all things I'm just kind of doing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: This is your—this is the proposal that—

MARY MISS: That's getting into the proposals. But then, there's this period of, you know, they really want you to come and put something in front of the building. Really, it's like—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Like a statue.

MARY MISS: That's what they really want.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: But they—but they invite you in and say, well, you know, we've selected you as the artist. So, you're always trying to fit into this context. And it's like, you know, this shoe that's really uncomfortable, but you're trying to make the best of it. There was a project I really liked, but it—they end up being these things that don't happen. But this was for a project for a tax building, I guess, in Minnesota, in St. Paul. And I went to the site—it was a construction site. The building's foundations were being put in. There was equipment all over. There was this funny little house sitting in the middle of it. It was the first house that was built in St. Paul—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, wow.

MARY MISS: And it was in the middle of this because the community and local history group didn't want it to be torn down, but they didn't know what to do with it. And so, I had this commission, and basically, they wanted something in front of the building. I thought, oh, okay, I'll just pull it straight out from where it had been located

originally. And that happens to be the cafeteria, so, we could even mark it out on the cafeteria floor. Let's pull it straight out, in front of the building and you know, restore it, but [in the surrounding area -MM] take it apart, and show what all the parts were that made this building up. The stone foundation—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —how much wood it took to build the building, laid out as a seating area. Something to show the shape of the rooms inside, something to show the structure of the floor plan, the layers of walls—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —that there were. And I mean, who knows what it was in that situation, but there was always a reason that, no, that's no—

ANNETTE LEDDY: No, we can't do that. Yeah.

MARY MISS: I think it was accepted, and then somebody—some acting director said he didn't think that was a good idea for a tax building—so, you know, it's like trying to figure out how to make something interesting. I don't think I have the—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, of the ones that have been made, what are the ones that you feel the most successful, you know, what you really wanted them to be, from the beginning? Are the closest to what you wanted them to be?

MARY MISS: Probably the Union Square Project.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I actually really like that. I think that really works.

MARY MISS: And—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And it's my favorite of all the subway station projects, really. I mean, there's so many, but this—I like how it's so abstract.

MARY MISS: So, I went to the station, and you know, Union Square's one of the most complicated stations, and it was even more so before—and I saw these things spray painted on the station.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And you know, at first, I thought, oh, if we could only get some light in here—that was not possible. I saw this red spray paint, and I—and then they told me they were going to be covering up all of the historic—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Tile?

MARY MISS: —tile, you know, this.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: And how they are allowed to do this—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —by the preservation rules, I don't know, but—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: I thought, okay, but what if I could at least keep fragments of the old station, and kind of get—call people's attention to it? And in this case, the architect was really interested, Lee Harris Pomeroy, and I found, in an old platform, abandoned platform, these beautiful faïençed tiles and medallions. And they were going to take them out, and put them in the MTA Museum. And I said, "Can we keep them in place?" And the passageway was only going to be that wide.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And the architect said, "Look, we could really use more space. We'll use a big saw, cut that—cut these fragments out, widen this."

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's so good. And those big, excavated pieces of rock? Where did those come from?



MARY MISS: This?

ANNETTE LEDDY: You know, the ones—that's like under these wires, going up? And then, in the ceiling, there's—there are letters in an inserted space?

MARY MISS: This.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, that's that. So, it looks different from the angle I saw, okay.

MARY MISS: Yeah. So, what I wanted to do was kind of reveal the history of the station, and in these frames, there's text that's written on the underside of the frame, and then there's a mirror—

ANNETTE LEDDY: A mirror that reflects it, yeah.

MARY MISS: —so that it reflects it, so that you have to kind of try and figure out where the words are coming from, just like underground, you had to figure out where the grid was ending. But also, that mirror—I thought, "Oh, people will stop to check themselves—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —you know, put their lipstick on or something, then maybe they would get interested." And with the big piece that was—there was a mirror on this reverse side so that if you're walking in the back, you can get a glimpse of what's on the other side—you know, you'll see this reflected. And this shows—this says something about who made the—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right. But this still looks different than the section—okay, so I saw this—oh, no, it doesn't, I see. Yes, the rock part of it.

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's what I was noticing on the other side. I see.

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay.

MARY MISS: That's where they just used a giant saw, and sliced through the—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And so, here, we come back to the red. So, the red came from the station itself, basically?

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And you just decided to build—

MARY MISS: To red line the—to red line the station, is how I thought of it. You know, that you could just go around the station. There are 125 fragments. Here, we inserted these in the historic railing, and they all kind of have something that they're, you know, lining up with that tells you something about the, you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —station itself, and how it functions—signals. Then, the other elements are these—

ANNETTE LEDDY: When you're in the—when you're in the Number Six subway, there are also some that you see across from the rails.

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: And then, these inserts in the wall—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —have images of parts of the station that were removed—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Removed, yeah.

MARY MISS: —with the description. And then, again, it's—you're looking into that, but you don't know how far

the space kind of—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —goes beyond.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I mean, it's very subtle. And in a way, you know, if you don't know it's there, you don't really know, but once you get the—it's this whole intervention, that it's a piece that, you know, it's involved in the whole history. It's just like—it expands in your mind—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —you know? It's—

MARY MISS: But you know, when I talked about like, if you could have a moment of intimate engagement in this very public space, that interested me. You know, I traveled in India quite a bit, and something that's—that was a real inspiration for me, to see these sites in cities where there's total chaos around you, and there'll be some little place that somebody's bothered to pour orange powder on this, you know, rock in front of a tree. And so, even though there's this chaos around you, there's this one spot that gives you pause. So—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, it reminds me a little bit of Athens—there're certain subway stops in Athens that—where they have display—where they display things that they found in excavating the station.

MARY MISS: Interesting.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And they're beautiful. You know, it's—you're not—it doesn't have a museum kind of precious feel, but it really feels, you know, it's—they're just—it's striking and beautiful, and it changes the whole feeling—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —of being—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —in a subway.

MARY MISS: Sounds nice.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah. I think that's very recent, though. I think that—this station, the one I'm thinking about, was built when it—for the Olympics. It was an extension of the metro—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —and then, they built this one new station. And in the course of doing it, they found, you know, like so much stuff underground. And some of it was put in the museums, but then they decided to keep some of it—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —and just insert it in these little places.

MARY MISS: Niches.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And things like that, yeah.

MARY MISS: Interesting.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And there's glass, sometimes, and I don't know. It's interesting.

MARY MISS: I'd like to see it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, yeah. Not as—this feels—it has more of a feeling of being in the tradition of, you know, conceptual art. In some ways, you know, you might think like, Lawrence Wiener even, or someone like that—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —where theirs is still a little more conventional, but it still does have this—it's kind of a way the public space has been expanded, and deepened, without it being done in some precious or catchy way.

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: You know what I mean? In a kind of real way.

MARY MISS: So, this probably—this kind thing, I—you know, there were interior pieces that I was doing occasionally, along the way. Let me look at what those are.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I like these mirror ones that you have in the woods, too, and that in a way, this seems like—still in that—I was trying to think about, you know, what elements, survive from your earlier works. And definitely, the reflective surface thing, you know—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —the mirror thing does—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. This was really one of the few indoor projects that I really liked, especially because there was a mirror reflection between the top and the bottom there [referring to installation at the Danforth Museum -MM].

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: Kind of—it's like, whenever I could make you think you weren't inside, I felt happier—happiest with some of interior works. Oh, that very early one on the wall that the Guggenheim owns, actually—it's this one.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, wow.

MARY MISS: Where there's this space you can't quite see what's behind there. But then, this one, there were all of these—there were these corridors, but then, all these mirrors in it, so it seemed like there were—

ANNETTE LEDDY: *Arrivals and Departures—the Doors*. We need to keep saying the titles because of the—

MARY MISS: Ah [inaudible].

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: There were actually 100 doors that opened within this, but then, when the mirrors reflected, there were—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And the—that's in a museum, right? In Texas—is that where this is?

MARY MISS: The Museum of Modern Art owns that.

ANNETTE LEDDY: This? Oh.

MARY MISS: But it was shown in, I think, Dallas.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: It was an exhibition of Alice Aycock, George Trakas, Richard Fleishner and myself that traveled, and one of us did an installation at each of the places, and I did it in, I think, Dallas. And George did a beautiful project that's at the La Jolla Museum, outdoor project.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Yeah, I've spoken to him, and he's shown me—you know, he sort of have this whole other life in France. You know, I mean, he has these commissions in France, and not in Paris, but —

MARY MISS: I love the one that's like the knife blade. You know that one?

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's a bridge?

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, I know. That's so beautiful, yeah.

MARY MISS: George is one of my favorite—

ANNETTE LEDDY: He is a really—

MARY MISS: —artists.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —really amazing. I mean, I think, I really didn't know that much about—112 early things I'd heard about, but I didn't—it's hard to ever know about these things that are done in foreign countries.

MARY MISS: Yes. And also, George has been more elusive than most in his peripatetic life of traveling and working wherever he is.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah. Well. Let's see. I think we might be at the end of our allotted time here.

[END OF SD02, TRACK01.]

ANNETTE LEDDY: But it seems like your work has gone in a really different direction since then and in a way, I'd just like to—like you to tell me how it developed. I mean I'm aware of the CALL project and that kind of thing, just how you ended up where you are now with it and also how your studio process has changed because I see you have this staff and it's a whole different deal than it was—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —years ago, right?

MARY MISS: Yes. So in the '90s, I spent a lot of time doing projects, developing proposals that didn't happen for one reason or another.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Do you know why they didn't happen in general?

MARY MISS: For the most part, it was about money, always about money.

[They laugh.]

Not most part I think. Well, I guess it's a little bit—so for instance, I spent a number of years developing a project, which is in this book, which was for a walkway in Milwaukee along the river.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And I was really interested in trying to show the relationship between runoff water in a city and the river, and in this walkway, trying to get people out in a different relationship to the city and the river by taking them out onto the river for instance, and then in detailed ways, showing them the water running off and getting them to think about that. And it was something the people weren't focusing on at that point. Ecology wasn't focusing on it [the ecology of cities -MM]. City government wasn't, but I knew that it was important and being—it seemed important to me. When it came to funding, when I had signed the original contract, they said you have to at least be able to provide at the end of this a walkway that is walkable and we hope it can be more than that, but at least it has to be able to make this passage from this half mile along the river.

And so in the end, they couldn't raise the money to do the more expansive project and basically that stripped off all of the parts that I thought were really important about showing this. And a few things were left in, but I turned the project over to the architects I had been working with and said, you know, you're going to implement it. I had never been back to see it until I went recently to start working in Milwaukee again, which is a later story.

A sewage treatment plant, water treatment plant, in Arlington, Virginia, I was asked to come and do a per cent for art project for this very extensive rehabbing of a 30-acre plant right below very wealthy homes, fancy homes, in Arlington. And I—it was—I think they thought they were going to get something in front of the gate. And I said I'd really like to think about how this piece of infrastructure could become a public place, how people could begin to understand the relationship to the piece of infrastructure, in other words, what they do in their homes and businesses affects how that plant operates. Could we invite people into it? Could we—if they even just drive by, make it apparent that what's happening—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —here? So went through the development of this project. The engineering part of this rehab of the plant, which was \$400 million plus or minus 40 percent, which people don't get that kind of budgets, only engineers, went over like 150 percent over, you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Wow.

MARY MISS: —or something. And so they eliminated the part that I was going to do, and again, it's a substantial amount of money that in that case was a certain number of millions of dollars.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: So there was this kind of—Indianapolis Museum of Art asked me to do a walkway, decided it was going to cost too much, did ask for another proposal, decided it was going to cost too much, asked for a third proposal, decided it—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, see and so it just keeps being the thing that can be crossed out on a budget.

MARY MISS: Yes, and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Extraneous.

MARY MISS: And so in the meantime, these are really interesting ideas that I'm developing for a—that little house—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —you know, in St. Paul. That one doesn't get built. Well, in that case, it was really the—somebody decided they didn't like the idea, that acting director who came into a position of authority. But I was—I was really learning interesting things or there was the—one of the L.A. county museum that didn't happen which was about the Le Brea tar pits and trying to show people—

ANNETTE LEDDY: But there is something there now, right, that you—

MARY MISS: Not mine.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Not yours, but something where you go and you sit in this little area and you look down into the—

MARY MISS: Yes, it was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —pit.

MARY MISS: And when I was there, it was very rough—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —you know, structure and I thought, oh, wow, this is great. Let's try and make it—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —accessible and more—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —you know, part of a larger thing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: In that case, the tar pit museum, the museum of whatever it is—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. That's over—yeah, next to that one.

MARY MISS: And the county museum got into a dispute and I was the, you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Sacrifice?

MARY MISS: Not sacrifice. I just got caught in the conflict—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —so it didn't happen and it was really such, you know, an interesting project. I really was—anyway, so here's this time going on. No wonder I have no visibility—I keep doing these things, spending years on things, and nothing happens.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And in the meantime, I'm thinking, wait a second. I'm really—I'm talking about the importance of an artist's role in the public realm. I've been, you know, proselytizing for this so to speak over—and I'm sitting in my studio stacking up plans that aren't working. And I think the—where it really became apparent to me that something had to change was when—after 9/11. You know, I had just taken the last train out of Penn Station going to Princeton that morning. I get to see this happening as you come out of the tunnel.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, my god.

MARY MISS: And nobody's cell phones are working on the train because the towers are, you know, not working—transmission towers aren't working. And my husband was in his own studio at the time and watched everything happen and we couldn't communicate. I'm stuck in Princeton. The city's closed, total trauma. We get back, stay with some friends up on 86th Street, and after a couple days, are able to get back down[town]. I had left my windows open in the front and in the back so this—everything was covered with dust and my assistant—one of my assistant's brothers worked for the EPA and we said is it safe for us to go in and start cleaning? And he said yes, it would be safe, but we wore, you know, masks and clothes—those paper covers. And we cleaned for several days and, I mean, you can imagine trying to clean this place. Everything had to be touched, you know, and wiped down. And afterwards, we were still traumatized and my assistants and I, you know, there was a landscape—there were two landscape architects that were working with me at that time and we just, you know, what can we do? What can we—how can we—we had to do something and then there all of these people coming downtown in the droves, and—where is the—here it—this is the project, but if you see a little bit of blue on the wall over there that's showing—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. The blue fence.

MARY MISS: The blue and so we saw all of these people coming downtown and they built this platform that kind of put them overlooking the site and it was—I thought it was horrible because people were coming down and they were put in the position of being voyeurs and gawkers. And what they were coming—they—I think the desire of people were mourning, but there was no—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —way for them to. And all they were doing is facing police barriers, first at 14th Street, then at Houston, then at Canal for a long time, and then down here for a very long time at Chambers Street. And so we said let's try to imagine a different kind of edge of this that could be a temporary memorial and let's replace the sawhorse like police barriers with these—we'll string together plastic pipes and paint them blue. And in place of the Jersey barriers, we'll do concrete seating and trees that could flower in the Spring. And how could we begin to think of this as a wreath—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —for Ground Zero—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Beautiful.

MARY MISS: —and make it a place that people could come as mourners and have a way of being participants and not just in that awkward, you know, just looking position. And it was such a kind of key moment for me to begin to think about my own neighborhood, my own city, what was most compelling to me. Here I'm always taking these assignments. Here's a sewage treatment plant. Here's a, you know, the grounds of the county museum. Here—but how could I focus on things that I was really concerned about and so this position that artists are always in as the recipient of the assignment—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —if you're in the public realm—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —I wanted to turn around and say there should be a way that artists could address the issues that they found be compelling—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —and in their own communities. And so I went on to do work on a park project in Santa Fe. It was really trying to—I was kind of building this conceptual framework for that project saying it should be a place where people could come and have new ways of thinking about this relationship of the city, the city of Santa Fe, and the natural environment.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: They were in the midst of a terrible drought at the time. Again, most of those things got eliminated because of budget or because of regulations about how water is controlled. So then there was a big park project that was a competition we entered in Orange County, California and in that, I said, "Okay, I've learned my lesson. I'm not going to presume that things get put in in the beginning." How can we think of this as being a park where incrementally, over time, artists would collaborate with scientists and other experts to do projects that would give people new ideas about what do you plant in your yard? What, you know, how do you handle water? And what's our history, you know? There was an old control tower. It was an old—the El Toro Marine Air Base where Nixon landed when he went home after leaving office and many other things happened there, but we were going to convert the control tower into the residency center for people to come and stay. But that project didn't happen and in the meantime, I was moving ahead with another proposal in Indianapolis that didn't happen, but they paid me for the work that I had done. So I took a year and really thought, you know, there's got to be a better way than all of this time spent. I really want to get things, even if they're very modest, to be happening.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: And so I developed the City as Living Laboratory during that year that I had covered and I—about the same time, I did this project in Boulder that's with—you see in the corner there with that blue dot. We placed 300 of those blue markers showing the projected flood level in Boulder [*"Connect the Dots": Mapping the History and High Water of Boulder Creek* -MM].

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And, you know, the scientists were upset because nobody was listening to them. Here you are in Colorado, who's concerned about flooding, but Boulder's at the mouth of a canyon.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And it's the highest hazard flood zone in the western United States.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: So here with those markers you could see okay, in relation to my own body, they're ankle high or they're—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —you know, 18 feet up in the air, but there was this visceral way of understanding what this was really about. And so I—the idea was how could you get cities to begin to understand that artists could have a more essential role than just a per cent [for art] kind of thing, that we could help? And of course then all during the '00s and, you know, during this time, but starting in the '90s, you're beginning to see these issues about the environment become more and more pressing and not just pressing, but overwhelming.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. May I ask a question? When—so in a project like this of showing the flood levels and so on, are you—is it your idea to create a kind of political awareness, you know, on the part of the population? When you talk about the role of the artist in this, it's—there's partly making them aware of the history of their city and of the water systems around the city. That seems to come up quite a lot, but is there also the sense that if they understood the dangers that we're up against they would become more activist or at least supporters—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —of climate change related—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —legislation? Is that—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —how you think? Yeah?

MARY MISS: So, you know, if you look back at the early work and the kinds of things that were interesting to me, I talk about engagement. I talk about intimacy and interior kind of, and so I'm starting to do things then during this period that are very modest. I'm saying, "Okay, I've tried all these big projects,"—another one for the North

Carolina Museum of Art. I do this major planning for this. There's a hole in the water where it's very dramatic. It's going to be this great project. They called me a year later [and told me they needed to pause our work during the construction of the building -MM] and say we've already built it, and they built it with the landscape architect. And I mean by this time I've just had it up to here.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I mean it must have been just heartbreaking to have this happen again and again.

MARY MISS: And at a museum?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: You know, wait a second. Those are the protectors of the arts, right? So it's like okay, how can I do a very modest thing? And I can't, [continue in the same way -MM] you know, I'm giving up on these things, you know. Okay, I did the South Cove. It cost \$13 million in 1986 or 1987, or whenever it was completed. I thought I would I get to do those [types of projects -MM] again. Never again did—was that possible to work at that scale.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Wow.

MARY MISS: And so I'm saying how can I do something that—where there is a visceral engagement?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: What is the means of engagement that I can use?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: The other part is, I did the project in Des Moines, Iowa that was this demonstration wetland and this was done—again, it took a long time to do over the course of the '90s from maybe I worked '91 and I when—I forget when it was finished in '96—oh, ['98 -MM]. And I worked with a botanist at Iowa State and some engineers, but the botanist was so interesting as he was describing this [site]. We were trying to show, in the middle of the city, you know, there was an area where you could walk through. I guess it was in the—a total aerial of this, that you could walk through reeds that—here, this path. There were tall grasses growing on either side of you and so you could walk through that. There was a place you could get up high and see what kind of birds are, you know, in this area. There was this place where you could sit down and look at eye level with the water. But as I was hearing about the plants that are [already growing there -MM], you know, being—and that we were also planting with collaborating with the garden club there, I was getting this intimate sense of the site and I had done these projects or proposals over the years, there was this more intimate engagement that was happening [at the site -MM].

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —as I was looking at places. It wasn't just the distant view. It's like what's growing there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: And so I really got interested. On this project, I was saying by the end, "But I wish I'd been able to have people hear what I got to know about this place. I wish there was some way for that knowledge, that, you know, about that place to be available." And so then as I'm starting to think about this City as Living Lab, I've got this idealistic, back from my '70s experience, okay, we're going to change everything. I'm still the, you know, '60s, '70s girl after all. I think we can let cities know that artists really can have this different role and—but people didn't know what I was talking about so Indianapolis asked me to come back and do another project, having vetoed three in a row or something.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MARY MISS: They said will you come back and do something—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —more of a modest—more modest scale, and I did this project along the river. I don't know if you've seen pictures of it [*FLOW (Can You See the River)* -MM], where there was a red sphere on the thing I wanted people to notice in the mirror, adjacent with a red mark on it [the face of the river -MM].

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And you could align those. The thing could be called out that I was asking you to look at, a fish hatchery or a historic site or a—



ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —you know, something about that river. So we had 125 stopping places and I said this isn't anything about, you know, the spectacle approach. This is like, I want people to get to intimately look at this river system and I would like you to be able to have the experience that I've been lucky enough to have of listening to [someone knowledgeable about the site describing it -MM]—you can dial up and listen to just a one-minute description of what that is that you're looking at. So—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So the works are more informational than they used to be?

MARY MISS: I'm trying—I'm trying not to have them be informational. I'm trying—and I'm still trying to figure out how do you engage people with this more intimate knowledge of a site without having it be like you're just telling them—giving them information.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: You know, how can you—how can you provoke their interests? And so as the City as Living Lab was going on, one of the premises was that as I developed it, the—Mayor Bloomberg was developing this PlaNYC about sustainability and it was Department of Construction talking to Department of Transportation talking to, you know, whatever, and with really no engagement with people in neighborhoods or on the streets. So it really became a very important part of this that our goal was to engage people on the streets in their own neighborhoods.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So you started working with the Bloomberg initiatives? You mean the ones where he—where he sort of makes those seating areas in the middle of the street and does that sort of thing?

MARY MISS: I mean those are the things that were outcomes of the PlaNYC.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Yeah.

MARY MISS: But I'm kind of looking at—they're looking at waste [cleaning run-off water from the streets in those projects -MM].

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: You know, water—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —energy. So they've got their six topics that they're looking at.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right.

MARY MISS: And I'm thinking, "Okay, how could you really get people to know what those little green buffers are at every street corner?" Do people really know that those are bio swales collecting water and that altogether they make 5000 [acres or some large amount of land -MM].—you know, almost as big a Central Park, you know? So that's when I proposed the Broadway 1000 Steps—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —thinking, "Okay, how could have—how could you imagine Broadway from the tip of Manhattan to the top of the Bronx as the green corridor of the city? And could you imagine incrementally?" It's kind of like the park, incrementally, over time that this could be occupied by temporary or permanent projects that let people see things [new ways of thinking about living in the city -MM].

ANNETTE LEDDY: So in a way, your—what's happening instead of being project oriented, you're creating frameworks, right, for artist collaborations—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: —with civic units?

MARY MISS: Right.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, it's a much bigger ambition?

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: Does that seem correct that—

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —the idea is to create the framework and the—

MARY MISS: Yes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —within which—

MARY MISS: So—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —these things can happen?

MARY MISS: A framework and a methodology.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right.

MARY MISS: And so that's what we've been, since 2008, really focusing on. So here's me who's never run any kind of organization. I form a nonprofit, I develop the City as Living Lab framework in 2008, 2009, go to a—something [a conference –MM] called Tipping Point that the Earth Institute at Columbia organizes at the Lamont Observatory and they invite artists and scientists, and they—the arts people are mostly theater or dance, not too many visual artists.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And I get to meet these really great scientists like Eric Sanderson who did the Mannahatta Project, and Bill Solecki who's the head of the Sustainable Cities Initiative at Hunter.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And, you know, several others and they help me articulate the, you know, the important things from a scientist's point of view. So it's—I guess what—collaboration had been so important to me over the years and all my projects. I really was totally committed to it, but it's, you know, I needed to not just be doing my riff on—I had to make sure that it was—as I—the way I was proceeding had sound principles for the scientists that they would be willing to—

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MARY MISS: —you know, play with me—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Right.

MARY MISS: —with the artists.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: And so as I've gone forward, I—that's why I think the collaboration is so important because artists can always do their own riff on things, but it may be missing the—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So let me just get clear about this. So you—how is this funded? This, you know, you have this nonprofit, but how do you—do you raise money from different organizations? Like you've said the Mellon people or—

MARY MISS: So we started and had some really good luck early on. Ford Foundation gave us an officer's grant. We didn't quite fit in there. The Rockefeller Foundation gave us a grant. So we started getting grants and we did this first under the fiscal umbrella of New York Foundation for the Arts.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And then after, you know, we had an advisory board and then maybe in 2010, became a nonprofit. I don't know if it was '10 or '11 that we got—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —the—we, you know, it takes—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: It's a process and started with a real board in '11, '12, and so we're this young organization and we've kept getting grants. The New York—the National Science Foundation, I had a very interesting conversation early on with somebody in the informal science part of National Science Foundation. And I talked about the Broadway project and I said, "We really need \$10,000 to, you know, do some tests." And he said, "What would you do with \$100,000?"

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MARY MISS: We're like—what?

[They laugh.]

So we got I think a \$250,000 grant, which at least half of which went to somebody who did an assessment—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —of what we were doing. Then we've—it's been kind of hand to mouth with some private donations and grants—another very large grant. It's the \$3 million grant we got from the National Science Foundation. Now, we're working in Milwaukee on a project and that's being sponsored by Marquette University who's partnering with us to look at this kind of city scale project there. In the meantime, City as Living Lab is really about supporting other artists in pursuing initiatives like these.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: So we've been having workshops along Broadway, for this Broadway initiative, having artists and scientists attend those and then do proposals. We have about five proposals now that we're in various stages of developing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Like what would be an example?

MARY MISS: There's going to be a climate action kiosk. We don't have a better name for it yet, but in Harlem near 125th Street on the property of the—one of the NYCHA housing complexes.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And we've collaborated with an environmental justice group called We Act, and the people who—the residents of this NYCHA complex to see if we can do a—we're calling it a kiosk that—where people would be able to come and get information about doing a community garden or health issues. Air quality and asthma are a huge problem in that neighborhood or disaster warning preparation or heat advisory things. People really wanted a place that they could come to share information or get information and could this be a physical place on the grounds of a NYCHA property?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: One is a community garden that's trying to reflect the different cultures of the residents of another NYCHA property up near Van Courtland Park.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: Another is to bring attention to Tibbetts Brook which is a stream that's in a tunnel and people would like to have it out in the open to daylight the brook, but it's going to take maybe 20 years to do that so this project—our temporary projects are to kind of call attention to Tibbetts Brook in the meantime.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. So this is a very different kind of art and also different kind of working method than you began with. It's really—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Do you ever miss the simplicity of making those objects out of planks of wood and—

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, you do? Or do you ever think about also doing sculpture for example?

MARY MISS: Well, my—doing this, you know, the sculpture in quotes was always pretty limited. I go upstate about once a month for a week. A week or ten days to work and what I miss is the—that kind of quiet—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —time of reflection.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right.

MARY MISS: But, you know, I've either built or dreamt up so many things over the course of my career. I'm ready to kind of take on a role like this [helping to establish the CALL methodology, at the same time I'm working -MM] in Milwaukee doing my own project—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: but I'm interested in supporting—in kind of having this support role or—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Yeah, facilitator or really an artist-activist role, you know, and that's the—and do you think—you started this by saying that it all began with 9/11. I mean do you think it is this condition of the world and the condition of climate change and so on that has kind of moved—

MARY MISS: I think we—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —you towards this?

MARY MISS: Yeah, I think we all need to reconsider ourselves, our lives, our roles.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And I think that's what I've kind of been redefining.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: So yes, do I miss just sitting? [and thinking? -MM]. I've always had to have some support [in the studio -MM] and more support as computers have become more important and as I have not wanted to spend my time totally on the computer, you know, so others help me with drawings and things that are done that way.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, so that's—so one of the one of the questions that we always ask is how has technology affected your work?

MARY MISS: It's been really interesting because I'm very interested in technology as I can learn about it. So what remains the most compelling thing to me, from the very beginning to the very end, is engagement and engagement with this world—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —around us—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right.

MARY MISS: —and how that can happen so I'm really interested in technology and that kind of engagement that's taking place, but I'm trying to marry it to place, to the real world, because that real world has been the thing that's [most compelling to me -MM]—it's engagement, but it's engagement with this—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —real—with real places.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Not with like selfies on—in cyberspace kind of thing?

MARY MISS: No.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yes, yeah.

MARY MISS: It's—so—but I think that technology has great potential for making the link to place.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And I don't know what it is yet and I haven't figured it out. I haven't—I've never felt that I've gotten

the balance quite right, but I'm trying different things. I just finished a project in Staten Island where on an old—on the side of an old quarantine facility—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —and how can you not just illustrate that you were on this historic site? So I did these like 14 columns and there's this—it's a little bit related to the interiors that you see of the columns in Union Square where you're looking in the glass box and see the reflection. They're these columns with mirrors and words and they're fragments of the story about this site which is very traumatic. It's where people were taken off boats, put in this facility against their will, separated from their families. Sometimes they never saw their families again. The surrounding community built—burns the place down at a certain point because they don't want disease spreading and so I have these 14 columns, fragments of each part of this—pieces of this story. And then we asked six different people, and then I did one of them, to record these short pieces about this place, but we tried to get people that would be interesting like there's this—Guy Molinari, who was this kind of semi-criminal head of Staten Island for decades; Buster Poindexter, who's a famous musician—rock musician who every young person knows about; one of the Black Angels, the black nurses who agreed to take care of TB patients when nobody else would. We got these people that like are interesting people to tell the story. So we're trying that, but, you know, in—we're looking at—in—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, and I have a question. So, I'm thinking about the Diego Rivera murals in the municipal palace in Mexico City. You know, they tell this story of, you know, the discovery of essentially the life in Mexico before the conquest and then the conquest, right? So—and it's a narrative that is accessible to all kinds of people who go there, you know, just visually and in a way you're also telling that story and breaking it into frames, right, to parts, only it's—so what—I'm just wondering how do you see what you're doing in relation to that older way of telling that story?

MARY MISS: I don't know that people would have the patience to look at that mural and figure out what it's all about.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's probably true. It would take too much work.

MARY MISS: And—

ANNETTE LEDDY: It would have to be a video, [laughs] yeah.

MARY MISS: You know, it has, you know, that—the engagement—humans are still the same humans. Engagement, what excites them—what excites them is, you know, changes so much.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's true.

MARY MISS: And we did this other project in Long Island City for an exhibition at the Noguchi Museum and part of it was to trace Sunswick creek, a creek that's no longer visible. It's in pipes, and we worked with a writer, Robert Sullivan, and I don't know if you know his writing. He's a really wonderful writer. He's—he wrote a book called *Rats*. He wrote a book overlaying—*Rats* sounds very undesirable, but it's really a very interesting history of New York. But he did another book recently where he's looking at contemporary sites and overlaying them with revolutionary war where events happened and kind of—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —this marriage of the—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —you know, this overlay. I love his writing and he—we asked him to write pieces. We were kind of having cookie crumbs to draw people along this route, very modest interventions, and then he did this narrative that—just short again. You hear one minute or something where he's evoking this creek, what was there, what is there now, and showing how related they are, and that the path is going through the middle of a NYCHA housing, but it's following the path of the stream. So they put the buildings to either side so you still see the reflections or that this was always a place of kind of new things happening and indeed there are all of these little shops with muffler repairs and little startup shops, you know, for taxicabs and things like that or that you get to kind of source of Sunswick creek and gee, how interesting this place that was really swampy is a little triangle that nobody ever built on in the middle of the road.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And it was—it was—I really loved that narrative—the, you know, evocative narrative. So now we're trying to find a way to get people to explore the whole corridor or Broadway. What would get them curious

enough to do sections of it or maybe to finally try the whole thing? And we're trying to do this with a, you know, virtual, you know, device in your hand, but in a way that you don't stay on your device, but that—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —that allows you to connect with different aspects of the city.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And I feel that probably there needs to be some kind of narrative within that that—or that it could really benefit from that, but—so I'm really interested, but where my heart and soul is in the world around us, the physical world, and it always has been, you know, those—that first like taking the rubber mold off the plaster and seeing that you could do that and how things work and how the tree—how do the roots go into the ground? You know, some people are obsessed with other people and who they are and what—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —they're like and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right, right.

MARY MISS: —other people are words. I do like words a lot, but my main obsession is with the physical world—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —you know, and looking at it. So I understand young people having this—who've grown up with this virtual world being obsessed with it, but it's not in itself the thing that—although I really am so interested in the aspects of it. I'm not so interested in being able to communicate so easily and quickly with [laughs] everybody all the time.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Well, that's true. The technology question is really pertinent because you've had to bring that into this work to make it—it's part of making things accessible—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —now so—

MARY MISS: But I guess I'm just wondering does this sound strange or, you know, where I've ended up considering where I started out or—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, I think it, you know, it sounds like—to me, it feels like you have followed a certain path, you know, that is internally very logical and so on, but then I would also wonder what the reaction of the art world is to this kind of work? Do you get reviews or anything? There's no reaction—

MARY MISS: No reaction.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —from them. So you're kind of in another realm now.

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: The realm of urban design.

MARY MISS: Urban issues.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: And we completed a project in Indianapolis, this one that was with the National Science Foundation grant, and I mean I'm kind of used to this now since about 1980. It used to be in the '70s I'd send off my latest work and somebody would publish it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MARY MISS: And starting in 1980, I did this project [at the Fogg Museum -MM] that I thought was a fabulous project. It was a response to the space that I was given at the—this project, I really loved it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, yeah. I've heard a lot of people—

MARY MISS: And nobody would—nobody would—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —talked about that.

MARY MISS: But nobody would—but nobody published it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Really? Because I've always heard about that one.

MARY MISS: I sent pictures—I sent—I sent pictures of it. Wait a second, I think this is really [laughs] you know, it was a space that was sacrosanct and that nobody could touch anything. And of course I always wanted people to walk through things so I thought well, I'm—I'll make people really wish they could walk through it, you know, and really try to imagine what it would be like. And so I sent this recent project off and went [laughs] so I—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, it probably was not about how good the work is because it's obviously wonderful, but it's probably about how somehow the art world has shifted.

MARY MISS: Yeah and—but the thing is I think that there are, you know, this word has surfaced recently about my practice. Everybody talks about their practice.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, right.

MARY MISS: I never heard that word.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: But actually I've always thought of my work as a practice like in the sense that for me, the most important thing is to every day come in here first thing and sit in my studio and read some things and think. And I'm less able to do it when I'm here because [I'm running a non-profit -MM]—and I try not to go in the other room [where others work -MM] until noon, but then there are meetings and running—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —a nonprofit and meeting with people who are working here. But this is—to me, it is a practice and it's just been ongoing and evolving and I think the—there are so many younger people who are beginning to think in terms of not just the one per cent [for art], whether it's for the one percent for art or one percent for people who can buy art, but who think of themselves as having a social practice or a—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —you know, who are interested in engagement in different ways. So I think they're the people who I would hope to be communicating with and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And that's what you feel—in other words when you think about how you'd like to be viewed in the future, is that what you think? Somebody who essentially enlarged the possibility of social engagement—

MARY MISS: Of what it means—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —for people?

MARY MISS: Of what it means to be an artist—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —of—that if I could help people consider artists in a different way, as essential and not as the frosting, not as the last thing—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —that comes in, but really as the essential participants in our culture and in the conversations of our culture. And whether you're looking at sustainability or you're looking at other issues—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —I think there is this absolutely kind of important role that we can have in communicating in ways that nobody else can viscerally, emotionally—you know, and if I can help. I feel so passionately about it that I'm willing to, you know, spend huge amounts of time with board people and, you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: I'm trying to—so it's a pursuit of passion.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And do you see yourself—I know—I noticed that you've done a few pieces abroad and I was kind of wondering if you see yourself as a—working in a global tradition or as being an American artist?

MARY MISS: I'm really an American artist and I think it's interesting to go someplace and do something, and I love doing the project in India that I got to do there—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS:

—and—or Finland, but, you know, I've hardly worked in other places. I think my childhood prepared for me this life that I lead, you know, I have not moved out of this place [my loft -MM] since 1970, you know, my home.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I mean; you think it was like you're counter-transitory now or—

[They laugh.]

MARY MISS: I, you know, I've got home on one side, my studio. I've been here all this time, but I move constantly with the work, you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Yeah.

MARY MISS: —working Des Moines, Milwaukee, Santa Fe, Orange County, you know.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: It's kind of like my childhood, you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, but, you know, for example with George Trakas that he does all these works in France. He has like, you know, he speaks French.

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: He writes French. I mean he's just adapted to that.

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And many American artists have done that and obviously you could have, had you chose to, but it seems—the sense I get is that you're very centered in American culture and geography.

MARY MISS: I—well I think I'm very centered in place.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: You know, it's what really is interesting to me and any—I love going to a place and doing a project and looking at that place and trying to understand it and, you know, scope it out and I just find that totally interesting. And I have to say, you know, I talked about my dad as being really an—this important person for the natural world and understanding—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —it and relating to it, and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —being intimately engaged with it. And, you know, when he was dying, he was telling this story about when my aunt was born. And he said that he and his brother were walking through the woods, that they were hunting and the leaves weren't making noise because it was raining. And I thought that was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.] It's great, yeah.

MARY MISS: You know, this is—this former army officer, you know, telling me 60 years later, that there—the leaves weren't making—I mean the—his observations of the natural world were really important to me. On the other hand, my mother was this—really this curiosity that I recognized in her father, this, you know, Irish orphan



kid, you know, who made his way in the world. And she had this kind of curiosity about the world and interest and, you know, this—whether she was going over land to Tibet from Nepal when she was 80 years old in the back of a pickup or, you know, she was just really curious about things. And so I think that was a good combination for me—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —with those parents—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MARY MISS: —since we started with the parents.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MARY MISS: And by the way, I forgot to say that I guess around the early '80s, I—my former husband and I got divorced and we were together about 17 years, and a very rich exchange, a very rich relationship, but at the same time, really impossible, like living by yourself with another person or something. And in about 1990, I met George Peck, who's my husband now, and it was kind of funny because the bike racers, when I first knew my former husband, several of the most serious bike racers were Hungarians and they were part of his friends. And then when we moved here, there were—there was a couple that lived in the alley on Staple Street who were Hungarian who were the only other kind of human beings in the neighborhood and we got to be very close friends. So somehow when I met George, I already had this Hungarian—since [when we first started going out - MM] he's Hungarian—connection and it's been a very interesting and rich kind of connection because the revolution had just happened about the time we met—not revolution [but the end of the Communist era -MM]. He left at the time of the [1956 -MM] revolution, but the wall came down about the time we met and we started going regularly to Hungary. And that was really interesting to have this other culture—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: —made accessible to some limited degree.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And has that affected your work in certain ways? Have you had—

MARY MISS: I just—I saw great things there, you know, that I had really loved looking at and exploring that place, really wonderful friends that we have out there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And, you know, I wanted to ask you, this book of your photo drawings, now is this something that you did just during a certain time?

MARY MISS: I did them over—I don't know. What does it say? When are the earliest ones in the—?

ANNETTE LEDDY: You did them when you were on—you had a residency and you—

MARY MISS: Let me look a second.

MARY MISS: —began looking at—

[END OF SD03, TRACK04.]

MARY MISS: [Laughs.] This archiving will help figure that out. But, I don't know, I started taking pictures a long time ago and then I started putting them together at a certain point and I was interested in the kind of physicality I could get out of these photographs. And it became less interesting to me as soon as Photoshop came into—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —Oh, of course, yeah—

MARY MISS: And people said, "Oh, you should Photoshop these," and I did one once, then it was totally uninteresting.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: But, if you could actually physically reconstruct something.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: I thought that was—I was learning something from it. But it didn't make sense to do it when you could take the seams [between the photos -MM] away but if you could take the seams away, then I was bored.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see, yeah. Well, you know, it's interesting because of Land Art and Earthworks are so—and your work too- is so connected to photography because you have to document it. Although, of course, you take these wonderful photographs of your early work and I think that in many cases then, as you I'm sure know, the photographs start to become the focus of the show, for example. It starts to be a new focus for it. It seems like that almost started to happen here and then it went a different way.

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. And there was a gallery—Senior and Shopmaker Gallery wanted to show some of these, sold a few of them.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.] Ok, so, I feel like we've come to the end here—

MARY MISS: —Yeah—

ANNETTE LEDDY: But is there anything else that you feel like you want to—

MARY MISS: No, I don't think so. Just, this *City's Living Lab* has been a real adventure, you know. At this late stage, to take up something that—But I really think, it's about all of us redefining ourselves and rethinking, at least it is for me. I feel very lucky to have been able to pursue this.

I was having discussions with one of the board members recently and I think there was the expectation on this person's part that, I don't know, there should be a level of protectiveness or comfort that I've never assumed was necessary.

So, I've always been willing to extend myself into a territory that was very unsure, you know. And it's worked out alright, you know. That you go out and build a project the Nassau County project, you know, by yourself and a couple of helpers and, you know, you just do it. And in 2008 you start a non-profit when nobody has any money and just do it—

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.] Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. Right, yeah. I mean that you have an internal sense of the next step, is how it seems to me.

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. But there are no big bank accounts and long term assurances for—

ANNETTE LEDDY: did you see this—I don't know if you saw this project, that won an award that a redesign of Central Park that stripped the park away and showed just the rocks.

MARY MISS: I didn't see that.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [inaudible]

MARY MISS: Interesting.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I can send you—

MARY MISS: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: It caused kind of a scandal, because the idea would be that the park itself would be removed and you would look down into all of these prehistoric rocks and so part of it was building these very tall towers. So, only the people who lived in these towers would, obviously, be able to see this.

MARY MISS: It's kind of happening, right? [Laughs.]

ANNETTE LEDDY: In a way it's a little bit prescient, unfortunately. But on the one hand kind of a fascinating idea and on the other hand, oh great, take the park away. And it got an award, I mean [laughs]. Whereas somehow the idea overrode any sense of, like, real life in a city and how critical having that green space is.

MARY MISS: Mm-hmm [Affirmative]. What I always think is so interesting is how New Yorkers, and Jackie Ferrara could be the poster child for this, think that nature and the city are totally separate, you know, and that there's no connection between natural systems in the city. I mean, get her started on taking a trip outside the city, "Oh, no, if I left the city it would be that there are mosquitos or there are—"

ANNETTE LEDDY: —Oh really?—

MARY MISS: —The city is totally separate from that—

ANNETTE LEDDY: The thing with Manhattan is that, I guess it's such a small area, relatively speaking. The layers of history and geography are just so—

MARY MISS: —It's so interesting—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —Fascinating, visible—

MARY MISS: —And that's the thing in these walks that we do [at CALL -MM]. Like this geologist, a few week ago —

ANNETTE LEDDY: —The ice one, I remember about that—

MARY MISS: Yeah, it was so interesting.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [Affirmative].

MARY MISS: You know, taking us down to River Side Park and being able to see where the glaciers had moved across. Or, taking us across a 114th street, which I'd never done, just off Broadway there is this huge boulder between two buildings that's like, three stories high. Just a little too big to move, you know. Everything else had been flattened up there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right, when someone points out those little things—

MARY MISS: Yeah, I love to, kind of, go through those layers and—So, you know, I don't know if you're in the neighborhood whether or not everybody wants to know all that stuff, but can you begin to engage them? You know, I did this proposal of using mirrors on Broadway and I was really interested in, kind of, pointing out [different aspects of the city -MM]—We did a test of it, but we weren't able to do the full scale thing [along the full length of Broadway -MM]. Point the mirror towards something, have a disk opposite that tells you what it is you're seeing reflected in the mirror. But you get to see [your own reflection -MM], you know, in part of that picture. Even if you just get people to know that thing exists, even if they don't want to do the dial-up or know more about it [inaudible].

[END OF SD03, TRACK04.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]