Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Diane Burko, 2016 November 4-14

Funding for this interview was provided by the Lichtenberg Family Foundation.

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

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Diane Burko on 2016 November 4 and 14. The interview took place in Philadelphia, PA, at Burko's home and was conducted by Cynthia Veloric for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Diane Burko and Cynthia Veloric have reviewed the transcript. Burko's 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

CYNTHIA VELORIC: This is Cynthia Veloric interviewing Diane Burko at the artist's home and studio in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on November 4, 2016 for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number one.

[END OF burko16_1of2_sd_track04.]

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Good afternoon, Diane.

DIANE BURKO: Hi, Cynthia.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: We'll start at the very beginning. When and where were you born?

DIANE BURKO: Oh, my. That is the beginning [laughs]. I was born in Brooklyn, New York on September 24, 1945.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And please give me the names of your parents and their vocations.

DIANE BURKO: Doris and David Burko. My mother was basically a homemaker, and my father began his American career in a—I guess you would call it a sweat shop, in downtown New York City. They were both immigrants. My father came to America in 1937, and my mother came in 1939. She always liked to joke that she came on the last boat, but we thought most immigrants said that. However, after she passed away—she actually came in September of 1939 [laughs]. So it was close to the last boat, for sure. They both came from Eastern Europe: Poland, Russia, Russia, Poland, Ukraine, that area.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Were they interested in art?

DIANE BURKO: No [laughs], I don't think so. As I said, you know, they came to American in their 20s; they already were adults, but they were both intelligent. They were bright people. And I think their interest was to survive, as a lot of immigrants are when they come to a foreign land. And, as I said, my father started out—I think the first thing he did is peddle handkerchiefs on the east side, and then, from there, he got a job at a dress factory. But many years later, they moved on up, and he was—I always liked to joke that he was an armchair socialist, but he moved on to being more of a capitalist in the end, and they did quite well, sort of a Horatio Alger kind of story.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Did they encourage your interest—

DIANE BURKO: Yes.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —or development in art?

DIANE BURKO: Yes, they did. They absolutely did. I was an only child, and I think that had a great deal to do with it. And I had a lot of love. I mean, they were really doting parents, very focused on me and anything I was doing. And in around the third grade, I remember Mrs. Levine [ph] told my mother that—my mother was worried that I was biting my nails, and Mrs. Levine said, "Well, you know, she likes to draw. You really should encourage that." The next thing I knew, I was taking classes at the Brooklyn Museum Art School for kids, and that was a—that was not an easy task for my parents because, at that point, we lived in Bensonhurst, New York, Brooklyn, and I think it was a big subway ride to get all the way from there to the Brooklyn Museum. And my father used to take me every Saturday.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So other than this teacher that you had, were there any other very early artistic influences?

DIANE BURKO: Well, even this teacher wasn't as much an influence as just someone, you know, saying, she

should do this; she saw that I had some talent. Early—well, I don't know what you mean by early. I know in high school already I had moved, and I went to Erasmus Hall High School, and many of the parents of my friends were American, as opposed to European, and, you know, they took their kids to museums every now and then, although I think I do have to credit one particular relative: my cousin, Millie [ph]. She had gone to college and was the daughter of my mother's aunt, who actually sponsored her coming to America, and Mille took an interest in me as a teenager, although, you know, she's not that much older; I'd say she's about 15 or eight—maybe almost 20 years older than me; she's still alive, and she was the first one to take me to a museum. I'll never forget that. It was the Whitney Museum when it was still on that small street. I think it was like 40-some, 28th Street, or 27th in the Village; it was before it moved uptown, and I still remember seeing these Josef Albers paintings and thinking they were ridiculous. And I actually wrote an essay about how ridiculous they were because I knew nothing about abstract art [laughs]. Who would know that, later on, I would have an acolyte of Josef Albers', who went to Yale as my mentor [laughs]?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: How ironic. Was Brooklyn, in the 1950s, as culturally vibrant as it is today?

DIANE BURKO: Absolutely not [laughs].

CYNTHIA VELORIC: [Laughs.]

DIANE BURKO: No, I mean, I almost grew up in a shtetl, but actually, I grew up in a little neighborhood that, you know, had lots of Italian kids, and a lot of Jewish kids, and some blacks sprinkled here and there; it was just a regular city neighborhood, but I did have a good public education. I skipped a grade, which I always joke that anyone with a half a brain in New York would make what they called the SP, "special progress." So junior high was really a wonderful experience for me. I had a lot of mentors, teachers who took an interest in me: my social studies teacher, my drama teacher, my English teacher. And I think going on to high school at that point, the problem, I remember Ms. Loos said—wrote that in my—one of my books or something, saying, "Your only problem, Diane, is going to be figuring out which talent you want to actually pursue."

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Describe your awareness of artistic culture as a teenager.

DIANE BURKO: I don't think, aside from that visit—well, of course, the other culture I had was walking through the Brooklyn Museum basement, where I took the art school lessons, but at that point, they were filled with mummies; that was when the Egyptian collection was down in the basement. And I remember the mummies very, very well, but I don't think I ever, unfortunately, discovered what [laughs] was going on upstairs when I was still, you know, in public school or grammar school, so to speak, but by the time I was in high school, I did—was aware. And actually, my parents had moved then, we were a little bit more established. I mean, in the beginning, we lived in a one-bedroom apartment where I slept in their bedroom, and they slept on one of those Castro convertible sofas [laughs], you know—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Wow.

DIANE BURKO: —because they were struggling, and the kid goes to sleep earlier than you, so it's really a practical thing to put them there, but then we moved, when I went to high school, to Flatbush. And we lived, literally, on the corner of Ocean Avenue and Flatbush Avenue where it came together. And diagonally across the street was the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, and across the street was Prospect Park, and down Flatbush Avenue was the library. So even though—I sort of really moved up culturally [laughs]. And, at that point, I found myself back at the Brooklyn Museum, trying to become a monitor in the adult classes. And I talked my way into one of them, and all that meant is I got free tuition; I could just go, and a monitor meant you called the attendance. That was first time I saw a nude model.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So when you said a monitor in an—

DIANE BURKO: An art class, yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —adult class, what kind, specifically?

DIANE BURKO: Drawing. Drawing and painting.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Drawing class.

DIANE BURKO: They had night classes at the Brooklyn Museum at that point.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. How did you choose Skidmore College? And did you know you wanted to study art from the start?

DIANE BURKO: Very good question. I didn't know. I wasn't sure. I—again, because of my immigrant-parent background, there were not that many role models to figure out what I wanted to do with my life. And I wasn't

one of those kids who grew up saying, "You know, I'm going to do this or that," although, I remember saying at one point I wanted to be a detective. And then at another point, I very much wanted to be an architect, because I loved—I remember drawing on graph paper and drawing these split-level houses, you know? And I went—you know, I took art classes. I was in the art advanced group, or something like that at Erasmus Hall High School, but I also was very interested in other things. I was reading Freud because I had an older boyfriend who gave me a book. So I was—I was interested in a lot of intellectual things that were sort of on the periphery of my reality. I mean, I wasn't deeply into anything, but I loved reading, and I liked psychology. So I got it in my head that maybe I could be a psychiatrist. And I wasn't sure if I would do that or if I would be an artist. So the thought of going to college meant I shouldn't go to an art school, but I was probably better off going to a liberal arts school that had a good program.

And I should add, I did want to go to Music and Art, which was, you know, the high school that all kids went to with talent. And my mother, being rather narrow, you know, in her view of things, totally nixed that. She said, "You're not going to go to a high school with beatniks, and you're not going to travel that far into Manhattan." So I didn't go to M&A. So the way I discovered Skidmore was totally arbitrary, and I always like to joke that a lot of my life has a serendipitous aspect to it. I knew I didn't want to go to Brooklyn College because I knew I had to get away from my family. You know, I was a rebellious girl, and I needed—I wanted to get out, see the world. And Brooklyn was a very stifling place, and I certainly didn't want to go to Brooklyn College. It's nothing, as I said, the way it is now. Now it's cool. Now I tell everybody I'm from Brooklyn—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: [Laughs.]

DIANE BURKO: —but, back then, at the age of 16, I wanted to escape and never return. So what were my options? I had heard of Brandeis College; my mother took me there. I liked it. NYU was another school I knew about. And Skidmore was—I didn't know about Skidmore until a very crazy looking red-headed woman, young woman from Skidmore, came to our class—our art class to tell us about it. And she was cool. She had red hair; I still remember her hair, and she was punky, or I guess a beatnik would be the right word for that era. I just got turned on to what she said about the art school. So we went up for an interview, and I fell in love with the campus. You know, I'm from the city, and there was this beautiful Victorian—house after house after house. It was like, very magical. And I met Alice Moser, who was the head of the art department then, and, you know, there were—she was a very powerful looking woman, and the art department looked exciting. And I could take art, and I could still study, perhaps, science and figure out what I wanted to do. So that's why I chose Skidmore, because someone walked into our classroom [laughs] and mentioned it. And I got in. I was—I got on the waiting list, I remember, Brandeis, but then I found out, after, they didn't have a very strong art department at the time. So Skidmore was the best choice at the time.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: What were your favorite classes, if you can remember?

DIANE BURKO: Well, I—this might be out of character, but I was a super math student. So I took integral calculus, you know—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Wow.

DIANE BURKO: —both levels. I loved math. I used to dream in theorems, you know, like F to the whatever.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: [Laughs.]

DIANE BURKO: Now, all I remember is sine, cosine, cosine, sine, cosine, cosine, sine, sine, which was the way we memorized things. I loved art history, loved, loved, art—I loved history. And soon—I think soon after I got there, I figured out I was not going to be a psychiatrist because I realize, again, I should have known this all along, that you have to go to medical school. And I hated the sight of blood; I still do. I mean, I got out of cutting up the frog in biology. So, you know, medical school [laughs] was out of the—not going to happen. So I wasn't sure what I was going to do. And I was extremely fortunate, I think, in my sophomore year to have a professor named Arnold Bittleman, and he became my mentor. He was this—he was Albers's protégé; he had gone to Black Mountain; he studied with Albers; his wife worked with Annie. And, you know, I just got totally enwrapped in Arnie's world. And, you know, I think about it; he must have been in his 30s at the time, but to me, he hung the moon. And one of the things that was great, for me, was I was able to relate to him as a human being. His father was a butcher; he was from the Bronx, so he was like, you know, as middle class as I was. And, yet, he was an artist. So all of a sudden, I realized one could be an artist. It certainly wasn't something I grew up thinking I would be. I mean, when my parents saw I was good in math, you know, they thought I would go on to math, and my father wanted me to be a lawyer or a doctor. You know, I'm an only Jewish kid; they don't want you to be [laughs] an artist, but, indeed, that was—by the time I met Arnie—and I was also good. So I became the teacher's pet. I was very enthusiastic, to say the least, and that was it. You know, I knew, from then on, that's what I was going to be; I was going to be an artist. I would teach in college like he did, and the rest is history.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: What media did you focus on at that time?

DIANE BURKO: Well, you took, basically, foundations your freshmen year, but Arnie was very interested in Hercules Segers and [Albrecht] Dürer, and things like that. He was very much a draftsman and, you know, was very interested in the mark. So I sort of followed that, but I got into, actually, pastels, oil sticks. And my first serious work—the work I got into graduate school with, quite frankly, were these very large, pastel, oil stick drawings. I would get these big blocks and, you know, rolls of paper, like 42-inch paper, and—but my senior year, I had my own studio, which was an honor. And I would just, you know, put the paper on the Homasote walls, and make these crazy, abstracted images, but they came from nature because, as I said, Arnie was very interested in organic shapes. So he would bring a shank bone in, or something; we would paint from, you know, organic things, but then out of that, as in Arshile Gorky, for instance or [Roberto] Matta, you know, artists like that I was looking at. So it was a very wonderful world there that I had and a lot of abstraction. I remember one day, I was doing a whole series of drawings that were in pink and blue and red. And I was in my studio—maybe this was a group studio—and the phone rang, and they said, "Burko, it's for you." They called me Burko. And Arnie said, "Go outside and look at the sky." And, sure enough, the sky was like my drawings, because, you know, it was just beautiful red, pink sky with blue, you know—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yeah.

DIANE BURKO: —splashes. So he was a really, very inspirational teacher.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: What was the aesthetic direction of the fine arts program in the 1960s?

DIANE BURKO: Perfect question. It wasn't super-realism, for sure. It still had vintages, vestiges of abstract expressionism, because, you know, the teachers came from that, but it was Arnie and then another colleague of his, Arthur Anderson [ph], who also had gone to Yale, who carried on this abstract language the most. And I emulated both of them.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So you felt in synch with the direction that the program was going?

DIANE BURKO: Oh yeah. Well, you know, I have no synch—I have nothing to compare it to. I mean, what did I know? I was this young, 16-year-old girl, you know, wide eyed, and you—just soaking in whatever they gave me, although I could tell the difference between a good teacher and a bad; in my first semester, I had some really dull, boring, not incompetent, but not talented, teachers. So by the time I, you know, experienced Arnie and then also Anderson, and then Arnie brought in a man named Bob Reed who also had gone to Yale—actually, he—from Skidmore, he went to Yale, and that's where he had his whole career. You know, it was a different way of thinking, much more forward looking and experimental.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: What was your confidence level compared to the other students?

DIANE BURKO: I was confident. I—you know—you know, I will speak about that, certainly, later about my being a feminist, but I always said, and it's really true: I never personally experienced blatant misogyny. And it think it was because, A, I was an only child, so I had that already on my side because I had a lot of attention and focus from my parents, and I was a high achiever. I was a hard worker, a high achiever. I remember once though, I got an A-minus one semester, and [laughs] I was broken up over it.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: [Laughs.]

DIANE BURKO: I thought, "What did I do wrong?" I called Arnie's house, and his wife answered and just goes—he says, "Burko, what's the matter with you? What, an A-minus isn't good enough?" I said, "Well, what did I do wrong?" I mean, so, yeah, I was confident.

[They laugh.]

And I did well. I mean, I'm not saying I was a 4.0 student. I mean, I didn't get 4.0 [laughs] in every class, but I was very good in art history; I was good in history. I still have nightmares about chemistry. So I still can't remember if I—I must have taken it in high school, but I did very well in math. I mean, I got an A-minus in integral calculus. So that was nice. And I—you know, and I aced most of my studio courses, but I worked for it. I mean, I worked hard.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Now you mentioned the fact that your teachers showed you Dürer and Hercules Segers's drawings—

DIANE BURKO: Segers, yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —Segers' drawings, but were there any other historic artists that you were drawn to and why?

DIANE BURKO: Then?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Then.

DIANE BURKO: Well, I've mentioned—I've looked at Matta a lot; I looked at Gorky; I looked at Willem de Kooning—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: But those are 20th-century artists.

DIANE BURKO: Yes. History.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: I'm going, I mean, way back, yeah.

DIANE BURKO: Well, in art history, certainly the French artists attracted my attention. And, also, some of the earlier ones, like there was [Jean-Baptiste-Camille] Corot; I remember being very taken by Corot. I remember seeing a—I'm trying to think when I saw the Van—no, those major Van Gogh shows, they were probably in graduate school already. Caravaggio, was someone. I mean, I took—you know, I minored in art history. So I took one course that was just Raphael, Leonardo, Michelangelo, you know? So I—and then I also took 19th- and 20th-century painting. So I was steeped in the French traditions, certainly [Édouard] Manet; [Gustave] Courbet was someone I admired, not [Claude] Monet as much, at that point in time, but definitely Courbet, because I loved the roughness and the strength of his paintings. Winslow Homer was someone I remember looking at. And then [Camille] Pissarro was another one. So, again, the whole French group, but I also remember [Albert] Bierstadt and [Thomas] Moran and the Americans, [George] Inness, [Frederic] Church, yeah, they were a lot—I learned a lot when I was in college. And so—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So did you—you admired the Hudson River School painters?

DIANE BURKO: Oh, totally, yeah, yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And it sounds like some of the proto-impressionists in France?

DIANE BURKO: That would be—yes, that's—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DIANE BURKO: —yeah, good summary, right.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay, so—

DIANE BURKO: Oh, but let me interrupt. I also was interested in [Henri] Matisse and also in [Pablo] Picasso, and I still remember, there was a pivotal book in college that I read, *The Banquet Years,* and I just love that era, the idea of the turn of the century and what was going on in the city of Paris. So I also took French; I forgot to mention that. And I lived in that *la maison francaise*. So I was a French student, and then I had a teacher Paula Prokopoff, who was my French teacher, whose husband was Steven Prokopoff, who then became the second director of the ICA here in Philadelphia. So they were an influence on my life, as well. I love their bohemian lifestyle. I used to babysit for their kids. So they were another influence, aside from Arnie.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: I think you mentioned previously that you were inspired to become an art teacher like Arnie. So what made you pursue an MFA at the University of Pennsylvania?

DIANE BURKO: That's a very good question. I actually hadn't planned to go to the University of Pennsylvania, I wanted to go to Yale, just like my mentor. And, you know, there's always politics involved. So he was an Albers acolyte and very devoted to him. And Jack Tworkov took over the department when I was about to go to graduate school. And apparently, there was a lot of scuttlebutt about that, and Arnie, I guess, didn't like, you know, that turn of events. However, I was an ambitious student, and I went up, and I met Jack Tworkov, and I showed him my drawings, these pastel drawings. And he was extremely positive and friendly and supportive and, you know, very—had a great interview. And I came back to Arnie, and I said, "Arnie, this guy loves my work."

And Arnie goes, "Of course he loves your work. It looks just like his." Now, I had no idea that my work looked anything like his, but either they're like strokes and marks, and that was what Tworkov was doing. And he said, "I don't think you should go there." I said, "Well, where should I go?" He said, "You know what? There are two places you should go. You should go to Indiana University because"—and I'm going to block out the name of the guy, super-realist guy who did still lifes; what's his name? I'll think of it in a minute, but anyway, he wants me to go there or I should go to Penn because he had a good friend named Bob Engman who taught there, and he was from Yale, I think. And he said, "Those are two good places for you." And then he came back, and he said, "Guess what?" This guy that he wanted me to study with at Indiana, he said, "He's going to be on a sabbatical; he got a Guggenheim. You should go to Penn."

I just listened to them. So I said, "Okay, I'll apply to Penn." [Laughs.] So here's the irony of going to Penn; at that point, the painting department had three main characters. It had Neil Welliver, and then it had Angelo Savelli, and another Italian. And these were Italian modernists; they showed at Marlborough, okay? And Welliver really didn't respond to my work; it was these two guys; these Italians responded to my work because it was abstract. So you have these two veins of paint. You had Neil, you know, coming from the Alex Katz, you know, realist, New York school, and Neil had gone to Yale. And then you had these guys, these older guys, that were there. So anyway, I got in, and I realized that when I got there—and this was always a lesson I used to speak about with my students—I got in based on these huge, large, powerful, pastel drawings.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Which were abstract?

DIANE BURKO: Which were abstract. And I'm getting into a painting school where the head of the painting school, one of them, is painting landscapes. And I realize—I didn't realize right away. So the first thing I decided is, I knew I had to go back into painting. I mean, I painted before. So I took those images, and I figured I'd make paintings out of them. And that was my first mistake.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: [Laughs.]

DIANE BURKO: And I always say this as an object lesson, or a life lesson: when you make an image, or when you make a work of art, everything has to work together. The image comes out of the material. And here I was, already having a developed, visual vocabulary that came out of these pastels, and I was trying to transfer it into paint. It didn't work. And it was clear to me, soon, that this isn't going to work; I hated what I did. So I said, "You know what? I'm going to go back to square one. I'm just going to start painting from life." So I started painting skulls. I started painting self-portraits. I started painting interiors. My first year at Penn, in that studio, I was painting interior walls. And I had done that a little bit at Skidmore. Actually, I can show you a little painting I did of a studio; I did a whole series of windows out of the studio, but, you know, that's not what I left Skidmore doing. And so I slowly built up a painting vocabulary based on painting the figure, because we had figure classes. You know, quick *croquis*. I always say those—I used to have slides to show my students, because my work is so different from that and I like them to know that, you know, you still have to know [laughs]—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DIANE BURKO: —how to paint from nature or to draw from a figure; I think that's a pretty crucial basic skill. And then about second year out, I was driving in a—we had a Chevrolet station wagon. Do you want to see if you really got everything I was saying? Do you think you did?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Afraid I—

DIANE BURKO: Okay, so I'll just continue. I was in the station wagon, and I saw the East River Drive in my side-view mirror. It was very cool to see that landscape captured that way. And I got an idea that I wanted to paint those kind of things. So I stopped the car. I guess, you know, it's funny; if I had and iPhone then, I would have taken a picture of it, but, of course, I didn't. Maybe I made a sketch or two. And then I took my paints with me and started making paintings from out of the car windows, rear-view windows, side-view window, all of that. Now, there was a guy named D'Arcangelo that was doing the same thing, but who knew? You know? It just happened to be that I saw one of his a little while later, and I thought that was ironic. So that's how I started painting the landscape. It was a framed landscape. And then I started seeing landscapes out of airplane windows, Eastern Airlines. I did a series on Eastern Airlines.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Was that while you were still in graduate school?

DIANE BURKO: At graduate school, yep. I was in graduate school. Eastern Airlines doesn't exist anymore, but I used to fly to Miami, because my parents had a place in Florida. And I would always, you know—so I did a series of those. I remember square paintings where one was actually of the seats in the terminal, and then all the others were looking out windows where you had the seats in front, and you could see the window, and then you could see the landscape. And this was in my last year of graduate school; it was a three-year program then at Penn, which was cool because I had a pretty big scholarship. So it was wonderful. It was—you know, all I'd do was paint every day, but I was also teaching at community college that last year.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DIANE BURKO: And that's when I was doing these window paintings. And I wanted to find images out the window that were different from every—you know, what I would see when I flew. So I wrote to the agricultural department, or the state—I think it was the agricultural department, and I asked them if they had images of aerial farms. I don't know where I got this idea from. Maybe I saw an aerial view of a—you know, aerial farms have all of these wonderful patterns in them. And I did a little bit of a fib. I said I was teaching a course. I was teaching a course on American art, you know, like a survey course at community, believe it or not. And I decided

that I could ask this guy for some views of aerial farms. So he sent me 8x10 photos, and they were all of Pennsylvania, the lot of them, so that was pretty funny and ironic. And I started making those my source material. So the paintings would be more about that and less about the plane. One very large one I did at the end of this series was, oh, maybe 84x100 or whatever, and it had a wing in it that I had, you know, taken from a photograph, but it was really about the aerial farm.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So you were working quite large while you were still student?

DIANE BURKO: Oh, yeah. I did a huge, big painting, a self-portrait, in the studio that was as long as the whole wall of the studio, you know?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: What possessed you to work so large at such a young age?

DIANE BURKO: I don't know! I don't know! Well, I just enjoyed it, you know? I mean, I did little studies, but I did. I remember this friend, who I've just reconnected with on Facebook, named Joe Giordano, he was a wonderful painter, and I really admired him. He'd gone to Maryland Art Institute, MICA. And, you know, I was also an oddball because, A, there were very few women in the program, and B, most of them had come from art schools. And there I was from a liberal arts school. So that was, you know, different right off the bat, but, anyway, he—I remember that year, and he saw me painting these big interiors with me as the artist in these paintings. And he said, "That is really ambitious." You know? So I didn't know what that meant, but he saw that as very ambitious. You know, I never thought of it that way. I just was having fun, you know?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So, going back to the specific program at Penn, did you feel that, in some ways, the program was a continuation of Skidmore or a radical departure?

DIANE BURKO: Oh, totally a radical departure.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. And what—was pop art popular there in the 60—yeah?

DIANE BURKO: Yes, very good. And not only was pop art popular, but I had Red Grooms visit my studio. I had lots of, you know, interesting—but I remember Red Grooms particularly because, by my senior year, I had taken this idea of the landscape that was always set in a vehicle; you know, it was landscaped out of an airplane window or looking through a car when you open up the door of the car, and you see out. And I started—went from these aerial views to art history views. And there was a painting of mine that Malcom Campbell—did you go to Penn? I can't remember. Malcom Campbell was an art history professor at Penn, and he was wandering through the studios one day, and he saw this painting of mine. We became friends, and he subsequently bought this painting, and it was big; it was, like, you know, 84x84 square, and it was a painting of Van Gogh's fields with a car door in it. So, I was doing what we called quotes, and I did a [Pieter] Bruegel snow scene; I did, you know, Van Gogh, number of Van Gogh's, and I remember Red Grooms came to the studio at that point.

He said, you know, "These are really cool. They're really hot. You could do something with these in New York, but you'd have to keep doing them." And I thought that was a very wise bit of—it was wisdom that he was sprinkling into his little crit, and I didn't want to keep repeating myself. I remember I did another one; this was a really cool one. I had a motorcycle with two circles, so that you're like sitting on the motorcycle, and you're seeing these two circle mirrors and the landscape that you're seeing was a [Georges] Seurat. I have a picture of that somewhere. I don't know. I must have them rolled up if they still exist. So, I had a lot of fun, and again, these were large paintings, and they were whimsical, and I enjoyed them. Then I started doing circles, where, again, looking out of a camera, you know how you see the circle of the landscape, and the whole other part—it was a circle and a square, and the square part was grey or another color and then you were just seeing the landscape—

Cynthia Veloric:—as if you were looking through a camera.

DIANE BURKO: Exactly, yeah, yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay.

DIANE BURKO: And a lot of those—I did some of those in grey, some of those with color. There was—Peter Max was popular then, and then some would say it looked like Peter Max. I didn't like that, but I was playing around with different color systems and different ways of seeing the landscape.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So was there a push for politically-oriented art in that era?

DIANE BURKO: There wasn't, but this Joe Giordano was painting about the Vietnam War. And then—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —and he was at Penn?

DIANE BURKO: He was at Penn with me. I still remember his paintings. And they were discouraged. They didn't understand why he was painting these soldiers, but he is a political guy now, and we kind of relate [laughs] to each other about everything that's going on with this election. So, it's really interesting that he was; he was doing that. I don't think it was encouraged.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. So, you mentioned that you started teaching at Community College of Philadelphia while you were still in graduate school, and it sounds like you knew that you wanted to start teaching immediately after college.

DIANE BURKO: Well, I wanted a job.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Was there another career path you ever thought about?

DIANE BURKO: No.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: No, Okay.

DIANE BURKO: No.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And how—

DIANE BURKO: Now, I was totally in [laughs]. I was totally committed to what I was doing. There was nothing else on my mind, except making art and teaching it, because that was a way of earning money. I mean, I have to say that my goal was not necessarily to be a professor as much as to be a really good painter.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. How did you choose Community College of Philadelphia?

DIANE BURKO: Well, they chose me. I mean, I sent, you know, resumes out to a 50-mile radius and went to a few interviews, and this was the best of possibilities, you know; it really turned out very well for me.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And what year did you begin teaching?

DIANE BURKO: 1969.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay.

DIANE BURKO: I graduated in June, and September, I started teaching, '45, '55, '65—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Now, but you said you started teaching while you were still in graduate school.

DIANE BURKO: Oh yeah, well, I was—yeah, so, '68, you know—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay.

DIANE BURKO: But that was at night. It was a night class.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Well, that counts.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Did you form your teaching philosophy and method based on your preferences as a student?

DIANE BURKO: Well, let's go back. I was trying to figure out how young was I when I started teaching so—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Early-20s?

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, it was my early 20's, because I remember I was very young. So, you're asking—could you repeat—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: I'm asking—

DIANE BURKO: —that? Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Sure. Did your teaching philosophy and your method of teaching, was it based on what had appealed to you as a student, or was is it something you formulated—

DIANE BURKO: —I formulated—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —spontaneously?

DIANE BURKO: I kind of, you know, felt it out as I went along, but clearly, the foundation that I got in undergraduate school really informed my teaching. I was taught really great lessons. I mean, I—and I remember them. A lot of them didn't mean that much to me when I was an undergraduate, but they came to the fore as I tried to explain or develop projects and things for my students. So, I had a really good grounding with these professors, especially Bittleman, you know, who would say things like I was painting yellow. I was—oh, Bonnard, I didn't mention [Pierre] Bonnard, he was one of my heroes. And, and [Jean-Édouard] Vuillard, you know, and I looked to—I used to see their work at the Phillips Collection in D.C., and I was emulating Bonnard at one point with these windows, and I had a—maybe a table in front of a drawing table, and it was very yellow and glowing, and I remember him saying, "Well, what would it be like if it was all yellow, or what would it be like if there's very little yellow?" And very clearly, what I understood about painting in general, was about amounts. I mean, I had, like, these really simple tenants that I would teach, and I still teach them. Painting's about edges, how one edge hits another. It's about contrast, and it's about amounts, amounts of color, you know. So again, those are abstract formulations, as opposed to deep space or chiaroscuro or things like that, and I think I taught painting that way.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So, you said it was both a job to pay the rent and something you absolutely had to do. Once—

DIANE BURKO: What, no, what I absolutely had to do was make art. Teaching—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay.

DIANE BURKO: —was a way to pay the rent.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. But once you got into it—

DIANE BURKO: Oh, I enjoyed it.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —did you develop—

DIANE BURKO: I enjoyed it.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —a passion for teaching?

DIANE BURKO: Oh, absolutely, yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Did you learn anything from the interaction with your students?

DIANE BURKO: Absolutely, every day. I mean, you know, that's the joy of teaching, is if you can have a rapport and an exchange. It's not just you saying something. You want to see what they say back, and it makes you think, and that's how you evolve as a teacher.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Did any of them affect your own practice in any meaningful way over the 30 years?

DIANE BURKO: Wow! Maybe not at community college because it really was basic, but I also did a lot of gigs, you know, where I would go to different colleges and give lectures and then do studio visits. More so when I would go to a graduate school and see what other kids were doing. That would inform me. I looked at some woman's palette once, and it was all red and pink, and I remember, I was just, like, probably—I don't remember when it was, but I remember it just influenced me looking at her palette, or having discussions with people. So, I'd say there were many exchanges with young artists, who, you know, were into other things, just as it is today. I mean, I still have exchanges with my studio assistants. I mean, I learned about Flashe, that paint we were talking about earlier, from a student. You know, so I'm always looking for responses in my work from younger people and learning from them.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: From all your years of teaching, cumulative, could you name an extremely meaningful memory?

DIANE BURKO: You mean with a student?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yes, or the experience of teaching in the classroom, something that really sticks in your mind, sort of an "aha" moment or something that touched you deeply.

DIANE BURKO: Well, I—it's cumulative memories, what I enjoyed most about teaching. I had these night drawing classes, and I created a schedule for myself that, again, was subservient to my painting schedule, my studio schedule. So, it was great, if I could go to my studio in the morning and not get to Community until 2:00, teach a 2:00 class until 5:00, and then I would do a night class from 6:00 to 9:00. And in some of those night classes, there's a lot of freedom, and I remember I was—no one had done this before, but I had seen other people do it. I started getting this large butcher paper, and again, I did that Skidmore; I mean, I was taught that at Skidmore, and it came from Skidmore. We did these very large, you know, drawings that went from the floor up to over how tall you were, and we did full-size drawings of ourselves or other people or the skeleton. And I just remember, you know, wonderful experiences with the students and how they would be so shocked to see how great their drawings were, just because we worked at them and the surprise of the discovery of, you know, seeing those things evolve over time.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And the large scale—

DIANE BURKO: Large scale.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —in the end.

DIANE BURKO: The scale was very important.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Right.

DIANE BURKO: But the scale went both ways. It could be also very small, you know, and it could have a lot. I remember painting assignments that were very cool where, you know, you're teaching beginning painting; they don't know how to draw, so how do you get them to make something that's viable? Well, I never liked putting an apple or pear in front of someone. I thought that was boring. If I thought it was boring, they're going to think it's boring. So how do you get them into developing some sensibility? I would do abstract, but I'd make them make collages. Okay, so they would do, like, one collage would be dark; one had to light; one had to be neutral; one had to exciting. And I'd bring all these magazines, and we'd sit for hours and do that, and then I'd put them up on the walls and say, "This one's good. What do you think of that one?" And then from there, then they would make a painting from a collage. So they were learning how to mix color, and they were learning a little bit about drawing, but they were getting into the concept of painting without being stifled by not knowing how to draw. So, you know, I just kept developing different—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —different approaches.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah. Different projects.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Different methodologies.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay, now I'm going to take a sharp right turn.

DIANE BURKO: Okay.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Or a sharp left turn.

DIANE BURKO: I'd rather a left turn.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay.

[They laugh.]

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And ask you, amidst all this seriousness of purpose and your drive to be an artist, did you have time to date much, or were—when did you meet your first husband?

DIANE BURKO: Well, you know [laughs], I did not date when I was in graduate school because I did the stupid thing of getting married four days before I started graduate school. That was a big mistake. I did date when I was in college. I was pinned to somebody else. But this guy, I had met him originally when I was a teenager, and he pursued me, and he was very romantic. He was very different from my college dates, and I should have stuck with my college dates, but I didn't, and I was just willing to have an affair with him, and he was working in New York. I was going to graduate school, and that was just fine with me, but he was extremely persistent, and he wanted to get married, so I just agreed. I think one of the motivations was I really wanted to separate myself,

again, from my parents, who were pretty controlling, even though I was out of college, and this was a good way to do it, you know. I'll be married. I'm going to graduate school, and he was very supportive of that.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And did he move to Philadelphia with you?

DIANE BURKO: Absolutely. Yes. And so I started graduate school, and the first thing I got from Neil Welliver was ribbing over the fact that I was married, and he was a bit of a dirty old man, so you know, I didn't have much going for me with him because I was this young, married thing.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: [Laughs.]

DIANE BURKO: And then what was interesting is this first husband of mine, who was a husband for many, many years, I should say, was commuting to New York for his job until he got a job in Philly, so I would drive him to the train station every morning, and he would take, like, the 6:30 train, and I'd be in the studio, so people really thought I was something else [laughs]. But it was just because of my schedule, so I would be in the studio from 7:00, 7:30 on—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Amazing.

DIANE BURKO: —you know, working. So that—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So—

DIANE BURKO: —was a good thing actually for—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So—

DIANE BURKO: —career.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —what type of work did he do?

DIANE BURKO: He was—then he worked for National Car Rental. The thing that made him unique and different and interesting was that he didn't have a college degree, but he was super smart. He started out being an actor in New York and then realized that he couldn't make a living that way and just dropped it completely and went into sales. But then when he came to Philadelphia, he—oh, I think what happened is they found—he was looking for a job in Philly and the company in New York found out about it, and I think, at the point, he was in travel agency and then he went into insurance and, you know, it was—he finally wound up in advertising, and that was a very good fit for him.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. So how many years were you actually married?

DIANE BURKO: Too many.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: [Laughs.] And what was his name?

DIANE BURKO: His name was Ernie Goldberg. I never took his name.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: That's interesting. Were you a little bit ahead of the curve on—

DIANE BURKO: Apparently I—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —maintaining?

DIANE BURKO: —was because, yeah [affirmative], I always have stayed Diane Burko. I'm very happily married now to Richard Ryan, but I, you know, don't use his name either.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. So, let's go back, or let's continue into the early-1970s. So, you're out of graduate school; you're teaching—

DIANE BURKO: —teaching at community college.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —at community college.

DIANE BURKO: Right.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And what were your goals as an exhibiting artist when you first started out?

DIANE BURKO: Well, once again, just sort of, as you asked me, you know, what did I want to study? I didn't know

what I could study. What did I know about my goals? When you went to graduate school at that point, and even undergraduate school, especially graduate school, a lot of the professors I had, especially Neil Welliver, they were very dismissive of the art world, although they were sucking up to the art world and doing it very well, but the model they gave you was like, you just do your art; you worry about that; you, you know—you don't think about exhibiting or things like that. So, I didn't know what to expect. I knew I just had to keep making art. Teaching was great, but again, serendipitously, I have been very fortunate. While I was still in graduate school, these two women wandered into my studio; they were a lesbian couple, and one of them was on a—I don't know what they called it, some kind of a fellowship; I guess it was a graduate school fellowship. Her name was Neva Hansen. She had gone to Cleveland Art Institute and she had worked for Sam Green at the ICA, the first director of the ICA. And she and her partner would wander through the studios, and they just stopped at mine and thought I was interesting, and they befriended me. So, these were older women that knew a lot about art, so they started telling me things and teaching me.

We used to have this wonderful game of postcards, and you'd figure out who the artist was by looking at the postcards. Then they lived in west Philly and so did I, so my husband and I got friendly with them, and Neva Hansen was very hip, doing extremely interesting work, and she knew Marian Locks, and Neva suggested that Marian go visit my studio when I graduated. So, I met Marian Locks probably in 1970, just when she was beginning to open her gallery in the back of a little, old gift shop on Chestnut Street, and Marian was very interested in my work and in me, and way back then, she started taking my work, those circle paintings that I was talking about. She sold them to different banks. Have to remember the names of the banks, and I have to look it up. And she was doing very well. She had a lot of corporate work then.

FMC was just establishing an office in Philly; she was going to New York and doing things, and Neva showed with her; I showed with her. She—John Formicola was an advisor of hers; he put me into a drawing show that Edna Andrade was in and Liz was in, Liz Osborne, and Marian kept visiting my studio and was really like a mother hen. And in 1974, I was offered a one-person show at the Art Alliance, and this happened because Edna Andrade was on the exhibition committee, and she recommended me. And I remember going to Marian's gallery; at that point, Marian, I think, had moved already to Walnut Street, and I remember saying, "Marian, can I be in the gallery now? Look, I'm having the show?" You know, because she was selling my work, but I wasn't in the stable, as they called it, because I was very young. And she said, "Well, you know, I think it would be better for you to have the show first, but I'll pay for the framing." She framed the whole show. I have the show, and then I think right after that I was officially with the Marian Locks Gallery.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So, in those early years, then, of the '70s, what materials were you using most of all and showing in these exhibits?

DIANE BURKO: I was an oil painter, but through Marian, she got me to do silkscreens because that was a way to get your image out in a more inexpensive fashion. That was one of the strategies that art dealers used at that time. So I made some—I've made some—not the good—I mean, I'm happy with those silkscreens; I'll have to show them to you. So, I did that, and then I was doing these aerial views, as I discussed with you, the car things and that, and then I got into—and again, it was about learning something else. I got so good at making these orange and green and beige and grey paintings that I got bored. I'm someone who will not continue doing something if—when it becomes production. Now, I know that's the way to develop signature style, but it's not my way. So, I remember saying to myself—and I saw an image that I liked of mountains, alpine mountains, and I said, you know what? I said to myself, I got to make one of these paintings and get rid of all these colors. I'm only going to do it in blue and whites. So, in 1973, I started making these blue and white paintings. The show that was at the Art Alliance was alpine—a photograph, alpine paintings. It was mountains; it was snowy mountains, go figure, 1974.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So, just to reiterate—

DIANE BURKO: Maybe—excuse me, it was 1973 when I had that show. My daughter was born in '74, I had the show in—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —was that your—

DIANE BURKO: —September 1973.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: That was your first official show, so to speak—

DIANE BURKO: My first official show—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —at the Art Alliance?

DIANE BURKO: —one-person show was at the Philadelphia Art Alliance, but—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Perfect.

DIANE BURKO: —I was in another show with Neva Hansen at Beaver College, then, it was called, and then I also did a show with another woman, Elaine Yanow I think was her name, and that was at the Arts League in West Philadelphia. So I had these two person shows—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Right.

DIANE BURKO: —I think before and then the one at the Art Alliance.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. We can always check the printed—

DIANE BURKO: Yes, it's in my resume.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —chronology.

DIANE BURKO: Yes.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yes. Okay.

DIANE BURKO: Which I don't have in front of me.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: [Laughs.] Describe your first studio, and what conditions did you require for an [laughs] optimal working environment in those days?

DIANE BURKO: Great question. You mean when I got out of graduate school?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yes.

DIANE BURKO: Okay. So this goes back to family dynamics. My husband and I lived on a second floor of a double in west Philly. We had one floor; it was really nice, when I was in graduate school. I mean, we started out with a one-room thing, but we moved on to that. But once I graduated, we—West Philly was a great place, and the houses reminded me of the houses I lived in in Skidmore. So, I like that style. I like, you know, the wood paneling and all that, and I wanted to buy a house, and my parents had some means, and they were willing to give us a deposit. So, this house, by the way, cost $21,000. I heard it just sold for about $450 or $5[00] [laughs]. $21,000 on South 46th Street, between Larchwood and Hazel. We found this house, and we fell in love with it, and I knew—it was a three-story house, so the third floor was going to be my studio. We're going to break down walls, and I could have a nice back studio. And I remember my mother hearing our plans and saying, "Are you out of your mind? You're going to take our money; you're going to do this, and the first thing you're doing you're making yourself a studio? What about the kitchen? What about this?" And she really was extremely judgmental, and I remember saying, "You know what? If you don't want to give us—if you don't want to help us, we'll get a loan; we can get a mortgage. This is what I'm doing, and you're not—you know, if you're going to interfere, forget it." So I really stood my ground, and that was my studio. So, my original—my first studio was on the third floor of this house, 510 South 46th Street, and I was in that studio for many, many years. It was the width of the house, which, quite frankly—I don't know. It might have been—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —500 square feet maybe or more?

DIANE BURKO: Well, it was at least—I'm trying to think of the width.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DIANE BURKO: It—what were those houses? They must have been about an 18 or 20, at the most, wide, and it must have been about 35, 40 inches long, because I had—we broke down walls, so I had a nice, long space with windows on the right, and I had a wall on the end, which was my studio wall, and we made it out of Homasote, and then I had another wall on the left to put other drawings and things in, and I did that big drawing that's now up at PAFA, you know, the 114-inch drawing, was done on that studio wall, and that was 1982. So—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So there was pretty good light?

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, the light was pretty good, but I, you know—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: With the row of windows?

DIANE BURKO: —I had artificial lights as well. Yeah, I never was someone who believed in the great romance of north light. I just needed light.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. And it was comfortable for you to work in the city like that, in a—you know, in a city home?

DIANE BURKO: Oh sure, and it was—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay.

DIANE BURKO: —comfortable to work on the third floor of your house and, you know, then I could commute, you know, and go downstairs, get on trolley, and go to community college and teach, and then go back home. And I didn't have our—my child until 1974, so I was in that house '70, '71, '72, '73, for about four years without, you know, a kid. And then, when Jessica came, she was in the second floor, and I got—well, we had someone living with us, Perry Steindel [ph], until she was born, and then, you know, I would get a student to live up there, and that could help with the babysitting. So, the student had the front room and the bathroom of the third floor, and I had the back.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. Your life was based, clearly, in the city, so,—

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —you were starting to do landscapes where you had been a little bit so, did you need to get completely out of the city to do those or you—

DIANE BURKO: No, because the land—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —were you working from images?

DIANE BURKO: I was totally working from images that I was collecting, either on calendars or magazines or books about alpine skiing. I totally was working from sources. Nothing was, at that point, from en plein air. I mean, I had done that when I was in graduate school, did a lot of works, cityscapes, you know, the whole nine yards, but once I started doing this work, it was about making paintings; it was conceptual in a way. I didn't need or have any desire to be outside.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Got you. So, were there any artists local to Philadelphia or New York that you had strong connections with, either personally or stylistically, in the early-'70s?

DIANE BURKO: Yes, well, I was friends with—I said Edna Andrade was a mentor to me. I was also friendly with a woman named Edie Neff who taught at U of Arts. She was a figurative painter, studied with Larry Day.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Edie Neff, not Eileen—

DIANE BURKO: No.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —Neff, okay.

DIANE BURKO: There's two of them. Eileen I'm friendly with now; she's a great photographer. No, but this was Edie Neff; she was a painter, drew beautifully; she died too young, but I was very friendly with her. We were close. I had—still have a very close friend named Lenore Malen, who lives in Manhattan, who went to Skidmore with me and then came to Penn and studied art history and, since, became a painter, videographer artist. So, she was someone I have kept—still keep up with. Someone who, really, I relied on, in terms of studio visits and, you know, talking about what I'm doing and, you know, she's known me since undergraduate school, so she was a clear person that's been in my life, in my studio life, in my personal life, all these years.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: How about artist friends in New York?

DIANE BURKO: Well, yes, what happened in '74, because of my feminist activity, and I did this—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: We'll get to that later.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah. But through them, I became very close to a woman name Audrey Flack, who I just had dinner with last Sunday. And I met her in 1974, and we became very close. Miriam Schapiro was another influence on me. Those two were the really strong, New York artist. Then I also was close to Joyce Kozloff, who I'm still close to.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: It's interesting; you're naming all women—

DIANE BURKO: Yes.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —–pretty much, as opposed to any men painters.

DIANE BURKO: I can't think of any.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: [Laughs.]

DIANE BURKO: I'll scratch my head.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: That's interesting.

DIANE BURKO: Oh, well, actually, there was one, Bob Berlind, who passed away recently, was—actually, was a student of Arnie Bittleman's at Black Mountain. He was older than me, and he was a really nice painter. We kept up over the years because we had the Arnie connection. He actually wrote an article on me for, I think, *Art in America* or Arts—I can't remember which magazine. I had a lot of respect for Bob. Bill Scott, later on, became my friend, but not in those years. Oh, and then, of course, at community college, another colleague, who I really still respect, was Jeff, Jeffrey Reed, who's a good painter, and actually, when the ICA had some kind of a show, I can't remember when it was, but it was some kind of inaugural show, and it was 25 artists, pick 25 artists. I picked Jeffery Reed as the artist to exhibit with me. It was in 1990.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: We'll revisit that later. Were there any artists that fascinated you that you didn't know personally, but you would have loved to have met?

DIANE BURKO: Well, there are a few more that are coming to mind that I have met that I should mention. One was Chuck Close, and we corresponded for a while, and I was always very impressed with what he was doing. Artists I would have like to have met? Wow, there are so many I mean, another art—well, Susan Rothenberg is someone I've always admired, always wanted to meet her. I did meet Elizabeth Murray once; she's another great artist who's passed away, who was really wonderful. I mean, there's so many. There is—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay.

DIANE BURKO: It's hard. Jim Turrell, I forgot to mention Jim. I met Jim in 1977. He's not a painter, but he's a great artist, and we've stayed friends over the years. So, he's certainly someone I admire, and I visit lots of his installations, even going to Japan, to Naoshima, to see his stuff. So, there have been artists over the years, for sure.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. So, do you have any anecdotes about particular artists' studios or processes or lifestyles that had an influence on you?

DIANE BURKO: Well, I learned a lot from Miriam Schapiro. She ran a tight ship; she had assistants. I never thought of having an assistant. She was organized, and she was in charge of her career, as well. I thought that was interesting. Edna Andrade, I guess, would be the closest influence I've had to watching an artist work and be. I was really privileged to know Edna closely. I was, I wouldn't say a daughter, but close to that, you know, thinking—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So interesting because her work is so different from yours.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, that's true.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So, there were other things about her method or about her—

DIANE BURKO: Well, about her being about—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —processes and just who—

DIANE BURKO: —about her—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —she was?

DIANE BURKO: —devotion to her work. I mean, you know, what your work is is not as important as, you know, the fact that you're making it, you know; it's not what it is. I mean, it's like admiring a novelist who doesn't write the same kind of novel you write, or a musician. No, Edna was really a role model for me. I learned how to be more professional, how—I learned about integrity and honor and, you know, just how to maintain oneself by watching Edna.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. In 1976, Ivan Karp offered you a dealer's showcase, whatever that means, at OK Harris Gallery in New York. How did you two connect?

DIANE BURKO: Well, that's good, but—in 1976, I, you know, was full of myself. I already had a kid. I was with the Locks Gallery. I was doing well. She was selling my work, and it was time to go to New York; don't you think? So I just made the rounds, at that point in time; we're talking last century. One could still walk into a gallery with a sheet of slides and, you know, I was an attractive, young woman [laughs]. I used that. And you know, somehow I met Ivan and sat down at his desk, and he looked at the stuff. And he said, "This is good. You know, you should be in New York." I said, "Yeah, I know. How are you going to help me do that?" And he said, "Well, what can I do?" And he said, "I'll give you a dealer's showcase." He said, "I'll let you use my"—and he had a—I don't know if you've ever been to his galleries. He's gone now. But he had a really nice space on West Broadway, and he had three, big galleries and then was his big office. And the last gallery to the right was a really nice space. And he said, "I'll let you have that space. You can have that from Labor Day or a week before Labor Day through"—I don't remember. It was like two weeks. I think it was like at the beginning of the season. And maybe he had an opening, and I've heard he's done this before. "Invite whoever you want in." So—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So in other words, he put the onus on you to select, to hang, and to invite.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, he gave me the space.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And how many of you were there? You said there were three galleries. Did you get one whole gallery?

DIANE BURKO: Oh, yeah, I had the back room of that gallery. Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And so there were maybe two other artists?

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, I have no idea who else was in the front. I have no memory.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay, so that what was meant by a dealer's showcase?

DIANE BURKO: Yes. Yes.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So how did it go, and do you remember what you exhibited?

DIANE BURKO: Well, I must've exhibited these blue and white paintings because that's what I was painting at that time. It was still those snow paintings. And what I did—this is before email. I wrote letters—I have carbon copies of those letters. They must be in my archives at Rutgers—to whomever I could think of writing to: writers, curators, whatever. I got a beautiful letter back from the curator of MoMA. Now I'm blocking his name. Who was the curator of MoMA then? Oh, he was so sweet. And he said, "I was in Europe. I—but your work looks interesting, and I wish you luck," something like that. And one of the people I wrote to was a guy named David Bourdon because I think he was quoted in an article about me in, of all places, *American Artists*. I had a feature article in *American Artists* in the 1970s.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Well, actually, I think it was the *Village Voice*.

DIANE BURKO: No, no, but he was quoted before.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Oh, this is a different—

DIANE BURKO: Right. Because he was quoted in that article, I felt I could write to him and say, "By the way, there's an article written about me, and they're referring to you in the article. I wonder if you'd come see my show." And he did, and he liked it. And yes, he featured me in the *Village Voice* because he was art writer for the *Village Voice*. And David then became a close friend, ally, supporter, wrote a catalog for me, a Lock's catalog.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So was there talk after that show of Ivan Karp representing you?

DIANE BURKO: Nope.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: No.

DIANE BURKO: That was it.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: That was it. One time.

DIANE BURKO: You know, he did his deal. He said, "You know, I've helped you out." Another thing that I did is I think I took some of those paintings and put them in a storage place in New York, which a lot of artists did, and then you could then invite people in. So that was a way of, again, trying to get people to come see your work, you know.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Can you just describe, in a little more detail, those paintings? You said they were blue and white and circles?

DIANE BURKO: Oh, no, the circle paintings were the aerials of the aerial farms.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay, so what were the ones at your showcase?

DIANE BURKO: They were made from magazines and books about the French Alps. They were really relating a lot to what I'm doing now, Grandes Jorasses, things like that. And I did them in '73, '74, '75.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And were they very large scale as well?

DIANE BURKO: Oh, yeah. Always large scale. Seems to be my thing. And soon after that, I had a show at ASU in Arizona—no, not ASU. Oh, what was that called? Arizona State University. And that, again, was serendipitous. I mean, the show wasn't. Someone wrote to me. I don't know how they found me, but they wanted to give me a show, and I had no desire to schlep out to Arizona. Why am I doing that? Until I realized that the Grand Canyon was there. And then I wrote back, and I said, "Well, you know, I can do this if you, in exchange, aside from bringing me out and I'll talk and do all that, "But my goal would be for you to get me to the Grand Canyon. I'd love to see the Grand Canyon."

So that show was happening, and before that, I used to go to the College Art Association, and I think there was a meeting in L.A. Went to the meeting, and there was some party, and that's where I met Jim Turrell. Jim was hanging out at the party, and someone introduced me and, you know, this is—I'm in my 20s, and I mention that I'm going to see the Grand Canyon; I'm having this show at ASU, and he said, "Oh, well, you know, how are you going to do that? What are you going to—I mean"—and I said, "Well, they're going to drive me out." He said, "But how are you going to look at it?" I said, "I don't know. I'm going to look at it." And he goes, "Well, that's not the way you should do it. You should fly into the Grand Canyon." I said, "Really? Okay. Yeah, sure. I'm going to fly in to the Grand"—he said, "If you get in touch with me, I'll fly you in." And his friend—and I look at his friend, and I go, "What's with this guy?" And he goes, "No, no, he really can fly you in. He has a plane. He's a pilot." So I took him up on it. And that's how Jim and I met in 1977.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Hmm, I see. I was going to ask you that question eventually.

DIANE BURKO: That's how it happened. But it was those same blue paintings or more similar ones. When did I have that show, did you say, at Ivan Karp's?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: '76.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, right. And this was right after. This was the next year.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay, so going just back to that show again, at that time when you were showing the alpine paintings at that dealer's showcase, did you consider yourself part of the photo-realism movement that that gallery was promoting at that time?

DIANE BURKO: Very good question. At that time, a lot of those paintings were made with acrylic, and I didn't bring that up because I started out as an oil painter, and at some point in the '70s, the turpentine was really eating up my fingers, and I got allergic to it. And for that reason, I switched to acrylic. And again, you know how I was saying earlier that the material has to go with the image? It was the perfect switch because I was doing these cold, blue and white paintings, you know, with very sharp edges—oh, I learned how use to acrylic, so you could have a soft edge as well. I switched to acrylic. So those paintings that were in Ivan's show were acrylic, and the ones that were at ASU were acrylic. Ironically, when I flew with Jim and subsequently had images from the Grand Canyon, I couldn't make them in acrylic because I could not get the rich, deep browns and reds and colors I wanted. And I switched back to oil.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Didn't you also work in colored pencil around that time?

DIANE BURKO: That was after. No, that was in the '80s.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Later. Okay. So—

DIANE BURKO: But from a number of images that I got while flying with Jim.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So this flight with Jim Turrell, was this the first time you took aerial photographs of the landscape?

DIANE BURKO: Exactly. That changed my life. That's why I always give him credit. I mean, it was just—you know, he wasn't doing it intentionally, but there I was in his plane, shooting, and all of a sudden, I had images

that I had taken. And that, I think, was a turning point. And from that time on, those were my sources. I had to go to the landscape. I had to experience it, and then the paintings came from those personal, onsite sources, as opposed to *Arizona Highways*, or calendars, or a book on, you know, skiing.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So they grew out of—they grew organically out of your—

DIANE BURKO: —–experience.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —–experience.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah. Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So then, as your career literally took flight—

[They laugh.]

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —did you associate yourself with a particular movement or style?

DIANE BURKO: I didn't think of myself in those terms.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay.

DIANE BURKO: I let other people do that.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. So you would not have defined your style, per say, at that time as being any particular thing?

DIANE BURKO: It wasn't really—it was most super real. You asked the question earlier.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yeah, or photo real.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah. Photo real. With the acrylic painting that I was doing, but it was really very, very abstract. For instance, when I think back to those paintings, who I think of as an artist is Augustus Tack, which is not a well-known artist, right. Maybe you know who he is. And I had discovered his work at the Phillips Collection. His work was abstract, but it was about landscape, and he had these lozenge shapes that I really enjoyed. A lot like—I'm blocking his name, the guy who has his own museum in Denver [Clyfford Still –DB]. Oh geez. I'll think of it in a minute. But anyway, it was abstract, and my work, if you looked at it, was really abstract. It was like shape to shape that was making up these mountains, you know. So it wasn't super real. It was—but, from far away, it looked pretty real.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: It had, what they still call, artistic license involved.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay, now, who were your first collectors, if you can remember?

DIANE BURKO: Wow. The first collector was Malcolm and Joan Campbell. I mean, he paid me out. He paid out the painting. You know, like every month; these people had three or four kids. He was a college professor. You know, every month, I'd get a little money from them. So those I remember as being my first collectors.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. And how did your work find its way into the collection of Jalane and Richard Davidson in Chicago?

DIANE BURKO: Oh, that's a great story. But before I get there, I do want to acknowledge that, in the beginning, a lot of my work was collected corporately through Marian. So there are many banks, you know, who have my work, and other kinds of corporations because of Marian Locks. And it was more corporate stuff I think in the beginning because, like you said, I had large paintings. They filled walls.

So the Davidsons were collectors of work on paper, and they knew Marian, and they used to come by. They were from Chicago, but they would travel in. And one day, I got a call from them saying—and at the point, I was doing the color pencil drawings. Remember you asked about that. I started doing those in the '80s. Again, why did I start doing them? Totally arbitrary. Totally serendipitous. I started doing them because there was going to be a works-on-paper show at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Big show. I knew about it, and I had this great watercolor paper, but I hated doing watercolors. And all of a sudden, it came to me. I love this paper. I'm going to do colored pencil drawings on these paper. And that's how it started. And I made this triptych that was really terrific of the Grand Canyon, and that was accepted into the show and in the catalog.

So I guess maybe the Davidsons found me out through that or through Marian. And they called one day and they said, "You know, we've been following your work for quite a while." They knew a lot of about me. They had seen my work at Genesis Gallery in New York because, after Ivan Karp, I did a show in New York for a number of years. "And we know—we've seen—Marian has shown us some of your drawings here, but we need a vertical. Do you have any verticals?" That was their question [laughs]. Why did they need a vertical? Well, because they didn't have a lot of room on their walls. So this was a way of their getting a Burko, but it needed to be vertical. "Yes, of course, come over to my studio. We'll find you a vertical." And we did. And that's how I first got into their collection.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Do you remember what it was of?

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, I think it was of red rocks in Colorado because, once I started doing flying with Jim, you know, this was what I loved to do. And I was on—you'll get a kick out of this. I was on a tour with Mary Garrard, the great art historian who became my friend. She was the art historian. I was the artist, and it was the Year of the Woman or something in Denver or all through Colorado, and we spent maybe a week or two traveling through the whole state giving talks. And in one of the talks in Yuma, Colorado, we went into this town. And literally, it was a one-street town. You know, it had a post office and a church, you know. I don't know from this stuff, coming from Brooklyn, New York. It was really strange.

And I gave my lecture in the basement of a church, and the ladies—*American Artists* had featured me recently. They had the magazine. They thought I was, like, the greatest thing since white bread, go figure. And the woman comes up and goes, "You know, I know you like to fly and my son is going to take you up on a flight." I go, "Really?" And he was waiting outside on his motorcycle, and his name was Rick Chance. He said, "Take a chance with Rick Chance." I was scared out of my mind, but I couldn't say no. I was thrilled. So I got on the back of his motorcycle, and we rode to the airport. I mean, this little strip. And we got into his Cessna, and we flew over [laughs] a lot of land in Colorado, and I took photos. And I made drawings from them. Luther Brady has some of those drawings, and I know—I think the Davidsons have that too. He turned out to be a really great guy. I think his father ran the newspaper, and he was a carpenter, and he loved to fly.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Amazing.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Amazing. So you started exhibiting out west in the late-1970s. Do you feel that your panoramic landscapes are especially appreciated in the American West?

DIANE BURKO: I wish they were more so [laughs]. I have no idea. I think you're right. I think I exhibited in Texas and in Colorado and Arizona—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: L.A.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah. I don't even—can't remember how that all happened. You know, maybe through Locks Gallery, maybe through shows that people invited me to be in. I really don't remember.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: For some reason, I feel that, maybe because people are closer—

DIANE BURKO: —–o the land?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —–to the land—

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, maybe.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —–and maybe relate more to the land—

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —–that would be an especially—

DIANE BURKO: I think that's it. I was sought at—yeah, there were galleries that were very interested in my work out there. Yeah. Well, ironically now, I am represented in Santa Fe. Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Now, but back then, you weren't.

DIANE BURKO: No.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: You didn't pursue it?

DIANE BURKO: No.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: You were busy enough and had enough to do?

DIANE BURKO: I was busy enough.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yeah.

DIANE BURKO: For me—and again, you know, it's, where do you put your focus? And I always felt—and this is why I did show in New York for a number of years, but the galleries, which closed, that I was—Rob Stefanotti, which was a great gallery. And then he closed. And this was like '82, '83. And at that point, I was earning money through my art. I was teaching. I was making my work. And I said to myself, "You know, 50 percent is 50 percent. I don't care if I get it from Philadelphia or from New York." So I just decided, "I'll stay with Locks Gallery," which, in retrospect, was probably a mistake. I should've, you know, been—no, not staying with Locks, but I should've also pursued New York as well. And I just said, "To hell with it. You know, one is enough for me. Let me just make work."

CYNTHIA VELORIC: You had a solo show at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts' Morris Gallery in 1980. In retrospect, what do you think was the significance of that show and who curated it?

DIANE BURKO: Well, at the point, the Morris Gallery had a program of featuring Philadelphia artists. I don't know how I was selected. I assume they have, like, a selection committee. I think Judith Stein was the contemporary curator or the curator at that point. But Frank Goodyear was very much involved with that show, as I recall. I was thrilled to be having it, and it was all my color pencil drawings, so it was work that I had done based on those Jim Turrell flights, as well as the Denver flight that I was telling you about and I remember really being excited about it. It was a prestigious thing to have happen.

And I made a model of the Morris Gallery and started curating my own show, figuring out where everything would go and making the drawings. And I remember when it was time to deliver the work, I met Frank Goodyear, and I said, "Frank, here's my layout, you know." And he looked at me and he says, "That's not the way it's going to happen, Diane." He said, "You leave the curating to us and you just"—and he was so right because he really hung a beautiful show. And it was less than I had in it, and I think that was one of the first times [laughs] I realized, you know, I do my job. They do their job. And although I curate, I think, in my own home very well, in the end, you know, that is a space that he understood and I was very happy with that show, very proud of it.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Did the Philadelphia press cover it?

DIANE BURKO: I have been fortunate to have been covered by the Philadelphia press pretty consistently throughout my career. I have no complaints. The first person who ever wrote about me was Nessa Forman when there was still a thing called the *Philadelphia Bulletin* and then Victoria Donohue wrote about me over the years. I think the first time Ed Sozanski wrote about me was after my—gosh, when was the first time? It had to be at the Locks Gallery because I remember the incident. So I'd have to look it up. I guess it was after one of my California shows. And he was new to town and apparently he had this really—I got a really good interview. And—or review rather, and I saw someone on the street later that day or the next day just, "How the hell did you get such a good review from Ed Sozanski?" I looked at her and I said, "I slept with him."

[They laugh.]

DIANE BURKO: Of course I'd never met the man.

[They laugh.]

CYNTHIA VELORIC: That's hysterical.

DIANE BURKO: I remember and the reason I know it was the Locks Gallery on Walnut is because I was running into the gallery that day and going up the steps and someone heard me and they came out and they said, "Go away. Ed Sozanski's here." So they didn't want—they don't go near him, you know. He was very stuffy and you know, aloof, and didn't want anyone. And then I met him a little while later at a wonderful event that was at Yellow Springs that was—I can't remember all the people involved, but John Clauser I think—I think that's his name—was involved. And it was a gathering of artists throughout the city to discuss the arts. And I was hanging out with Julie Courtney and I said, "Who's that tall guy over there?" She said, "Oh, that's Ed Sozanski." I said, "It is? I have to go over and meet him. You know, he wrote this—". So I went over and I introduced myself and he was just so uncomfortable [laughs].

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yeah.

DIANE BURKO: But I have to tell you we became friends.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Note to the archives, Ed Sozanski was the *Philadelphia Inquirer* art critic from the '80s—

DIANE BURKO: Right, through the '90s.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: No, through about 2005 or so.

DIANE BURKO: I think you're right. Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yeah.

DIANE BURKO: Very fine, wonderful man.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So you became friendly?

DIANE BURKO: We did because his partner Marion Pritchard taught at the community college where I was teaching and we became friendly. And then the four of us would go out and he was a very kind, wonderful man. Very bright.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Were you still with your first husband then?

DIANE BURKO: Originally, I was with the first. Yes. And I think my first husband befriended him.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. In 19—well, let me go back for a second. You just started to talk about the Philadelphia community of artists in the '80s. Is there anything particular you can remember about the art scene in Philly in the 1980s?

DIANE BURKO: Well, in the '70s and the '80s, the art scene really did, I believe, revolve around the Locks Gallery. You know, Marian had all the great artists. She had people who got into the Whitney Biennial one year because Tom Armstrong who was once at the academy, then went to the Whitney so there was a connection there. There was a lot going on. There were people from New York who used to come. Peter Frank, who was a real hotshot young guy at that point in time, was a poet, used to have poetry readings at Marian's and bring in poets from out of town, from New York.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So she held a sort of salon at her gallery?

DIANE BURKO: She did. She did. She did amazing things. And then she would also go into New York a lot and hang out with New York artists. I used to drive her many times and, you know, then she would take people out for dinner. It was a very wonderful, happening kind of place.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: You say the art world sort of centered around her gallery. What about—

DIANE BURKO: In Philly. To my—you know, there weren't that many galleries then.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: I was going to say; there were a few other galleries—

DIANE BURKO: Very few. Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And there was also, of course, the Pennsylvania Academy, which had the school for artists. And did you see any connection between the faculty at Penn and Tyler School of Art and PAFA and Moore, to name the most obvious art schools—

DIANE BURKO: Oh, there's five art schools in Philadelphia. It's really quite astounding.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Right. Did you see a connection—

DIANE BURKO: An interaction. No.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: No?

DIANE BURKO: There seems to be cliquey to me, and I was an outsider because I'm not from Philly. Marian did have a number of artists from the academy. James Havard was a superstar at one point. But then she also had an artist from—who taught at Moore. But it seems like Tyler, because they were more in the suburbs, you know, sort of stayed out there in a way. But there was the center city. There was Sidney Goodman, although he didn't show at Locks. There were a few other good galleries here, but a handful, really a handful.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. In 1989, the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund awarded you a grant to fund a six-month residency in Giverny, France. Describe the experience.

DIANE BURKO: *En français ou en anglais?*

[They laugh.]

CYNTHIA VELORIC: *Oui si tu veux.*

DIANE BURKO: *C'était comme un rêve.* In other words, it was like a dream. It was like dying and going to artist heaven. I had found out about this residency the year before. It just started the year before, and I applied to it the year before. I was very excited about going to France. Earlier, you know, I told you I knew a lot about French landscape painting, and I think I had gone to France with a French friend who was from—who was originally from Paris. Actually I just saw her again. Françoise Schremmer was her name—is her name. She's a mathematician, and her husband taught at the community college. And I met her because she took one of those night drawing classes that I referred to earlier. And I never used to tell my students what I did, you know. I would just teach. But at the end of the semester, I always made a practice, if they were interested, I'd do a slideshow and show them what I do as a—as a painter, as an artist.

And that year I was showing them paintings from the coast of California. Had done a series—this was 1985, '86. And I remember Francoise distinctly saying, "Oh, you think that coast is good, you should see the Normandy coast, the Brittany." She was going on and on. I said, "Well, you know what? We should do that. Why don't we go?"

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Slow down.

DIANE BURKO: "Why don't we travel there?" And I said, "Really?" And a little while later in 19—I guess it was '87 or '88; I have to look it up—we went to France together. And we flew into Paris. Her son was living there. I remember going up to his fifth floor, sixth-floor flat to pick up *argent*, and he had already set up a car. And then we took a train all the way out to the Brittany Coast, right to the end. And then we—to Brest, and I remember being in this train with her, and everyone, of course, is French, and the men were saying, "Well, what are you doing?" It was, you know, winter. And she goes, "Oh, I just have this American friend. She's an artist, and she wants to photograph the coast." And they started laughing. "*Pourquoi?*" Because they said, "You're not going to have good weather. It's going to be horrible. It's going to rain." But guess what? We had good weather.

So we landed. You know, we went from spot to spot, and we literally drove along the Brittany Coast going east all the way up to Le Havre. And in Le Havre, I had arranged to take a flight going across to London where my family was. My first husband, my parents, and my daughter were going to meet me there. So we did a family trip there. And it was really fascinating and wonderful. And I went to Étretat. We went all—we couldn't find a place to stay the last night. You know, we thought it would be Étretat. We kept going all the way—we finally wound up, I think it was, like, a bar, and they had a room upstairs. And we found it and, you know, we needed a place to sleep. But I photographed Étretat the next morning.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Did you take photographs all along the way?

DIANE BURKO: Oh yeah, sure. Sure.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Along the coast. But you didn't actually draw or paint; you just took photos?

DIANE BURKO: No. No. No. I just—it's—yeah, I was just taking photographs, but it was a very dramatic coast and it was really funny. Years later, Polloxe—her nickname was Polloxe—told me that she was always frightened, as I ran to the edge of the cliff, because she actually [laughs] had a fear of heights. But I would run out of the car, run to edge of the cliff, shoot, and then get back in the car. And I did that in California as well. That was, you know, going along Route One. That was what I used to do. So yeah—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So all of this was before you had the residency?

DIANE BURKO: Before she [inaudible], yes. And then I found out about this grant because it was being coordinated at first with the College Artists Association, so I really wanted to do, and I applied; I didn't get in. I was so disappointed. They only picked three—I think three artists, or was it only one? I can't remember. Anyway, the one they picked, I knew the woman, and I knew she wasn't a really good painter, and I—it really bothered me. How did she get it and I didn't? Well, I found out—I applied again the second year. One of the reasons she might have gotten in it is that they never looked at original work. They just looked at slides. And they seemed to realize that that was not a good process. So the following year when they opened it up again—the competition, they had two tiers. First, you would apply with slides—20 slides, and then you would be reduced. And then if you made the first pass, you were required to give them a painting. They would pay for it. This was *Reader's Digest*. Had a lot of money then, you know. This was before it was—you know, it was still a private entity Lila Acheson Wallace owned with her husband. And those paintings would be picked up and flown or shipped to their headquarters, and then they had an international jury that juried it, and then you were selected.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Wow.

DIANE BURKO: So I got in that time.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: You must've been elated.

DIANE BURKO: I was elated, and yeah, it was really something.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So once you got there, and I take it you left husband and child behind?

DIANE BURKO: I did, with permission. I mean, I discussed it with the family, and I made sure I had someone, a student, living at the house, you know, to back up—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —for your child?

DIANE BURKO: Yeah. To back up Ernie's—you know, was that. And she was older, you know. She was 15.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Oh, I see. Okay. So you left, paint box in hand, and?

DIANE BURKO: Well, as I said, it was like dying and going to artist heaven. I mean, you got $1,500 a month. You had an apartment, a studio, a *Peugeot Cinq*, a roundtrip ticket, and even a French easel. What more can anyone want? But it was really interesting psychologically because I remember sitting at the kitchen table with Jessica, really nervous about a week or two before I was leaving. And I had everything arranged. I had sent my supplies over ahead, but you know, I knew—you know, I'm an organized person, so—but I was really nervous. I said to her, this teenage kid, "I don't know why I'm so nervous. I mean, everything seems to be in order." And she's, "Don't you know why you're nervous? You're nervous because you've never lived alone." And I said, "What do you mean I've never lived alone?" I mean, who's she to tell me something? And she just spelled it right out and said, "Well, you lived with Momma and Papa until you went to college. You went to college and then you got married." And she was right. I had never lived alone. So she hit the nail on the head. So this experience of living in a foreign place where you can't rely on any of the hallmarks of how people get along, you know, "Oh, I'm so and so, and I did this and that, and this is what I do," none of that applied. I was an unknown entity in a land where I barely spoke the language, and it was an incredible, growing experience for me.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Well, were there other people in your—

DIANE BURKO: Oh, there were two other artists.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —building or community or—

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, it was—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —for the residency?

DIANE BURKO: —similar artists. One was a Chinese guy married to an American, who was very much into himself and narcissistic and would run to Paris all the time to see his Chinese friends, and then there was a woman who I tried to befriend, and she was nice at the beginning, but again, very neurotic. So no, I wasn't really friendly with the other two artists, and everyone else was French.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Right, and it's a very small village.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, but the—but the staff was great, and there was a woman there who taught French, you know; she was British, lived there, Jan, and I took French lessons with her, and I would—I was very friendly, you know, with the registrar and the secretaries, and I used to go around with my little notebook, and they would see me and go "*voila c'est Diane avec le petit cahier*" because I would always carry a little notebook around and learn phrases, and it was just fine, and then I had someone who—Mimi Schapiro, I had some people that I met in Paris, and then I got—through them, I met Joan Mitchell, which was quite an experience.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Tell me more about that.

DIANE BURKO: They could write a book about that. I mean, she really was a character. I—Bill Scott was a friend of mine, a wonderful artist in Philadelphia, who had written about Mary Cassatt, and who else? Someone else, it wasn't just Mary Cassatt, but anyway, he had known Joan and, you know, she had a very bad reputation as being difficult.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Berthe Morisot?

DIANE BURKO: Exactly, exactly—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: [Laughs.]

DIANE BURKO: —Berthe Morisot. I knew it wasn't Mary Cassatt. Berthe Morisot, and he knew the Berthe Morisot family. So anyway, I said, "You know, Bill, I'm going to wait until you come to meet Joan because I am afraid of her," but when I met this—I think it—I think it was when I met these people in Paris, [Shirley Jaffe –DB] said, "You know, I think Joan would love to meet you," and I said, "Well, I don't know, you know. I'm a little frightened." She's, "Oh, no, no, no, you'll get along fine." So she gave me her phone number. I said, "Okay, then I'll give her a call." Well, I went—I still remember, about a few days later, I was in the studio. We didn't have phones everywhere, but there was a phone in the hallway downstairs from our studio. It was a group studio, big space; we each had a space in the studio. I went downstairs, and I answered the phone. She goes, "Hello? Is Diane Burko there?" I said, "Yes, this is me," and it goes—she goes, "This is Joan Mitchell." I go, "Oh, really? Well, hello." "How come you haven't called me?" I go, "Well, I didn't know…" You know, I was totally flabbergasted. She said, "When you—you know, let's make a date."

So I made a date and then she called—I can't remember the whole thing, but I think it was: "How come you didn't call me," and then she called, like, the next day or two, when I—you know, before where I was supposed to see her, and she goes, "Where are you?" and I said, "Well, we have a date for tomorrow." She's, "No, we had a date for today," and I go, "Hey," I mean, I was [inaudible] you know? "Do you think I would mix up a day to meet someone as important as you?" She said, "Well, I'm waiting for you now." I said, "Well, then I'll get ready and go. I'll clean up," and got in my Peugeot Cinq and drove down the road because she was in—where was she? What was it called? [Vétheuil –DB] And I—you know, it was right across the street sort of; it was like 10 minutes, and then I got there. She told me how to get in the gate, and I knew to press the buttons, and I got in the gate, and I arrived at this big clearing, and there's a house before me, and I see a front door and a side drive. I don't know where to go, go to the front door, and I ring the bell, and she finally gets to the door and she says "Why didn't you come in the side door?" I said, "I didn't know which door to use," and the side door—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Wow.

DIANE BURKO: —had big—the side door had big dogs, and I don't like dogs [laughs]. That's the only reason why I thought the front door was a better idea, and then, you know, we hung out, and I showed her slides, and I brought catalogues, and we talked, and she took me to the studio, and we went out for dinner, and we had a nice relationship for a while, and then it kind of soured. She was very, like, high school, like a high school girl, you know, playing people off each other. Oh, and of course I forgot to mention, I did become friendly with a wonderful couple who lived in the village down the road, and it was Jean-Marie Toulgouat and his wife Claire Joyes, J-O-Y-E-S. Jean-Marie Toulgouat was actually related to the Hoschedé family, so he was a descendant from Monet, but not by blood, okay, because you know Monet married Madame Hoschedé after his wife died, and that's who—he lived with her children, and there was also Butler, you know, that family involved, so—and Claire that year was writing a book on Monet called *Monet's Table*; it was about food; she was into food. So I remember, you know, the photographers would come, and then I would go to their house and eat the leftovers, so we became very close. They were good friends with Joan, and they also had issues because Joan could be hot and cold with everybody.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: It sounds like she was not an easygoing type of person.

DIANE BURKO: No, she had been an alcoholic; she was an incredible artist. I mean, it was—it was a privilege to just, you know, spend the time with her, even though she was difficult because, you know, I learned. She came to my studio; she did a studio visit. Actually that painting, the *Nympheas* that I showed you earlier that's going to be in that catalogue, Joan came and saw that painting in my studio, and it was stapled onto a board, and she said, "Well, you know, you're using the same size brushes; you should use different size brushes." It was really smart; she was right, and then she looked and just, "But, you know, I like those drips." It was so typical Joan Mitchell [laughs] because, you know, there were drips coming down, so she liked that. That's all I remember her saying, but it was important, and it really—you know, I was thrilled that she made the effort to walk upstairs and see my work in the studio.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Did the plein air aspect of your work generate a different critical response when you returned back home?

DIANE BURKO: Well, I think the work that I produced as a result of that six-month stay was powerful work. Was it the result of the fact that I was doing a lot of plein air paintings [inaudible], or was it the result of my coming to this, you know, intense emotional self-awareness, transformative experience because I lived alone for six months? I mean, I don't know, you know, what the psychological dimensions of that were, but I did come home knowing I was going to get divorced, so it was a very [laughs] momentous—I did not—I was not—it was not a good marriage that I had. That happens with people. I was very, very young, and my first husband didn't grow as I grew, and he had his own emotional problems, but we had a child, so you know, that was a reason to keep the marriage, I felt, together, and I did until she was going to college, but at that point in time, I knew, in 1989

when I returned, that, you know, I did not want to be married.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. So when you came back, you showed the plein air works, yes?

DIANE BURKO: Well, I had studies, I had a whole wall of them, but the show that I had at the Locks Gallery—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —following—

DIANE BURKO: —Giverny—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Right.

DIANE BURKO: —was paintings that I did in my studio based on the photographs and, you know, the studies I had done, but they weren't paintings that came from—directly from a study, a plein air study. They were more paintings that came from photographs that I took, but they were informed by the experience of having the key to the garden and painting in the garden whenever I wanted to.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And what was the critical response?

DIANE BURKO: It was a very positive response. Was it a positive response because of the way I painted, or was it a positive response because of the content? You know, I don't know, but that was—I mean, that was another, you know, rave review that I got from Ed Sozanski.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So, by chance, did you start to align with different artists who had more of that plein air sensibility?

DIANE BURKO: No.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay.

DIANE BURKO: No, I don't think I did.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: All right, now we're moving to the 1990s. You were included in a group show at ICA in 1991.

DIANE BURKO: Oh yeah, that's the one where I included Jeffrey Reed.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So tell me about that show; I think it was called *Artists Selecting Artists.*

DIANE BURKO: That's right, yeah, yeah. Well, I had a very big, major Giverny painting in the show; I think it was one of the last ones I did, and it was bought by a good family. You know, I think it's in Palm Beach and—what do you want me to tell you?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Well, have you ever had a relationship with the ICA since then?

DIANE BURKO: No, and I would love to.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Interesting.

DIANE BURKO: But no one's ever asked me.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And what do you think of their exhibitions in general?

DIANE BURKO: I think they've had incredible exhibitions over the years. I knew Suzanne Delehanty; I think she did some groundbreaking shows. I think of Judith Tannenbaum, who worked there with Janet Kardon, was wonderful. I mean, they've spent—I mean, the Mapplethorpe show was there. I think they've done groundbreaking shows over the years. I don't know. I must say, in the last five or eight years, I haven't gone to that many there; they're still very good; they're—a lot of them are performative, installation-type work. They did a great Ann Hamilton show there years ago that I enjoyed. I think they do great things, and they used to show—well, they've shown local—or Sarah McEneaney had a show there, so did Eileen Neff, and I was hoping [laughs] that maybe Diane Burko would too, but I think it's a different group of, you know, curators at this point, so yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. In 1993, you were awarded another residency at the Rockefeller Study and Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy where you painted en plein air for five weeks.

DIANE BURKO: That's right, yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Describe your experience there, and how did it differ from your experience at Giverny?

DIANE BURKO: Well, the one thing was the time; Giverny was six months; this was five weeks, so that in itself, you know, was a huge difference. Another thing was, at Giverny, it was a very solitary existence, you know? I lost—never been as thin as I was when I lived in France. You know, I ate very—had a very simple life, you know, salad, lentil soup, fresh bread every morning, black coffee and a lot of traveling. I did a lot of traveling in France, and I had a car. In Bellagio, you were with a community of people. There were, like, 20 or more of us there, and it would rotate. I think every two weeks, it would be a different group would come in, part of the group, let's say, and it was an academic group. I was the only artist in the group, but it was social; you would eat together; you would have breakfast, lunch, and dinner, although I never had lunch with the group because I would go down to my studio, the Casa Rosa, which was down below by the water, and then I'd come up and clean up for dinner, and it was quite an affair; it was a like a five-star hotel. So the contrast with lifestyle was incredible—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Well, wait—

DIANE BURKO: —–and stimulating.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —describe this residence again?

DIANE BURKO: It's called the Rockefeller Study and Conference Center—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —–Study and Conference Center.

DIANE BURKO: —in Bellagio, so it was—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yeah.

DIANE BURKO: —on top of a mountain; it's between Lecco and Como Lake, you know, and it's a residency for people who are working on books or finishing stuff, writers; it could be mathematicians, philosophers, and they have a poet; they had a composer, and they had an artist, and I was the artist.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So it was a social community as well—

DIANE BURKO: Exactly.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —as an individual—

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —working community.

DIANE BURKO: It was an intellectual, social community; we each presented to each other what we were doing, and that in itself was fantastic because I remember, the first night, there was a cocktail party, and I met this man who—I said, well—talked about what we do, and he said he was studying creativity, and I said, "Creativity? You know, I just read a great article in the *Times* about that." I actually clipped it and gave it to my students because it was about the concept of flow, you know, that when you're in the zone, you can do something and time—you just—and I'm describing it to him, and he's smiling; he says, "Yeah, that was about Csikszentmihalyi and my work. He's here, too." [Laughs.] So *The New York Times* article was about the guy I was talking to. So it was chic [laughs]—and then it was Howard Gardner from Harvard.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Oh.

DIANE BURKO: So we became friends. So it was a wonderful group of people. Tony Hecht was there, a very well-known poet. It just was a great group of people.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: What about the accommodations?

DIANE BURKO: Like a five-star hotel.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: [Laughs.] Amazing.

DIANE BURKO: Five-hundred-thread sheets, it was amazing [laughs].

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yes.

DIANE BURKO: Another person who I really became friendly with—and his, his husband was Edmund White, the writer, the very famous, gay writer, and he was with his lover there, and we really made a bond, I guess because I was the artist, so we hung out a lot together, snuck out, because they liked you to stay just there, and then Richard, my second husband, who I had been dating at the time came to visit for a week, so that was really

wonderful. So we had a great time.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Let's go back to the work itself that you created at Bellagio.

DIANE BURKO: The work at Bellagio, as you said, was really plein air. Every day I'd get up; I'd go down to my studio; I'd either paint from water, and I also took images that came from the window of my room, which was up—it was a villa, so I looked down on Lecco—no, on Como. Lecco was the other side and that's where my studio was. So the photographs that I did from Lake Lecco, I then made paintings from when I got back home to Philadelphia, in my studio.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DIANE BURKO: So it was a combination and I did a whole show and that show was the one where Robert Rosenblum wrote the catalogue for that show. It was called *Luci ed Ombre*, light and dark.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Did you feel—

DIANE BURKO: Or light and shadow, I think. Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Did you feel that somehow these paintings were different—very different formally from the ones at Giverny, or was there a similarity?

DIANE BURKO: I think there was a similarity in brushstroke and a similarity in energy, but they were different palette-wise because of, you know, what I was painting and—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DIANE BURKO: —and I didn't do big ones of Bellagio the way I did the Giverny ones for some reason. Now that I think about it—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yeah.

DIANE BURKO: —they were kind of smaller scale.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And you have no idea why that is, now? It's hard to remember?

DIANE BURKO: Well, I mean I was going through a transition in my life. I was single. I don't know why, you know, but they looked good as verticals—as horizontal paintings, you know, I did a lot of diptychs and triptychs. Lee Alter was very interested in that and actually purchased a number of them and then gave them to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: But it is curious because you had been working large scale—

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, well—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —since your student days.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And it sounds like you pared down—

DIANE BURKO: You're absolutely right.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —for this particular series—

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —and so there had to be [laughs] some kind of major transformation going on, I guess.

DIANE BURKO: There must have been.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Maybe you were just trying to economize in every sense [laughs].

DIANE BURKO: No, no, but I—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Emotionally, spiritually, physically.

DIANE BURKO: I was going through a divorce, so that might have had something to do with it. When did I have

that *Estampes: [Works on Paper]* show? The print show? Was that before or after Bellagio? I have to look it up on my resume—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: I'm not sure.

DIANE BURKO: —to figure that out, but I—no, that's a very good point, and I never thought about it before. Why were those—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DIANE BURKO: —paintings so much smaller? I mean, there were no big ones in that, and you're absolutely right. I have no idea.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. Some things are inexplicable. So in 1996 you won a $200,000 public art commission sponsored by the Redevelopment—

DIANE BURKO: Yes.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —Authority of Philadelphia and the Marriott Hotel. Did you have a thematic agenda in mind, or did the Marriott suggest it?

DIANE BURKO: Neither one. Here was the story; it was a really—again, serendipitous. Let's see, I had had the Giverny experience, then I did Bellagio, and I went back to France with Jane Biberman maybe in '91. I can't remember when, but we did a—it was '91; it was before I got divorced—and we did this trip together where I followed more of Monet's campaigns because, even though I didn't love Monet in the beginning, I learned to really respect him by living there for six months and realizing how brilliant he was in finding these [laughs] great places to paint. I mean, he really knew what to paint, if it's Etretat or Belle Île, or also there was Le Creuse, this lake—river area, and I went and discovered that with Jane, and when we were walking through the woods there and I was photographing, she said, "You know, this is the same thing that they have at the Wissahickon. I don't know why you never go to the Wissahickon. I always walk my dog there."

So when I came back, I did go with her to the Wissahickon, and she was right; you know, it was amazing, you know, that part of the Wissahickon where the creek is and where, you know, the old restaurant is. So I was doing these paintings of the Wissahickon, just doing them, you know; I was enjoying them. Maybe they harked back to the stuff that I was doing at Giverny, but I loved doing them, and that was probably like 1995. So, you know, Bellagio was '93, and this is 1995. I remember going to a talk at PMA that the Fairmount Park Art Association would give every year, their annual meeting, and now it's called the Association for—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —–Public Art.

DIANE BURKO: ——Public Art. And after that show or after in the cocktail area, I bumped into Marsha Moss who was a friend of mine. I knew her in the art world, and she's, "Oh, Diane, what are you up to?" and I was saying, "Oh, I'm doing this and that," and she says, "I have an idea. I wonder if you'd be interested in giving me a sheet of slides for a project I'm working on," and Marsha was a public art consultant and worked for many years, and still does, on those issues throughout the city, and she said, "I'm doing a project with the Marriott, and I have a presentation. It's really—I know it's last minute, but if you could get something to me within the next day, I'd love to present it," and I said—I didn't know what she was talking about. She says, "Well, they're looking for a piece that's very large; it's a wall that's 14-feet by 34-feet, and there's also this frieze around the top," and she started describing it to me, and she said, "It's $200,000," and she was wondering, you know—she goes, "What do you think?" I said, "Well, I guess I'll give you a sheet of slides." So I did. The next thing I know, Marsha calls me up, and she says, "You're not going to believe it, but they love your work." So the backstory, I found out after, was that Mr. Marriott, I think it was Bill Marriott, was in on these juries with the Redevelopment Authority—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DIANE BURKO: —so 1 percent project, and apparently, they had presented many other artists, and he had rejected them all, and you were not presenting a proposal at this point; you were just showing what your work is. When he saw the Wissahickon work, which was part of it, and I guess I had Giverny slides—I have no memory of what I actually submitted—he was interested. So the next step, and this was real—I really felt it was a very enlightened process. They would offer the artist that was selected a $7,500 fee to come up with a proposal, so therefore, if they don't like it, thank you, goodbye, but at least you've gotten a fee for doing your work. So I said, sure, I can do that, and I said to Marsha, "You know, I want to do all three." She's, "You don't have to. You could just give him a proposal for the wall," and I said, "If it's going to be something important and conceptual, I would like it to relate, to that the frieze on top—"

[Audio break.]

So what I decided to do and, you know, I was already with Richard Ryan, who was a landscape architect and a visualizer and a builder and could do almost anything, and he was working actually—I just remembered this [laughs]—he was working for an architectural firm, BLT, Bower Lewis Thrower, and they actually were the interior architects for the Marriott. So we got a hold of the floor plans of the central area, and we created an architectural model of that, and then we superimposed what I was going to present to them as an idea. What was my idea? Well, I had just finished Giverny, so I was still very much interested in reflections. I went out to the Wissahickon, and I took lots of photographs, and I created a collage, which was basically, I would say, four-fifths water and one-fifth the trees that were being reflected in the water, and then what I did is I photographed other trees, really not from the Wissahickon, but actually trees on my way to the museum. There were these wonderful, big, big trees, beech trees mostly, and they were—you know, and there was sky there, and I took a lot of those, and what I did was, on one side of the frieze, it was all about looking up at the trees. The other side of the frieze was the same trees being reflected in the water. So my concept was that you're looking at nature through many different—from many different vantage points. So the main painting, the 14x34-feet one was of this big concept, and then you have these friezes going around that you looked up at.

Now this was major, the—you know, it sounds great; yeah, it's $200,000, but what Marsha suggested, and she was so right, she said, "I suggest that you propose to take the whole fee and be the project manager." So that meant that I, as an artist, wasn't really going to get $200,000 as a reward. I had to pay for things; I had to rent a studio that was $1,500 a month; I rented an 8,000-square-foot studio; I put up walls, dry walls, and then I had to order a canvas that was already gesso-ed from New York, that was that big, and then I had my assistants staple it onto this—on this wall. Then we had to hire a crane to get it out; we had to create a rolling system to figure it —I bought the lights. Richard, bless his soul, he created these slide ladders for me, projector ladders, because I used to work with projectors, so I divided the 14x34-foot canvas into eighths, and each one was another image. So I was able to raise the projector up to get the image and then—it's pretty complicated. There was actually a woman who—Carol Rosenbaum, who wanted to do a film on me, and she got as far as a trailer, but it never went further than that. It was a major—it took me three years. I think, in the end, I made about $60,000—I netted $60,000, but hey, you know, it was an offer I couldn't refuse.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Were they—were the Marriott people involved, *at all*, in any design issues or aesthetic issues?

DIANE BURKO: Well, they wanted something [laughs]—you know, they wanted—they gave me part of the money when the first mural was installed, and I researched that, of course, very carefully and I had a wallpaper company, who hung wallpaper, archivally add it to the wall. They were wonderful, so they put it up and I got part of my money that way and then, you know, we waited. No, but the only thing—it was actually—the management of the hotel was really stupid. Once the thing was up, at one point, they put a table and chairs in front of it, so Marsha, you know, got on—she got on that stopped; that was really dumb, but other than that, no.

I had to do the lighting, and for a while, the lights would be out, and I would be very upset. At this point, I don't go there, you know, because I don't want to get upset. You know, if the lights are out, what am I going to do, you know? There's a huge plaque that I had nothing to do with that the Redevelopment Authority put out, and it's really ugly, but it has my name, and I do remember my dear parents, they were both still alive at that point, and my father just cried when he saw it [laughs]. It was just—he just was overwhelmed. He was already ill; he had cancer, but he was just so proud. So it—that's a fun—it's a fun thing to see, but it's very much in my past [laughs].

[END OF burko16_1of2_sd_track05.]

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Hi, Diane, we're back. You mentioned your Jewish background a few times; has that part of your identity entered in to your work in anyway?

DIANE BURKO: I can't say that it has in terms of content or narrative, but I guess, you know, maybe in spirit, and I think I've already spoken about the fact that both my parents were coming from Europe in very troubled times: 1937 for my father and '39 for my mother. The only Jewish thing I can connect with, which is really superficial, but it harks back to a memory I had that I forgot to mention to you when we first met, and you asked me about, I think, when did I start making art, or you know, as a child, what did I do? And I was listening to NPR or something about number painting. Remember, there used to be those number painting kits, where you get a little canvas, and it had lines and numbers and then you had paints with numbers. So I had one of those when I was, maybe, in the third or fourth grade, and I recall vividly looking at—this is what my first oil paintings were. I'm going to—looking at the back of the Hagaddah—that's your Jewish connection. I think some matzah company used to give out these free little magazine Hagaddah, and on the back cover was a little boy looking up at his grandfather. And the grandfather had gray hair, and the little boy had a little yarmulke on, and that was my first painting. For some reason, I took those numbered, little dishes of paint and a piece of cardboard—or maybe, by that point, it might've been a canvas board because I think, somewhere in my stacks of memories of objects, I think this board still exists, and I made a copy [laughs] of this image. And that was the first oil painting I ever did. Is that a

hoot? I use those paints because those were the only paints I had. So that's how I used number paints.

[END OF burko16_1of2_sd_track09.]

DIANE BURKO: Well, and other than that little anecdote, I really don't see my Jewish identity entering my work at all.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Have you actually been asked by other artists, or theoreticians, or art historians that question before? In other words, ethnicity or diversity has been such a prominent theme in the study of artists over the last 20, 30 years; have these people tried to dig at you to try to uncover that kind of latent genetic strain in your work?

[They laugh.]

DIANE BURKO: I think the only genetic strain that's been obvious is that I'm a woman and not a man.

[They laugh.]

DIANE BURKO: And that's not in ethnicity, but certainly, that has played a role, I think more in my being and the way I act. I'm definitely a feminist. I've always been a feminist. I never took my husband's name—my first husband's name. That was a good idea, being now that I have a second husband.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: By the way, when did you meet Richard? Please state his full name and where you met him —

DIANE BURKO: Okay.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —and how long you've been married.

DIANE BURKO: Okay, Richard Lee Ryan is the name of my second husband. We met way before we ever became lovers. I met Richard in 1983, when he had just arrived, I guess, the year before to Philadelphia with his first wife, Kathy. I can't remember her last name right now, and she was attending a Ph.D. program at Bryn Mawr in archaeology. They both came from California. They were students together at UC Irvine, and Richard had studied at UC Irvine art history and studio art sculpture. So our relationship way back then was just professional. He was an artist; he made stretchers, and I needed an artist to make stretchers. I needed a guy to make stretchers and he was very cooperative, very capable, and we just struck up a friendship. And then we collaborated on projects in my studio. He helped me build the wall that I still use, my racts system, you know, with the pegs, so that I can raise my paintings up and down because I am a person of short stature, and I make big paintings. So I can move the painting up and down to paint, and of course, I use a ladder when I have to. But over the years, we came together; I got divorced, and we became a couple.

He, at that point, decided to go back to school for landscape architecture. He knew a lot about the landscape. He actually knows a lot about everything: building, plumbing, carpentry, cabinetmaking, et cetera. But then he got his degree at Penn in landscape architecture. So we always joke about, I'm the landscape painter; he's landscape architect and our tastes and our interests are very, very compatible and the same, and that's why he's a wonderful companion for lot of these expeditions we've been going on the last few years. We're always looking at the same stuff. We're always marveling at the same thing, and he's extremely supportive, and actually, when I did my Marriott project, in '96 to '98, he was instrumental. He built a model of the Marriott for me to present to the RDA and the Marriott group, and then he built these slide ladders, so to speak, that we used in the studio. He supervised the whole structure of the wall because we rented a 1,500-square-foot studio, which required building walls for the 14x35 foot painting that I was doing and also, then, for these other, long 95- and 85-foot x 7-feet strips of painting. So he was totally involved in all of the operations of the project, figuring out how to get a truck and a rig to get the painting out the window, and he built the frame around it to protect the edges. So most of my work, Richard's sort of been there as a support, and I think I earlier told you that he built my Giverny boxes, so that I can get my canvases over and, yeah, he's a partner.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yeah. Do you think your art would have continued to evolve in the way it did if you have not met Richard?

DIANE BURKO: Well, you know, there's millions of books about artists personal lives versus their creative lives and production. Certainly, being with Richard made me a much happier person, much more content, and much more energetic on many levels, and so therefore, I think he's been part of the energy that I have, and he certainly gives me the confidence, and as I said, you know, we went on this expedition to Svalbard together, although, quite frankly, in the beginning, I applied, and he didn't, to this Arctic Circle expedition in 2013, and I applied in 2012, and they asked if I would wait until 2013 because of the composure of the group. They wanted to have a good mix of all kinds of people, and therefore, I said to Richard, "You know, you are an artist; you're

interested in a landscape; why don't you give it a try?" He applied after, and he got in as well, so we were a great team, and now we continue to be a great team.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And what did he intend to do at Svalbard?

DIANE BURKO: Oh, he did. He created artwork, onsite artwork, and he even documented it in images that he did.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And what media does he work in?

DIANE BURKO: Well, he is a sculptor and a photographer, basically, but I would say, in the last few years—and he was very successful in these images, these digital images, that he produces by creating digital film, animations, and then taking stills and then making images out of the stills. But he uses a process called 3D Studio Max because he studied visualization in his career as a landscape architect; however, he sort of almost abandoned that to just work and design the garden. So he says, "You're the artist; you make the objects; I'm in the world," so, you know, he sort of departed from that, but adventure he loves.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: You sound like a very physical team together.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: You are physical; you're cerebral together—

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —and you are creative together.

DIANE BURKO: Oh, thank you. I think we are, and cerebral, I give him more credit than me. He's a much deeper thinker than I am. I always say that. He says, "Oh, no, you're smarter than me," and I'd say no, no, no.

He reads voraciously, and what always surprises me is he knows so much about everything. Even when it comes to vocabulary, sometimes I say, "Richard, what does this word mean?" and he knows. I mean, yes, he studied Latin, and I didn't, and that certainly helps, but we do complement each other on many levels.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Absolutely. All right, so now I want to shift into the 21st century.

DIANE BURKO: Good.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So we're going to start to talk about your life and your work and your vision and your relationships since about the year 2000. And the first question I want to ask is, who are some contemporary artists whose work appeals or speaks to your vision, since the turn of the last century?

DIANE BURKO: Wow, that requires a lot of contemplation.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: We can come back to that if—

DIANE BURKO: Okay. John Walker, but a lot of these artists, you know, I discovered in the 20th century, and I continue to follow them into the 21st century. So if I think of a really great painter, I love John Walker's work; I love his energy. You know, but then there's [Richard] Diebenkorn, who [laughs] didn't get into the 21st century. But I must say that I'm very taken by artists of today. Like just last weekend, I saw the Kerry James Marshall show, and there's an example of a contemporary artist. He must be at least 15 years or 20 years younger than I am, and he's totally embraced his ethnicity and his history and developed incredible visual documentation and metaphors and incredible paintings. He's a great painter, and I just saw his show at Met Breuer. Another kind of painter—or artist, I should say—I'm very taken by video. I'm very taken by videographers, and again, that's definitely, I think, more 21st century, although I'm thinking—I'm blocking is name—the guy who did the 24-hour clock.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Oh yeah. I forget.

DIANE BURKO: It starts with a C. Can we fill that in later [laughs]?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yes, we can come back to that.

DIANE BURKO: He's fantastic. He shows at Paula Cooper's. He's brilliant. [Christian Marclay]. There are a lot of brilliant videographers. Bill Viola, but again he started in the 20th century, but he's still certainly going into the 21st century. And then you have a woman who must be about 55 now, Pippilotti Rist. I just saw her show at the New Museum, and she's fantastic, and I've been watching her work from the get-go. So I've been following it.

And I think, you know, if I were 30 years younger, I think video would've been the way I would go, too, because you're able to do so much with it, and actually, there's a younger artist I know, who is from Philadelphia, I think, maybe, and she's done incredible work: Janet Biggs. Also went on the Arctic expedition, not with me, but a few years before, and I think she's doing important work. And then I have contemporaries like Joyce Kozloff, who's older than me, but continues, in the 21st century, to really be making meaningful, incredible work. So, you know, there's a whole range of people that I follow, and I can—you know, and I discover. I'm open to discovering, you know, other artists, always.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So it's interesting to me that the names that you just mentioned are not the names that are splashed across *The New York Times* or the—

DIANE BURKO: Oh, you mean like Jeff Koons?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —newspaper or haven't had immense shows at MoMA or Museum of Art Design, et cetera. So what is sort of your general feeling on the New York artists that get the most exposure and are widely collected around the world and command huge sums of money?

DIANE BURKO: Well, you know, the art world today is a commodity world. I mean, it's—you know, you know, it's a 20th-century word, at this point. So a lot about the art world has to do with status, has to do with Gagosian—and, you know, it's a corporate world; however, out of that world, you can still find some good artists, and I think they can sometimes come out of the high-end gallery or not. You know, has come back into fashion. I mean, she's with very high-end the gallery now. There's a range, but you know, when it's purely—like I'm not a Mike Kelley fan. I can't help; it's just not my thing. I'm not a Jeff Koons fan, but in a way, Marilyn Minter, on the other hand, who is also getting a lot of publicity now, I admire what she's doing. I really do. So you know, having splash and having a lot of publicity doesn't necessarily make you a pariah and not having any value, but I think, for the most part, it can.

[They laugh.]

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. Well said. Now recently, the art historian Mary Garrard described your landscapes as having a gendered aspect—

DIANE BURKO: Oh.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —and I'll explain. Rather than portraying nature, with a capital N, as other, with a capital O, as a man might, you paint nature as self, going with its swells, flows, flowering, et cetera. Do you relate to that idea?

DIANE BURKO: Well, it was an idea that presented itself with Mary Garrard, and also, at one point, with Ann Sutherland Harris, two feminist art historian friends of mine, and I like the idea. You know, I think—you know, what is that saying about, you know, ornithology is to a bird like—I mean, you know, I don't think about my work that way because I just think about making it. However, I think Mary has something to that, and I deeply appreciated her seeing it. I am a woman, and you know, if anything, I think that part of me might be reflected in my heart much more than my ethnicity, the earlier question you asked me.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DIANE BURKO: So yeah, I accepted. I like it. She's right; you know, she is right.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Since 2000, you've studied volcanic tectonics and glacial geology, as well as climate change. What spurred your interest in the scientific exploration of landscape?

DIANE BURKO: Well, you know, when one has the years to look back, you realize that maybe you were interested in these things earlier, and certainly, you know, the Grand Canyon was something I wanted to see in 1977, and that's why I agreed to the ASU show in Phoenix, Arizona, or Scottsdale, so that I could see the Grand Canyon. So clearly, the concept of monumental geological phenomenon have always captivated my imagination, but I don't think I ever identified them from a geological point of view. I mean, I just love looking at big spaces.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DIANE BURKO: I love looking at cliffs and rocks and, you know, the coast of—going to Giverny and seeing—standing on the cliffs in the Normandy or the Brittany Coast, but you're correct. Around 2000, I started learning about volcanoes—1998, to be exact, or '99, maybe, when I went to Costa Rica, and then I—maybe it was Richard's influence; I don't know, but I just felt the need to learn more about what makes these things tick. Maybe it was because I went to the Volcano Observatory in Costa Rica and just enjoyed that material and that aspect, maybe. I became more curious, although I think artists are curious. I think [that] all thinking, creative

people, what we have is curiosity, you know, always asking questions. You want to understand how this works, why it works. So indeed, volcanos was the first serious study I made, and I read books on it, and I started understanding tectonics. There's another example. Richard, of course, knew all about tectonics. I mean, you know, he explained it to me. I have to learn it like a newbie, but I understood it and, you know, one thing led to another. I was really so fortunate to get this major $50,000 grant from the Leeway Foundation in 2000, and that allowed me to travel and to do the flying and to meet scientists, to go to other observatories, and learn more.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yes, actually, I was going to ask you, when you first connected with geologists and other scientists on a professional level.

DIANE BURKO: Well, I guess it would have to start with the volcano project. You know, the internet was, certainly, very accessible by that time, and I am an outgoing person, which really gets facilitated with the internet because you can email anybody, and even though I seem outgoing, I'm a little shy, and I sometimes hesitate, but it's really easy when you're sitting in front of a computer to write a letter, you know. And you write one letter; well, you copy and paste it, and you write it again. And it was also easy to find names and scientists, and so I did start reaching out, especially when I got the grant because I knew I was going places. So, for instance, when I went to Hawaii with a friend of mine, Martha Ledger, wrote a very good article. I don't know if you've seen that article. She wrote an article—I'll get it for you—on our trip, and it was really quite good. She's very good writer. And we spent 10 days right outside a volcano national park. Well, before we went, I wrote to the observatory. I connected with scientists. I got them to recommend their helicopter pilots, so that I would have the best access.

I connected to a photographer, whose name I have to look up for you, who took us on top of a Kīlauea at midnight from the other way—you know, certainly are not supposed to do that, but he lives there, and we did it, and we walked on lava and watched a whole edge cast into the sea. It was amazing. So you know, up close and personal was the way I experienced volcanoes, but I also spoke to scientists about it. So I would say that was the first time, and then I was going to Sicily, so I wrote to people at Etna; I wrote to people at—oh, there's a wonderful woman who I wrote to was in charge of the volcano observatory in—can you stop it for a minute?

Vesuvius and she was just lovely, and she made arrangements to meet us at the observatory—Osservatorio Vesuviano. But you have to understand, it was closed. It was closed to the public. They were doing renovations, and my husband and I—Richard and I went there, and she spent almost three hours going through the observatory with us, speaking English with great difficulty, but she did, and she was just so generous with her time. Then again, she was also—she told me—so envious that I had this grant because I was seeing volcanoes she had not yet seen. And another great part of this exchange with her is that I had read Susan Sontag's book. I think it's called *Volcano Lovers*, and there were those beautiful logs of Sir—blocking his name—who was the great explorer in the 1800s, who was the diplomat to Italy, and he had climbed up. There was all this history. Everything was coming together, so it was just magical.

So, yeah, and there were other—oh, another scientist I connected with was so that we could climb some of the small islands off of Sicily, the Aeolian Islands, and he told me what tour guide to get, what place to stay in. So all along, I was getting wonderful encouragement and advice from scientists. At this point, these were volcanologists. Another volcanologist I met in Iceland—totally by accident, but I already had written to him because he was doing a tour. He had been the man who wrote—Haraldur Sigurdsson was his name, and he had written the encyclopedia on volcanos. He was an Icelandic person, but he was teaching at the University of Rhode Island and, believe it or not, he wrote [laughs] the introduction to my catalogue just through correspondence, and then, actually, I think we met on this cliff or this glacier soon after that. And to hook into him even more, in 2015—no, 2014, Richard and I went to Greenland, but before we went, we went to Iceland, and we went to see the Library of Water, which is, you know, north of Reykjavík, and they had a little museum that was a volcano museum. We said, "Oh, we have to go see that too." It was his museum. He was actually from that little town. So, you know, it's amazing how it all connects.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So in meeting these scientists—

DIANE BURKO: Yes.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —did that connection alter the way you perceive the landscape, which you had been looking at for 40 years already?

DIANE BURKO: I think I look at it with more passion now, with more understanding of what it's about. I look at it not as superficially because I understand them, of course. You know, I just told you the first group of scientists I met, which was the beginning of my studying geology, which was volcanos. Then, from there came my study of climate change, and then I really got into issues, you know, that were so much more powerful and scary and portentous, and in that vein, if you want me to talk about other scientists, there's a man that I really owe a great deal of gratitude to, and that's a man named Bruce Molnia. Bruce was at the USGS offices in Reston, Virginia,

and he was in charge of the Alaskan glaciers. The USGS actually publishes huge books on all the glaciers of the world, and he was the author and in charge of all the Alaskan glaciers. So, I wrote to him early on, not because I knew any of that, but after starting to study climate change, I understood that geologists were using repeat photography because I saw them online. You go to the National Ice and Snow Data Center and you'd see, "Grinnell Glacier, 1938," "Grinnell Glacier, 1978," and they would have these comparisons, and they also identified the photographers who took them. Bruce Molnia was one of the photographers, not of Grinnell, but of some, you know, maybe Harvard Glacier or some Alaskan Glacier. So there was a way of following through and writing to these people, because at this time, I didn't know if I could use their images. I found out after, of course, if they're USGS or NASA, they're in the public domain because I'm the one paying the taxes for them. I didn't know that then, so one of my motivations was to write and ask permission; "May I use these images in my work?"

CYNTHIA VELORIC: That was going to be my next question [laughs]. Why did you decide to use scientific photo documents in addition to your own photos of the landscape?

DIANE BURKO: Well, once I got into climate change, it was imperative that I do this because I wasn't alive in 1695—I mean, 1895, or, you know, earlier on. I needed the documentation as one of the strategies that I was using in making the paintings to talk about the before and after.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So which came first, your artistic vision about the before and after or your knowledge of the earlier photographs?

DIANE BURKO: Knowledge. Knew about repeat photography. I saw them, and it piqued my interest and I said, "Oh, I love"—first of all, I love making diptychs. I mean, I've been making diptychs and triptychs and series all my life, so it totally fit my aesthetic—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DIANE BURKO: —you know, my aesthetic instincts. But once I decided that I had to find a way to explore this issue through my own language of paint, which was the first way I did it, you know, I just found new strategies by reading more about science. They gave me the cues and the clues and the language and graphics and, you know, visual cues that I would intergrate into my work.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So, along these same lines, describe the evolution of your chronological, serial-based paintings.

DIANE BURKO: Okay, well, I began to, by telling that when I started—well, if we just talk about climate change and my whole project, *Politics of Snow*—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DIANE BURKO: —which was the first project, when I decided I had to figure out where that snow was in Grandes Jorasses that I painted in 1976 and was looking at it in 2006 at the Michener, that's what provoked me. What happened to the snow? What's going on? I know there's climate change issues; there's Al Gore; there's Elizabeth Kolbert. How do I find out about this? My first idea was to make a series of paintings on the Matterhorn. Why the Matterhorn? Because guess what? In the 1970s, I made images of the Matterhorn. I had this great old book, black-and-white book, so the first thing I did is I made 10 or maybe 12 images of the Matterhorn, 20x20 canvases, and I felt, if you saw a whole grid of them, that would talk about climate change, and I had this good friend—I always want to give her credit—Lenore Malen, who started out as an art historian and is now a really fantastic videographer artist living in New York, and we have been friends since college, so she will come periodically, you know, to the studio, and we'd schmooze, and she was, you know, always honest with me. I was always honest with her, so I told her about my new idea. I'm giving up what I was painting.

I want to learn about climate change, and I said, "Look, look at all these paintings I've made." She looked at them, and she said, "They're gorgeous paintings. They're luscious. They're beautiful. How can you be painting beautiful paintings if you want to be a political activist?" And I went right back; I said, "But Lenore, I'm painting a lot of them. Don't you get it?" And she said, "No, it's not enough." And then, I countered; I said, "Well you know, it's all what you bring to it. I mean, when I see a picture of a deer, I see a rat with horns, you know. I don't see a Bambi." And she said, "Okay, you have a point there, but you still have to go further in." And actually, she was one of the people who really got me to be more serious about the issues. And then I studied more, and it was then, going on the internet, that I discovered this concept of repeat photography. However, I didn't even know it was called "repeat photography." I just saw these comparisons. Wrote to Bruce Molnia, amongst other people. He called me up, and he said, "You can use my images." And we had a conversation, and he told me what repeat photography was all about. So that's why I always love to give him credit, but not only that, Bruce and I became friends. He came to my show, *Politics of Snow*. I've been down to his offices. He gave me all of the USGS books on all the glaciers around the world. We have met on panels together at the AGU and, as a matter of fact

—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: What is AGU?

DIANE BURKO: American Geophysical Union, which is a professional organization, which is, you know, world-over of earth scientists. I first attended their conferences in 2012 and had lunch with Bruce and his wife. And in 2012, there were 22,000 people attending this conference. In 2016, I will be attending another conference [laughs], in about three weeks, and there are now 24,000 earth scientists who will be attending, and actually, Bruce and I are on one of the same panels, so there's full circle for you.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Oh, and what will the panel be about specifically?

DIANE BURKO: I don't have the exact title in my head. I can read it to you if you want it after, but it's basically about visualizing climate change. How can art or design communicate issues of climate change? And, by the way, [laughs] I'm on two panels about that subject. I mean, I'll be doing different things on each panel, but clearly, there's a lot of interest, and there was in 2012 when I was invited. I mean, they invited me. They found me; I didn't know what the AGU was in 2012, but they reached out to me somehow—I guess through the internet—and asked me if I would participate.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Are you aware of other artists who are working in a similar vein to you?

DIANE BURKO: Absolutely, there are hundreds of artists. Believe me, I am not the one and only artist working on climate change. Of course, as the years have gone by, lots of people have joined the bandwagon.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: But do you think you might have been one of the firsts?

DIANE BURKO: No.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay.

DIANE BURKO: I can't take credit for that. There was a whole group that called themselves Eco Artists, and the Harrisons are this wonderful couple. She is in her 80s, I think, and so was he—Newton Harrison and Helen Harrison. They have been working on ecology way before I got into it. They're just a wonderful prime example, but there is an Eco Art Group out of New York that's been working for years. Jackie Brookner, a dear friend of mine who passed away last year, a sculptor, was working on water and water management and runoff and all those issues and working with groups. There have been artists, for a very long time, who have been working on it. Maybe I'm working differently than other artists, but certainly, I am not the first. There is a wonderful organization that is run by a woman named Amy Lipton and Patricia—I'm blocking her name. Two women started Echo Art Space, Patricia Watts, on the west coast now, and Amy Lipton, on the east coast, so they really have, like, you know, two vantage points, but they work together, and they've been around for at least 20 years working on land art, which is another, you know, way of talking about art, and actually, you can think of land art, you know, way back—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Going back to the *Spiral Jetty*?

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, back to Smithson, but this is another evolution of it. Sue Spade was a woman who worked in Philadelphia for a while, very active in the Echo art world. So like I said, there've been so many other artists who have done things. You know, I'm just one of many, but really, I would always, you know, point to Newton and Helen Mayer Harrison as one of the pioneers in the group. They show at Feldman. Feldman supported their work for years in New York, but there are others, you know; there just so many.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DIANE BURKO: You can look them up, but there have been exhibitions. There have been panels. Andrea Zittel is one that comes to mind, who's been around for a really long time doing her work.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay, but let's focus on you.

DIANE BURKO: Oh, okay.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Talk about your expeditions to the North and South Poles in 2013.

DIANE BURKO: Wonderful, I'd love to. Well—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: You may be one of the only artists that is actually going to the actual Poles and actually walking on the ice and hovering above the ice and taking it to this degree.

DIANE BURKO: Well, there are others, but maybe, my whole trajectory of everything I've done is a cohesive whole because it's been 10 years. It has been a decade. So as we already established, it started with these little, you know, small paintings of the Matterhorn; it evolved into my doing the two or three years' worth of these repeats, major diptychs. And then from there, you know, I integrated different vehicles, visual vehicles, and strategies, like recessional lines, et cetera, et cetera. So I did that from about '08 to about '13, and I'm an artist —I don't have what you'd call a major signature style, you know, when you compare what artists are like. I'm an artist who evolves. I really do believe there are different kinds of artists. And I am a someone that needs to keep growing, and as I grow, my work changes; as my interests change, my work changes; hopefully, it gets better, gets richer, but I know that I cannot repeat myself.

I am not a producer, okay? I can't make the same painting my whole life done, like April Gornik, for instance, who is a great painter, but, you know, they're all the same. You know, I mean, she'll go a little bit here and there, but I need to keep exploring new things. So here I am, you know, really getting into this stuff, having found ways. The only thing missing by 2012 was that the work was coming all from other sources. It was coming from scientific data. It was coming from the internet. It was coming from NASA. It no longer was coming from my imagery, and clearly, up until then, I went out into the landscape, like with the volcanos; I took the photographs; I did the research, and then I made work. So it was clear that I had to get out there. I had to figure out a way to really experience this climate change that I was learning about and talking about and painting about. So 2012, actually, I applied for this grant, the Arcticcircle.org grant. Twenty-six artists were selected, and we were to travel around Svalbard. Svalbard is 400 miles north of Norway and 10 degrees below the South Pole. It's really north, way more north than Iceland.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Is it part of Norway?

DIANE BURKO: Yes, well, it's what you call an International Archipelago, but Norway supervises it in Longyearbyen, which is the capital of this Svalbard. It used to be called Spitsbergen. It has two names: Spitsbergen or Svalbard. So anyway, the idea was that you get on the small ship, a three-masted barkentine, with 26 other artists or 24 other artists, and you sail around it, and you get off, and you get to shore, and you explore, and you go back on your boat, which is the way expeditions, you know, usually are. There aren't any hotels, [laughs] you know, in the Arctic or the Antarctic. So anyway, that was being arranged, and as I said, I was accepted in 2012, but I had a year because we postponed it until 2013. So I was scheduled to go there September 2013, end of September. And quite frankly, I needed the year to get ready. I was scared because—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: You can say that.

DIANE BURKO: Oh I can? I was scared shitless [laughs]. First of all, I hate the cold, you know. I am not a skier. I'm not a mountain climber. I love mountains, but I hate the cold. So I was really scared about that. So I needed research. I needed to find out what equipment to get, what clothing to wear, you know, what [foreign language] meant, et cetera, et cetera, and I did my research, and then, of course, I felt more secure. So as I was—and I was in physical training my—I was in physical training. I got my body—I mean, I'd go to the gym all the time anyway, but I really was focusing on balance and all this stuff because I was fearing that I would be the oldest person on this expedition. I was going to be, like, 68 or 69, and I was almost the oldest person. There was a 71-year-old. I was next to the oldest, and there were 20-year-olds and 30-year-olds and maybe a 40-year-old as well. Okay, so I'm all trained. I'm all ready, and in October 2012, I get a phone call from a friend, Carol Saline, who we had had dinner with maybe a few months before, and we told them about this expedition, and she said, "Oh, that's great."

And at the time we had dinner, she said, "You know, I want to go. I might be going to Antarctica or the Arctic. I don't know, but I have a cousin, and he works for a travel group that does that, so we might do that. Would you be interested?" I said, "Well, sure, obviously, I'm interested in going anywhere that's polar." Well, in October, she gives me a call and she says, "You're not going to believe this, but we have the possibility of going. They have seats for us," and I had to understand, what was she talking about? Well, apparently, when you have these big tours, these expeditions, and people sign up, if there are any seats or books, I should say, rooms left over on the ship, they're given out to family and friends. So Carol is the family, Carol and Paul, and Richard and I were the friends, and they are given to you at 70 percent off, seven-oh. Now, oh my God, so, you know, this is a very expensive undertaking. So I think it goes, like, from $20,000 down to, you know, below $10,000 or $16,000. So I said, "Wow, this is amazing." She said, "Well, listen," she said, "You have to let me know right away because I have a whole list of people, but I know that you're interested, and I know what you do, so you have to get back to me by tomorrow." I called Richard up.

I'm on the street. I go, "Richard, you're not going to believe this." And we we're about to go Paris, like, in two weeks and Richard goes, "Well, we have to say yes." I said, "But how are we going to get it together." They were leaving on January 30th—no, December 30th, excuse me, right before New Year's. We actually spent New Year's in Argentina. So somehow, we got it. We had to rush our visas. Well, I'll you about that. Well, Richard had to get a new passport because it was not more than—he had less than six months on his passport. And then, they said,

well, once they're going, they want you to go to Iguazu, which is the waterfall between Argentina and Brazil. So we said, sure, we'll do whatever you want to do. I mean, hey, we're fine. However, wherever I go, I want to fly, so we're researched how to get a helicopter to fly over Iguazu, so I could take shots. The helicopters only fly out of Brazil. Okay, no big deal, you're right there. Well, guess what? To go into Brazil to get the helicopter, you have to have a visa, and you have to get shots. So then we had to get visas and shots. It was crazy. But we did it all, and we went, and that's how, in 2013, I was able to be at both ends of the earth the same year. Isn't that phenomenal?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: It's phenomenal.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, and totally serendipitous [laughs].

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Wow. So getting back to the North Pole—

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —visit, do you feel that your work has changed as a result to that trip to the North Pole?

DIANE BURKO: The North and the South, of course it has.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, I mean, my God, you know, it's sort of like my work change when I was in Giverny or when I was in Bellagio. I mean, having that physical presence, that deep, deep palpable experience, you know, it seeps into your being.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Did you begin using media in different ways?

DIANE BURKO: Well, that comes later, as you well know. I mean, I don't know if you want me to talk about that now?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Sure.

DIANE BURKO: Oh, okay, really? Because we're zipping right along. Okay, well, then I have to tell you a little bit more about the North Pole experience, because—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And by the way, one of the shows that resulted from that trip was called *Polar Investigations*.

DIANE BURKO: Exactly, yes, yes, because I had finally gotten to the poles. So, when the Svalbard trip was a reality—as I told you, I had a year to prepare—one of the things that I wanted to do was not just be on the ship and get off the ship and experience it, I wanted to fly over Svalbard because, as you know, the aerial views have always been my thing. And I started researching it: how do I get a plane, where do I get a plane? Just like I did when I was, you know, flying over all of the volcanos. You know, I flew over everything. I did it in Iceland; I had a pilot. You know, I knew how to do it; I knew where to go, I thought. Well, when it comes to Norway, it's a little bit different, and I was going to apply for a grant, of course, because I know I have to pay pilots. So I wrote to—I finally found the name of the company that is in charge of these helicopters, and I wrote to this woman, you know, after a lot of research. She wrote back how much. I said, "I need to know what it is, an hour, so I can put it into my grant proposal."

She wrote me some numbers back in Norwegian kroners, and it was huge. It was like—looked like 5 million or something. So I wrote back to her, I said, "Well, this is a lot of numbers. Perhaps you put the decimal places in the wrong"—because when I translated the kroners into dollars, it was like $5,000-plus an hour. Now, I could pay $500 an hour, but I've never paid $5,000. She wrote back to me. She said, "Oh, no, actually, that is correct. This is Norway. Everything is expensive." And then she said, "And as a matter of fact, I have to advise you that I do not think you will be allowed to do this because the governor of Svalbard will see this as tourism, and we do not allow helicopters to fly in Svalbard for tourism." Wow, that was scary. So I said, "Really?" She said, "However, maybe you could contact the Norwegian Polar Institute, and those scientists go on expeditions around Svalbard with helicopters. They use our helicopters; perhaps they could help you." So, this was—you know, I guess this is the time to tell the story long because it should be down.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Well, this is how one thing leads to the next.

DIANE BURKO: Yes, absolutely. So, I start writing to the Norwegian Polar Institute. Now, I don't know who to write to, so I write in general. I, you know, do a whole spiel about who I am, my websites, blah, blah, blah. This is what I've done. This is what I want to do. Could you please connect me with the scientists, duh, duh, duh, duh, duh? I'm looking for—I will do a grant, blah, blah, and I started doing this in 2012, probably in May—April or May

of 2012. Okay, after I got back, but before, you know, Antarctica, and I don't get any response, and I had a friend who lived in Norway after she was an assistant to Audrey Flack. I met her; she is American, and she lived in Oslo, and I wrote to her, and I said, "I'm not getting anywhere. Can you help me?" She said, "Well they're all on vacation now. Don't worry, they're very. They're very slow. You'll probably get someone to get back to you." Finally, in July, I get an email, and it basically said, "Dear Diane Burko, your email has finally wended its way to my office, my attention, and I'm the person you really need to speak to. I will be in America in August. Here's a phone number, give me a call, and we'll talk. Signed, Jack Kohler." Wow, Hallelujah, so I'm waiting on pins and needles for Vermont; he was in Vermont, and I'm waiting for August. I called; there's no answer. I called; there's no answer. I'm freaking out, you know. I keep trying. Finally, a woman answers the phone. I go through my thing, "Hello, I'm Diane Burko. I'm looking for Jack Kohler. He asked me to call. I understand he's at this number." "Diane," she goes, "it's me Francis, Francis Kohler?" And I go, "Francis Kohler?" This is a woman I know from West Philadelphia, Francis and Bob. I know they have a son named Willy who is a young artist. Well, he's not that young; he's about 10 years ago younger than me. And I go, "I don't understand." She says, "Jack's my son!" I said, "But I only knew you had Willy." "Oh, I have two sons. Jack lives in Norway." [Laughs.]

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Oh, what an unbelievable coincidence.

DIANE BURKO: I know, that's my life. I'm telling you. Serendipity is my middle name. So, I go, "Oh my gosh, Francis, I cannot believe this." She says, "Hold on, I'll get Jack." [Laughs.] So, I mean, Jack had been living two blocks away from me in West Philadelphia. So, I get on the phone with Jack, and he goes, "Hey, you know I'm sure we can do something together, but I can't really talk now. My family is here. It's too crazy. I'll be back in December, and maybe we can talk then." I go, "December?" I said, "You know, are you going to the AGU in San Francisco?" He says, "Of course I am. I always go. I'll be there." I said, "I'm going to be there. I've been invited. Can I meet you there?" And indeed, we finally met, in December 2012; we had drinks with Jack; we had dinner. Jack and Richard are the same age. We have a lot common, and we talked about making a plan about how to do this.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And what was this Jack Kohler's job in Norway exactly [laughs]? Or what agency was he connected with?

DIANE BURKO: He is with the Norwegian Polar Institute. He's the head scientist and he's in charge of gathering data on ice balance. Ice balance is the study of how much snow falls and creates, on the glacier, the glacier, and how much snow disappears. And they measure year after year. If a glacier is healthy, we don't have climate change. It grows, and it goes back. It recedes, and it goes forward. It goes backwards. It goes forward; however, as we all know or we should know, it's basically going back; it's not going forward. It's only receding because mass balance, measurements show, that less ice is remaining than is being deposited and growing. And that's Jack's job, and he has been there since 1984 doing that on Kronenbreen glacier, which is this glacier that is near or at Ny-Ålesund, N-Y-A-L-E-S-U-N-D. Ny-Ålesund is the northernmost research station in the world, permanent research station, and Jack is the head of the Norwegian part of it, and as I said, Norway sort of runs things there. But it is a research station where scientists from all over the world because there's the Kronenbreen glacier, and there is another; they're very, very fast-moving glaciers, so it's something to study, especially for scientists who live in countries that don't have glaciers. Not every country has a glacier.

So anyway, Jack says to me, "Well, you know, there are many ways to do this. Maybe you'll come in the spring or maybe in the fall. In the spring, we go, and we put our instruments down, and in the fall, we pick up a lot of the data that we can't get through the computer, through the internet." And I said, "Well, the fall would be better, because I'm going to be there, you know. When are you going to be going?" He says, "Well, we're not exactly sure. So," he says, "But, you're going to have to write a letter to the governor to get permission." So I start writing letters in the spring, and Jack keeps looking up and saying, "This is never going to fly." He gives me the right verbiage to say that I'm going to be with them in mass balance, data, data. And I finally get approval only to go with him, and then I had I to get approval to go to Svalbard because it's a base with only scientists on it. We got approved for that. So Richard and I stayed on this base for four days, but it was crazy because we were in Norway. This trip was five weeks. Now, it's only a two-week residency. Why was it five weeks? Because we had to make sure we were there for Jack. Jack's dates weren't necessarily my dates.

So I remember we flew to Oslo. I didn't want to fly on 9/11, so I think we flew on 9/10, and we stayed in Oslo for a few days with Nancy Bundt, this wonderful photographer friend of Audrey Flack. Was a great host. She helped us. And we went to great restaurants with her. We learned a lot about Norway. From there, we—I had to remember this—we flew to Tromsø, which is the top part of Norway. From Tromsø, we had to change baggage and stuff, and we flew to Longyearbyen, which is Svalbard, and we met Jack. Then, we flew on a special flight from Longyearbyen to Ny-Ålesund. We spent four nights there, two of which days I was in a helicopter going up and down two glaciers, and it was, like, incredible. And that was my first real experience of standing on a glacier, a real glacier. It was phenomenal. And it was a small helicopter. There was an engineer and a pilot in the front, and it had three seats in the back. The first day, it was Jack, his assistant, and me, and the second day, the assistant left, and Richard was able to come with us. So, I was shooting. You know, I did video. I did video of Jack

researching because, quite frankly, once I was in that environment, I was not just taken by the incredible magical landscape; I was taken by the processes of these scientists. So I documented that and I actually gave that video—they edited it, and it was part of a presentation at the Norwegian Polar Institute, and it was about Jack.

So then, we finish that. It's still not time to meet the group. It was, like, the 17th, and we're not meeting the group until the 22nd or 25th—I don't remember the specific dates; I would have to look them up. So we then flew back to Longyearbyen, back to Tromsø, and we had a plan to go to the Lofoten Islands, and we rented a car in—no, we flew from—this was thanks to Nancy helping me figure it out. We flew South from Tromsø, rented the car, and then drove all the way back up through these wonderful islands, back to Tromsø, got on a plane, flew back to Longyearbyen to meet the group. So that's why it took five weeks [laughs] because we had to accommodate this wonderful opportunity to fly over Svalbard. So that was my trip. So the question was, what did I see? What I saw in the air, from these many flights, plus walking on this, was a lot of ice in the water and, you know, like I said, it was ingrained in me. Now, supporting that trip, you have to understand, I already had been to Antarctica. And in Antarctica, what I was seeing, from standing on a big ship—you know, these were two very different experiences. One was a three-masted barkentine, which was maybe—I don't know—60, 80 feet or less, and the other one was, like, 150-foot ship, you know, with 110 people on it. So, that ship, we were cutting through a lot of ice, thin ice. They called it a fast ice.

So I got a lot of images, you know, in my camera, in my head, of how ice breaks up. You know, looking at it from above, looking down, even though I wasn't in an airplane, but I was, you know, on a big ship, so I could look down on that. So, I had those experiences feeding my knowledge, and of course, you know, that—those were my first of two polar investigations, and then following that—it was interesting. Svalbard was great, but Richard was very disappointed because we had already been to Antarctica, and he felt Antarctica was so magnificent, so monumental. And Svalbard, it's much lower country. It's not as high mountains. It's just different. And I kept saying, yeah, but that's not just the Arctic. I said there's Greenland. Greenland, I know, relates a lot to Antarctica. And I said, "We have to go to Greenland," and I urged him. "We are going to do this, too." So September—October 2013, we went to Svalbard. August 2014, we went to Greenland. We planned our own trip, but of course, I had scientist friends like Marco Tedesco, a wonderful scientist at Columbia who studies Greenland ice ponds, melt ponds. He became my friend. He actually heard me speak at CUNY in 2011, and from then on, we created—developed a friendship. He writes me into grants, but unfortunately, I haven't—you know, [laughs] we haven't gotten that far. And also, Asa Rennermalm, a wonderful geographer, ice scientists at Rutgers, she also gave me advice about Greenland, and with their advice, and study, and research, we planned our trip to Greenland.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: It sounds like you've really got the bug—

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —to keep going with these arctic explorations.

DIANE BURKO: Well, I had to see more. I mean, you know, Greenland is the second largest ice field in the world. Antarctica is the first, which then, of course, led us to have to see the third largest ice field in the world, which is Patagonia, which is what motivated me to say, yes, I'm going to back to Antarctica as an educator on the Students on Ice nonprofit expedition. We had to pay for that expedition, but of course, not like you pay, you know, if you were a tourist, and again, it was Richard and me. And there were 46 students, 26 educators in different fields, and the students were high school seniors and college students, most on scholarship, either—in this case, exploring Antarctica, but they also—this program also explores the Arctic, and it's a wonderful program out of Canada.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Can you repeat the name of that?

DIANE BURKO: Yes, Students on Ice. It's run by a great guy named [Geoff Greene], I think. We can look that up. It might be wrong. It's Greene, and I can't remember his first name right now. But it was just great. It was a wonderful, wonderful thing. But why did I want to go? Well, it's always great to see Antarctica. However, our plan was, once we got there, we could then fly from Ushuaia up to El Calafate to go to the Argentinian, Patagonian ice field, which we did in January 2015.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Wow. How have all these travels impacted—

[END OF burko16_1of2_sd_track10.]

CYNTHIA VELORIC: This is Cynthia Veloric interviewing Diane Burko at the artist's home and studio in Philadelphia, PA, on November 14, 2016, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, card number two. Diane, we were talking about all of the travel that you did in pursuit of these panoramic and magnificent and gigantic land formations all over the world, but particularly, the ice and the glaciers at the poles. And I was

asking, how have all of these travels impacted your life, as well as your work? Your life in general?

DIANE BURKO: Well, I've learned a lot about myself [laughs]: that I actually am braver than I thought I was, that nothing matters except getting the picture, as they say. It definitely was an emboldening and positive, totally positive, experience to find myself out there in this atmosphere, world—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —wilderness, really.

DIANE BURKO: —wilderness, emptiness, unknown territory, for me, you know, this little Jewish girl from Brooklyn. I mean, it just was incredible. And as I said earlier, I wasn't a skier, you know. My parents didn't take me to places like that, so it was like being an explorer, and I must say, that sense of wonder and awe is part of my makeup. I mean, Richard says it's what makes me still a child, but I do [laughs] have this curiosity that I guess drives me to go to these places which are, you know, unknown, but within reason. I mean, I'm not going without a tour guide holding my hand, or telling us where to go. I'm not crazy. I'm not foolhardy, because I really value my life and I'm—you know, I feel blessed to still have it, and [laughs] I try to be careful. But that doesn't stop me from, you know, following what I want to see.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Do you feel that, recently, one trip propels you into the next trip? Do you see this as a continuing trend in your life, or do you feel now you might take a step back and reflect and not travel to such exotic locations for a while?

DIANE BURKO: I think that's what I'm doing right now. I mean, this is the year—I mean, January 2015, then in January 2016—we're going into January 2017, so in a way, I haven't done anything for two years, okay? And actually, it's been in these past two years, and really, these past eight months, where my work is finally, I think, taking an incredibly rich, deep, meaningful turn. And it's because I've had the time to not prepare for another trip. And I've had the time to let things settle creatively, and new things have happened that I'm very, very excited about.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Well, let's just for documentation—when was your actual last trip to one of the poles, or to Greenland or Iceland?

DIANE BURKO: Svalbard was September of 2013. Antarctica came before. That was January 2013. Then in August of 2014, it was Greenland. In January of 2015, it was Antarctica again, and the Argentinian-Patagonian ice field. So I haven't traveled since January 2015.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So almost two years.

DIANE BURKO: So it's going to be two years, yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Seems like it's for a reason. Okay.

DIANE BURKO: I mean, I've traveled, but not like that [laughs].

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So, you're still digesting, working, working through your experiences there, and I know you're working now in slightly different media—

DIANE BURKO: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —than before, and—which leads into a question about technology. What impact has technology had on your work?

DIANE BURKO: Okay. That's a two—I want to go back to the first way you phrased it, that you said, "You're working through those experiences." I don't want that to imply that the work that I'm doing now is really about those experiences. They are informed by those experiences, but quite frankly, my work is about what's happening today, which I'm finding out about through technology, okay? Through the internet, I'm keeping abreast of what's going on in terms of issues of climate change, in terms of glaciers in particular. And this summer, the Beaufort Sea, which is above Canada towards the North Pole, has been breaking up like never before. And I've been looking at images, thanks to technology, Landsat images, NASA images, NOAA images, and I've been looking at those, and they have been informing the actual topics that I'm painting about now. Yet, you are correct, Cindy, that of course these trips have added to the vocabulary that allows me to process the events that are occurring now.

And of course, NOAA, going back to NOAA, been looking at a lot of what they call GIFs, G-I-F, which are animations which are compiled through satellite imagery, and you can see things in real time in motion, and I've been looking at a lot of those, and I've been distilling those through technology, through just using a screensaver on my computer, freezing an image, and those images have informed the work. So you're right on point when you ask about technology. That's the way I'm using my technology. It's receiving images that have

been received from satellites.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. So, you recently began exhibiting photography and photo-based media in tandem with your paintings, as in the exhibition *Traces of Change* at the Cindy Lisica Gallery in Houston.

DIANE BURKO: Yes.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Does the anticipation of a mixed-media show alter the way you produce the work?

DIANE BURKO: No. It doesn't alter the way I produce the work, but I find it very exciting, and I have to say, a number of curators have suggested over the years that I do indeed—they would like to see the work in tandem, that they feel that one informs the other. I'll name two friends and curator friends in particular. One is Julien Robson, who used to be the contemporary curator at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, and he periodically visits the studio as a strong supporter of my work. And he's noted, you know, that there's a real relationship. Another one is Amy Schlegel, who used to be at Tufts University and actually curated the show of mine called *Flow* in 2007 at Tufts and also at the Michener, with Brian Peterson at the Michener. And actually a third curator who has been very interested in support of my work is Lorie Mertes, who's at the National Women's Museum. What's it called? NMWA, National Museum of Women in the Arts. And she also has said, "You know, it's really good to see the photos with the paintings."

And actually in relationship to that, Cindy, lots of people, when they saw the 40x60 photographs, which came out of the Viedma [Glacier] Series, you know, I've done others, but especially the deep time project I did. When they first saw them, they thought they were paintings. And, you know, that happened to me, I remember, with a show that was about Yellowstone, and a Grinnell Glacier show at the Locks Gallery in 2011. People walked into this room, and they thought they looked like the paintings, because it's a vision, I guess. I don't know. You know, it's my eyes. It's the way I see. So the photographs have some relationship to the paintings, but I think it's important to point out, they're not a substitute. What I make a photograph of, I don't really want to make a painting of. I mean, the photograph, if it's going to be a photograph and I'm going to make a 40x60 print of, it's unto itself. It's a piece of art. It's a work of art. Now, yes, indeed, I do make paintings from photographs, but those are usually from bad photographs [laughs]. They're from photographs that give me information, but they're not unto themselves works of art. I mean, I'm not going to paint tiny, little crevices and little things. I mean, I'm not a super-realist. So a photograph informs the kind of painting I make, but if it's a photograph on its own, it needs to be a photograph. Does that make sense?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Well, let's get back to something you just said. You said you're not a super-realist.

DIANE BURKO: No.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And yet, you do use these scientific, super reality photographs to inform—

DIANE BURKO: Right.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —your work.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, well, that's information.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Right. So have you always felt, from going way back to the '70s, that even though the sources of your information are very real—

DIANE BURKO: Real, yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —that your painting was never intended to look like a photograph—

DIANE BURKO: Yes.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —per se?

DIANE BURKO: Never.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So that's been an intention from the beginning?

DIANE BURKO: Yeah. I never had a goal—I mean, I'm not Chuck Close, you know, or Richard Estes. I never had a goal of, you know, a process that makes a painting from a photograph relate to the photograph. The photograph is a notation. It's a way of keeping a memory, just like being there is a way of keeping a memory. So it's information that informs. It informs the work of art, but it becomes something else. I mean, like anyone who writes a novel or a poem, they're getting information from reality. And then they're processing it, and then they're making it into their own thing.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Right.

DIANE BURKO: And that's what I think I'm trying to do.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And yet in small details of your paintings, one could say there are super-realist aspects.

DIANE BURKO: I would say just the opposite. I would say, when you look at a small detail of my paintings, they look abstract. We're going to have to look at my paintings and—

[They laugh.]

DIANE BURKO: —you show me yours and I'll show you mine.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Well, by that, I think what I mean is, there's information—

DIANE BURKO: Oh, yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —in your paintings—

DIANE BURKO: Yes, yes.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —that is based on—

DIANE BURKO: It is based on reality.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —again, based on reality—

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —but these are the kind of details that people may not notice when they're standing in reality, when they're looking at something up close—

DIANE BURKO: Well I'm giving you information—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —and yet you've captured—

DIANE BURKO: —about reality that's not—I mean, if you're talking about, like, recessional lines, or something like that, but that's not super-real. That's, like, integrating information, data, with painting. And I am trying to mesh those two things. Data is real, but I'm giving you a symbol of a stroke of paint or a schmear that's going across a painting, and I'm saying that's a recessional line from 1891. So, yeah. The number is real. It's referring to fact, but it's clearly paint.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay, well, I'm glad we're discussing this, because I think it's something that does need clarification.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: As to, you know, where the—

DIANE BURKO: Where the reality is—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —documentary evidence ends and where Diane Burko takes over.

DIANE BURKO: Well, yes. That's very good, because I have had scientists—actually, this other one I'd like to mention as a really deep supporter of my work is a man in his 80s named Henry Brecher. Henry has worked at The Ohio State University Center—I'm blocking the name of the center. It's the Byrd Center for Polar Research, and it's where Lonnie Thompson comes from. And Henry gave me a beautiful set of—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: [Inaudible.]

[Audio break.]

DIANE BURKO: Well, I first connected with Henry at the Byrd Polar Institute, maybe in '07 or '08, and he sent me a trove of images about Qori Kalis Glacier, which is this glacier in Peru that Lonnie Thompson has been researching for over 40 years. And Lonnie Thompson is an extremely internationally-known figure in the world of science, earth science, cryosphere, because he's the one who developed the process of making ice cores. And he has drilled ice cores that are 800,000 years old, that deep into the ice, and be able to study the reality of 800,000 years ago. So anyway, Henry used to go with teams to Peru, and he was a photogrammetry guy. It's the

technology of making images. And they would photograph these glaciers every single year from exactly the same spots. So he gave me pairs that went back 40 years. And I did a number of paintings on Qori Kalis Glacier, one of my first series. And I sent them immediately to Henry to thank him and say, "Henry, look. This is what I've done." And he wrote back this really very sweet note, and he said, "Oh, they're beautiful paintings, Diane, but really, the color is all off." [Laughs.] And I wrote back to him, and I said, "You ever hear of the word poetic license?" And that speaks to your point, okay? So, yeah, I'm basing it on his facts, but I'm making it into a painting. In the end, aesthetics trumps facts, for me.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. And that's sort of been your credo all along?

DIANE BURKO: All along.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. Describe the Flashe paint that you use, and I'm going to spell Flashe. F-L-A-S-H-E.

DIANE BURKO: F-L-A-S-H-E, yeah. It's—well, one of the joys of working with young studio artists, you know, students out of school, I've had a number of assistants from PAFA, some from the University of the Arts—is, you know, they're up on everything, and that's how I learned about Flashe. I think I learned about it from a young man named Ben Jones. We were talking about different paints, and he mentioned this paint, and he said, "It's really cool." And it comes in a jar, and what I loved about it, it gives you these very deep, rich tones, sort of like gouache, but it's much deeper. And it's plastic. If you use gouache, it's water soluble, and this isn't. And when I started doing a series that was about Landsat maps, a lot of them were on this rich, black surface, and you'd see the ice, you know, on it, or other images. And it just occurred to me, wow, I could use this Flashe as a ground, and then I can paint on top of it with oil, because it's, you know, oil on top of acrylic. And that would be really cool. So that's how I started using it. It was just, you know, hearing about it, trying it out, and liking it a great deal. And then I started using it in larger paintings, one that you know very well. So, it's just a way of, you know, finding another material that interested me.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Let's talk about your use of oil paint versus acrylic. How do you choose, and does one work better for certain images than the other?

DIANE BURKO: Very good. This is great. Well, I started out as an oil painter, and in the '70s, I think right out of graduate school, I was using turpentine, and it was very harsh. At some point, my fingers started getting infected. I mean, I got itchy, and, you know, skin was kind of feeling weird, and I realized that—and I didn't want to wear gloves. I hate gloves. I tried that, but it didn't work. So I said to myself, "Maybe I should switch materials." And, you know, materials do impact your image. And maybe this was part of my switching. I switched at the moment that I started painting blue and white paintings. I think I started—the first one was probably an oil painting. Bobby Burke was the art historian who has that painting. It was like a 50x50.

It was called *First Mountain*, and it was blue and white, and I think that is oil. But then I switched. I switched to acrylic, and I said to myself, "Ah, you know, all these whites are cool in acrylic, and blues." And the way I was painting then kind of went with the medium. And then I figured out, of course, how to make it work and make it gushy anyway. You know, I could make it look like—I'm a painter. I'm an artist, so it became much more natural to me. And for a long time, well, about three or four years, doing these blue and white paintings in the '70s, they were all acrylic. Then I had that, you know, wonderful trip with Jim Turrell, where I started taking my own photographs. And it was the Grand Canyon, and I went back to my studio, and again, I started painting in acrylic, and I didn't like the way they looked. They looked great when it's blue and white, but there were such rich, deep red and brown earth colors that I saw in the Grand Canyon, and I didn't like the way they look there. So I switched back to oil.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And colored pencil.

DIANE BURKO: Well, that was after. Yes. You're right. But going back to the oil, I think then it was a new product that I could use, and I no longer had that allergy, and so from then on, I went to oil. Now, yes. You bring up colored pencil because, indeed, it came from those same images that I took with Jim of Lake Powell and the Grand Canyon. And that was another material that I was using. You're right.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So—but getting back to the present, do you use both, or do you often choose one over the other?

DIANE BURKO: Well, now—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: In terms of your large paintings.

DIANE BURKO: Right, right, right. No, now I'm basically an oil painter. But a lot of the imagery that I started doing, you know, since I started *The Politics of Snow*, since '08 or '09, I've realized that, because there was so much snow in these paintings and because the snow is disappearing, it's almost metaphoric for me to leave the

canvas blank. So if you look at a lot of these paintings, especially the ones from '09, '10, '11, there's blank canvas, and the blank canvas stands in for snow.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Which reminds me, have you looked at the work of—often, at impressionists who dealt with the subject of snow in their work?

DIANE BURKO: Well, Monet's done some really cool snow paintings with those blue shadows. I know those very well. Anyone else you're thinking of?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yeah, I was thinking just of John Twachtman, American impressionist.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah. Yeah, I know those. Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And even some of the Bucks County impressionists.

DIANE BURKO: Bucks County is really who I'm thinking of. What's his name? He's done a lot of snow paintings. With an S. Oh. Some of Redfield's paintings are really cool. Yeah. Oh, I always perk up when I see snow [laughs]. Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And you know, so much of their investigation of snow was about the color of the shadows—

DIANE BURKO: Shadow.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —on the white snow.

DIANE BURKO: Sure.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And that is something—

DIANE BURKO: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Is that something you've been interested in, or not so much?

DIANE BURKO: Well, yeah, I mean, if you—I did a series of paintings on Antarctica that are relatively realistic 20x20s, and they explore that, because there's so much color in those snow cliffs that you kept passing when you were, you know, passing them by on your ship. Yeah, of course. I mean, it's not white. I mean, you know, it's—what is it they say? Eskimos have many words for snow.

[They laugh.]

DIANE BURKO: So yeah, the color is endless that you can find in the shadows.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Another medium that you've turned to is archival inkjet prints. Can you describe those for me?

DIANE BURKO: Medium. Okay, I guess that's a medium. Well, for me, it's the way I process photography. I did not come to photography as a professional photographer. So I'm not someone who ever grew up in a darkroom. I mean, I understand the concepts. My daughter was a photographer. She went to RISD, and, you know, we had a darkroom for her, an enlarger, and all that stuff. But I really didn't enter photography as a medium unto itself to make art with really until digital came in, although I must admit, I did have a 4x5 camera. I started out in film in around 2000, so I had real film. But as soon as digital came in, I was very happy, because that was a much more natural thing for me, because I'm not a techno girl. You know, I just shoot. And, you know, I shoot with a very good camera, you know, with a lot of pixels, so I can do what I need to do, and I like my images to be large, because my paintings are large and because that's the world that I like to inhabit. So digital printing is archival inkjet printing. I mean, that's the way it is. So that's what I've always done.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to add about your continuing *Elegy* series that you've been working on now for a few years, and you say you're continuing to work on it?

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, have we talked about that at all yet? I don't think we did, if we're in the 21st century—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: No, we haven't quite gotten there yet, I guess.

DIANE BURKO: So do you want me to—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Please.

DIANE BURKO: Okay. So, the *Elegy* series is basically the most recent iteration of this exploration of climate change. And again, you asked earlier, and this is wonderful, about materials. And I feel materials, you know, are always part of what an artist is involved with. New materials, whatever. And again, we've talked about the idea that serendipity is a part of my being. So here I am at Blick Art Store, and I'm just walking around, and I see a tube of paint in the acrylic section that has the image of cracked ice on it. And I'm thinking, "Wow, what's this?" You know, and it says it's called crackle. So I said, "All right, you know, this looks interesting. Maybe I'll see what that's about." So I bought myself a tube of this crackle, and took it home, and I squeezed it out on a little panel that already had black Flashe paint on it, like, you know, we had talked about. And it started cracking. And the more [laughs]—it was great. All of a sudden. And the thicker it was, the bigger the cracks, and the thinner it was, the tinier the cracks.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Almost, like, replicating what was happening with the glaciers.

DIANE BURKO: Exactly. I said, "Oh my God, this is so cool," but it was like, kind of yellow. So I said, "Oh, I don't like this. I'll have to mix some white Flashe into it." So I started mixing white flashe into it, and I started experimenting, and I really got into it. And I made many, many, many, many experiments. Around that time, Timothy Rub was coming over for a studio visit. Now, I think he had come before. He had come before I went to Antarctica in 2015. And he was coming to look at paintings—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Let's just say for the record, Timothy Rub is the current director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

DIANE BURKO: Correct. And on the suggestion of a wonderful collector friend of mine, Dr. Luther Brady, Timothy was coming by. And he came by the first time with Alice Beamesderfer, who is someone I've known and is so terribly important to the museum. And they were coming to look at paintings, because that's what Luther had suggested. And I kind of said, "You know, I have more photographs here right now than paintings, because I'm getting ready for this expedition, and I'm not really in my painting mode." I mean, I knew that, you know, for me to make serious paintings, I need a lot of time. And I had just come back from Greenland in 2014, and I was going in August. They came in November, and I'm on my way in January to go to Antarctica. So we talked, and he saw the photographs and everything, and he said, "You know, I'll come back." So he came back again in 2015, maybe in July, and I had these little studies. And he loved them. He said, "Wow, these are really fascinating." And I had some paintings that I had done from Patagonia as well.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: The studies were in what medium?

DIANE BURKO: They were these crackle studies on 10x10 panels that were—the grounds were all either blue or black Flashe paint. And we talked about paintings. I had been starting some paintings. We talked about those as well, but it was clear to me that he really was much more excited over these studies. And he said to me, "But they're so small. Can't you make them large?" And I said, "Well, I can try." So he leaves, and of course, you know, when the director of a museum suggests something to you, you take it a little more seriously [laughs]. So I started making panels that were 20x20, and I mixed up more of these mixtures and played around with them. And then it occurred to me that it didn't matter how big the surface was, if it was 20x20, 30x30, whatever. The module of this material was not going to get too much bigger, no matter how thick I made it. So I was a bit in a quandary. What do I do? And then I said, "Oh, you know, I am a photographer." And I thought about it, and I said, "Well, I could take a picture of this, and I could blow it up and then make it into a print."

And my friend Judy Gelles was coming over, and she's my photographer guru. I teach her about painting, she teaches me about photography. So I said, "Judy, I don't think I have the right lens to do this." And she said, "Well, why would you want to? You should just scan it." And I said, "Oh my God, of course, that's brilliant. I'll scan it." Then maybe a week or two later, a former assistant came by, who is a good friend of mine now, Anna Tas, a wonderful photographer in her own right, and I'm telling her what I'm going to do, that I'm going to scan them. And she goes, "Well, Diane," she's British, "you do know that the Philadelphia Athenaeum has a huge, major scanner?" I go, "No." So I find out that they have a 4-foot by 6-foot scanner. Anyone in the public can use it for $100 a shot. So I went with my milk cartons and my little boxes of 10x10s, made an appointment, and I used their scanner. And they scanned these images at 500 DPI, so I could then take them back to my computer; I had the files, and I could blow them up. So I cropped and I changed, and I, you know, blew them up, and—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And when you blow them up, how—

DIANE BURKO: Everything gets bigger.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —what kind of paper—no, and what kind of paper do you print them on?

DIANE BURKO: Well, the same paper I've always printed on. It's a watercolor paper, Canson white watercolor paper, because it's a fine art paper. And these things were really fantastically seductive. I mean, they were really interesting. And then, you know, like I say, I have a lot of friends that come to the studio. I love

exchanging ideas with artists, and another young artist came by, Kelsey Halliday Johnson, photographer and a curator. And she was excited over the series. And I said to Kelsey, "You know, I'm not sure how to present them," because up until then, my 40x60 archival inkjet prints were mounted on dye bond, without a glass, because I don't like glass. You know, I like the surface to be right up there in front of you, so it's more of a—I don't know—immediate, more like a painting.

And I said, "I don't know if I should do those that way." And she said, "Wow." She was very excited, also, about this work. And she said, "Well, you're creating"—oh, and by the way, I didn't mention, these all look like aerial views of glaciers. And I came up with the idea of calling them elegies. Now, what is an elegy? Well, an elegy is a word that refers to a poem or a lament for the dead. And that's what I was thinking about. I was thinking about the disappearance of these glaciers. So going back to fact and research, I compiled a list of glaciers that are dying, receding, all over the world, and I decided that I would name each one of these 30x30 images after a glacier or an area, like the Maldives, that's under great threat and duress to disappear. So I was telling Kelsey all that, and she said, "Well, so you're creating a fiction." I said, "Absolutely. It's the fictional image. You don't know what it is, but it's really a metaphor." And she says, "Well then, I think you should put them under glass because that contributes to the fiction of their being a photograph, but they're not really photographs." And I liked that idea, so indeed, I took her up on it, and I put these under glass.

So they're 30x30 images, though four of those were in the Cindy Lisica show in Houston in April, and they created a lot of attention and stir. So that's basically—that's the *Elegy* series. And to say just one more thing about it, is that Timothy came back, [laughs] and he saw those, because this goes on, and he loved them. And then he said, "So, how come they're not in your paintings yet?" And I said, "Because I haven't figured out how to do that yet." And that was the truth. I was, you know, still developing my paintings, working more on this stuff. And that was, let's see—2015—so I haven't seen him for about eight months now. And now I have paintings. So that's what I'm so excited about. I have finally figured out a way, and I also found another material where the cracks are somewhat larger, and then I figured out, with Richard's help, how can I get this plaster-like material to not crack or crumble, and he suggested adding white glue, Elmer's glue, to it. And that gives it a consistency that adheres to the surface. So again, it's been a lot of experimenting to this, you know. I've become more of a scientist [laughs] in that way, and I—you know, and now I'm having a ball, because I'm playing with all these different materials, and the work is becoming abstract, which is phenomenal.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: I'd like to talk more about the critical reception of your work over the years. You have had a very busy exhibition schedule right from the start of your career: galleries, art centers, museums, colleges, convention centers, ambassadors' residences. Describe your artistic practice or outlook vis-a-vis these various venues.

DIANE BURKO: Well, I have been very fortunate. I've been blessed with meeting people, being at the right place at the right time, and also, I was very fortunate very early in my career to make an alliance and a relationship with Marian Locks. And that happened right out of graduate school, and I think we talked about Neva Hanson and her friend Betty before. So I started with Marian. She was extremely supportive and really nurtured my career from the beginning in every way possible: paying for frames, driving with me for an NEA drawing competition; I had to bring drawings down; we drove together to D.C.; taking work back from Stefanotti's when he went out of business. I mean, myriad things that we did together all in support of my growing career. Now, you're asking about critical...

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Since you have exhibited in so many different types of venues—

DIANE BURKO: Right, right, right. How did that happen?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Not so much how did that happen, but did your practice or your vision change in any way when you were creating work for specific shows for specific venues?

DIANE BURKO: No, no, no. You asked me that earlier in another way.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: But let me restate it.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Knowing that your work is going to a college art gallery, versus a commercial gallery, is there any—

DIANE BURKO: No.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: No change in your practice? Okay.

DIANE BURKO: No, no, because that question assumes that the work comes after you know where it's going.

And my work comes before, and then it goes. And that is really true now, more than ever before, because I was with the Locks Gallery for 36 years, and in 2012, I left the Locks gallery and am relatively independent at this point. So no longer was I relying on having a show every two years, which you do have when you're with a gallery, every two to three years, depending on your production. So here I am; I'm producing work; I don't know where it's going. And especially now, I'm having this major show at the Walton Art Center. The curator, Andrea Packard, has picked the show over the summer. There was one painting left, which she decided upon in September, my most recent painting that will be in the show. I'm still painting. I got eight new paintings down there, the most abstract ones. I have no idea where they're going. So to answer your question, the work does not change depending upon where it's going to go. However, a curator will pick different types of work, depending who they are and what their interests are, and I just provide the work. And a case in point would be a show that I had this spring with Paula Winokur. It was at Keane University, and Paula is a wonderful ceramic artist whose work is in porcelain, and it's about climate change. It's about icebergs. And I first gave her images of icebergs that I collected from Iceland way back in '02, and she used them.

And she's been, you know, using my images, but going to Greenland, doing her own stuff, of course, as well. And she had this acquaintance who was the director of the gallery, who very much wanted to show her three-dimensional works that are installation pieces. They sit on the floor. Some of them are on the walls, but most of them are standing sculptural forms. And he said to her, "We got to put something on the walls. I don't know what to do." And she immediately said, "Oh, Diane Burko, she's my friend, and we've always wanted to show together." Well, he came. He called me, and I said, "Great. I have paintings." This is 2016, I had—2015 is when he first called me. I said, "Come over." He said, "Well, quite frankly, I don't want to show your paintings. I want to show your photographs. I like your photographs, and I think they'd look good with Paula's stuff." And I tried to convince him not to, because I had the paintings. I have the photographs, but they're not printed. And I said, "You know, that costs money. I mean, a 40x60 on dye bond is—you know, it's not a few pennies." Well, he gave me a stipend. He wanted prints. So we looked together; we took things from this series I talked about, the *Deep Time* series of 40x60s; I had some other 30x30s, and he put together a great show. So that's an example of your saying, "How does the work fit the venue?" It can, but I didn't make that work for his venue.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Got you. So then you've never actually created any installation pieces for a specific venue? I just want to be clear about that. Except for the Marriott commission.

DIANE BURKO: Well, yeah. Now, well, I'm trying to think about that. I did. When I had the Zimmerli show, I think I had the idea for a grouping of photographs that were, I think, 20 photographs, and they were each 20x20 inches. And I proposed those to the curator, Donna Gustafson, at the Zimmerli art museum. This was a show in 2013. And at that point, I hadn't printed them, okay? But I had the concept. They, being a museum, of course, took care of the cost of the printing. And she was excited, because she literally had a wall that they could be on, and they were on a freestanding wall, so it was five across and four down. And they were all images from Antarctica looking down. And it's a very cool piece. She tried to get me to give it to the museum [laughs], and I tried to get her to find a donor to purchase it. But so there's an example where, yes, indeed, I did. And I'm not against doing that. I would love the opportunity to have a museum say, "Okay, we're giving you a show in four years. This is the space." I would love to work with a curator. I have ideas of pasting stuff on a wall, you know, not even framed. I have ideas of putting maps in an installation. I have a million ideas of putting an archival photograph of Scott, you know, in the North Pole. I mean, I would love to be able to integrate a video piece with, you know, archival images plus my paintings, plus my photo—yeah. Find me a venue, Cynthia.

[They laugh.]

CYNTHIA VELORIC: I'll work on it.

DIANE BURKO: Thank you.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: What is your perception of the Philadelphia gallery scene, sales, and collectors in the time that you've been here, which is quite a few decades now?

DIANE BURKO: Oh, yeah. Big time. Right. Well, as we know, when I started out with Marian Locks in the '70s, the gallery scene was very small. There was Hope Makler; there was Marian Locks; there was Helen Drutt. Those are the only ones I can think of. Do you remember any others?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Well, the Mangel Gallery.

DIANE BURKO: Oh, and the Mangel Gallery. Right. That was about it. So it certainly has burgeoned and grown since then. And there was also Diane Van Der Lip. She had a gallery, I remember Marion was a friend of hers. Diane then went off to California and did her thing. So the gallery scene has definitely grown in Philadelphia. Co-op galleries have grown. Vox Populi is a great example of one that's still very much thriving. Fabric Workshop has become much more important. I mean, I think Philadelphia has a thriving art scene now. And some people call it the Little Apple. There are lots of New York artists that move here because real estate is still very

attractive. As a matter of fact, that's one of the reasons I stayed. I could not have 5,600 square feet in Manhattan for the price I have it in Philly. I couldn't afford it in Manhattan.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So what has your perception been about Philadelphia collectors? One might have said a couple decades ago that there were no collectors in Philadelphia for contemporary art.

DIANE BURKO: That's not true, because if you think of the ICA and A.C. Wolgin and Relice Lefton and all those women from the '60s, the Institute of Contemporary Art was really formulated by contemporary collectors. Now, let me clarify. Even though I said that there were these collectors that started the ICA, they weren't collecting Philadelphia artists. They were going to New York because New York was the center of the art scene. And I think it still is, but so is L.A., so is Germany, so is China, so is Berlin—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —London.

DIANE BURKO: —there are a lot of centers at this point in time. So the collectors were here, but I don't think they were that supportive of the Philly scene, although I think, again, you have to give great credit to someone like Marian Locks, who developed a lot of young collectors, who collected art. Kathy Putnam, a person I just spoke to, she's now at PAFA becoming a painter. She is a painter, but she's pursuing her degree in it. They were young collectors that Marian met years and years ago, because I remember they bought a Bellagio painting that they put in their bedroom. I remember they were telling me that. And they—you know, they moved on to buy, you know, more important people than me. So there are local people that do collect. Now, the other thing that's happened, and again, the Locks Gallery, I think, is in the forefront of this, is they're bringing—they're not just showing Philadelphia artists. They're showing New York artists, California artists. So that brings the Philadelphia collector in, again, not to necessarily buy Philadelphia artists, but certainly, you look at someone like Tom Chimes or Rohrer These are people that have been collected on a high level.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay.

DIANE BURKO: Rohrer [Warren]. Thinking of Luther Brady in particular, who I just visited yesterday. He's a man in his early '90s. Luther has been a stalwart collector of Philadelphia artists and New York artists and California artists. Ninety pieces of his are going to the Philadelphia museum. This is a man who has a number of homes with collections everywhere, and he is an incredibly serious collector. But that doesn't mean he doesn't collect Diane Burko or Liz Osborne, or Sam Maitin , even, was a close friend of his. Murray Dessner is someone that he collected. But he also collected Diebenkorn, De Kooning, [laughs] et cetera, et cetera.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: You just told me about your long relationship with Marian Locks gallery. Would you care to say why you no longer are with them?

DIANE BURKO: Well, nothing negative. Marian ran the gallery until about 1990, and it was moved to where it is now, to Washington Square. It's an incredibly beautiful space. I had the first show on the second-floor space in 1990. It was my Giverny show, and I've done wonderful things with Sue Yen Locks, who is her daughter-in-law. And what can I say? I think I wanted something more or something different from the relationship that Sue Yen was able or willing to give at the time. She was an incredible, a wonderful business woman, and really sold my work beautifully. No complaints. I just wanted to stretch out, go cross country, find other venues, things like that, and I don't think she was that interested or encouraging for me to do that. But I also wanted to stick with climate change, although we never really discussed that as an issue, but I had a sense that, after a while, she'd want to see different kinds of work because she's a business woman. She's selling stuff. And I've kind of moved out of making stuff to sell, although, believe me, I love people to own my work. But other things started taking over my priorities.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So you started working with the Lew Allen Gallery in 2012. Tell me about them and where they're located.

DIANE BURKO: They're located in Santa Fe. They are in what they call the Railyard, which is this very contemporary area that's been resurrected, I should say, I guess. It's right across street from SITE Santa Fe. They're two wonderful men, friends of Luther Brady, and I've had two exhibitions there, a major painting show and a major photography show. And I'm also recently associated with the Cindy Lisica Gallery in Houston. Cindy's a young woman with great ambition and energy, and we just hit it off. I'm really very happy to be with her. But, you know, what you mentioned earlier, what's ironic about having left Locks in 2012, so what is this? This is four years later. I've had six solo shows and been in 14 group shows since then, so that's really wild; isn't it?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yeah.

DIANE BURKO: And again, a lot of them have come to me. I mean, it's—you know, it's not like I'm knocking on doors. I'm too old to knock on doors, quite frankly, and you know, you don't do that anymore. But opportunities

have just arisen, and I've taken advantage of the ones that [laughs] are attractive. And of course, the most important one now is going to be this show that's coming in May of 2017 through September.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —at the Walton Art Center—

DIANE BURKO: Walton Art Center.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —in Fayetteville, Arkansas?

DIANE BURKO: Fayetteville, Arkansas, which is near Bentonville, Arkansas, which is where Crystal Bridges is.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Is there any connection between the Walton Art Center and Crystal Bridges?

DIANE BURKO: Well, it's the same family, obviously.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Right.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, yeah. And I know that they're arranging to have the curators, of course, come see my exhibition, so we shall see [laughs] how much of a connection there will be.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yes.

DIANE BURKO: But I will also say, there's programming under way now at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville to work with me. I'm going to give a major lecture there. I'm going to work with the students; I'm going to do crits. All sorts of stuff is happening, and that is why they extended the show through September 30th, because their semester is really over just when my show opens. But it will be very much in session in the month of September. So that's under way. Another thing I should mention is the reason Andrea Packard, I think, picked this show, aside from liking me and the work and all that, but it coincides with something called Artosphere, which is some big festival that they have out there that's all about nature. And it happens in May and June, so I'm the visual component of this, you know, huge, multimedia performance-type event that's going to be going on.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Very exciting.

DIANE BURKO: It is.

[END OF burko16_2of2_sd_track01.]

CYNTHIA VELORIC: In 2011—well, actually, we're going to talk more about your earlier political activities and directions, both earlier in your life and continuing up to the present.

DIANE BURKO: Okay. Okay.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So in 2011, you received the lifetime achievement award from the Women's Caucus for Art at the College Art Association. Congratulations.

DIANE BURKO: Thank you.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: In her presentation speech, the famous art historian, Mary Garrard, said she first knew you as a, and I quote, feminist activist, end quote, when you both helped found the Women's Caucus for Art in 1972. Did you and do you accept that title?

DIANE BURKO: Absolutely. Why not?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Talk about the feminist art movement in the 1970s.

DIANE BURKO: Well, the 70s, way back last century [laughs], was a time of ferment in the country, you could say, you know. It was—it came out of the antiwar movement, and the women's movement, you know, burgeoned, not for the first time, but in the '70s. And you had consciousness raising groups, which I have to tell you I never was in, but you had Betty Friedan and, you know, the whole list of great writers, Gloria Steinem; everyone was very active, and the feminist movement was very strong. But I'm an artist, so in terms of the art movement, that started happening as well. Woman—there was Women's House, you know, in L.A. with Miriam Schapiro and Judy Chicago. All this stuff was happening in the early-'70s, late-'60s. In 1972, I attended my first College Art Association meeting in San Francisco. I was in my early 20s. I just started teaching college, and at that meeting, I actually—Louise Nevelson spoke, oh my God; I was thrilled. I went up and spoke to her, and she kissed my cheek; I thought I'd never wash my face again. I was just very, very, you know—exciting for a young woman to see all the activity that was going on, and then I went to a meeting in a very small room, meeting

room. I don't know. They advertised it, and I followed, not knowing where I was—what I was doing, and it was really a bunch of art historians, and they were mad, mad as hell. Why? Because they were meeting to discuss the fact that there were no women on the board of the College Art Association at that time.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And how long had the association been in existence, about?

DIANE BURKO: Oh, at least since the early 1900s. And this is, you know, 1972. Oh yeah, it's a very old—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: CAA?

DIANE BURKO: Oh yeah, it's a very old organization; don't you think? 1920?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: I had no idea when it was founded.

DIANE BURKO: I will look it up [1911]. I actually have a book of the history of the CAA upstairs. I will look it up for you. So anyway, that was their criteria; that was their gripe, and in that room was Ann Sutherland Harris, Mary Garrard, Norma Broude, and lots of other people, but somehow I connected with them, and that was '72. And I really got fired up. I had also heard there was a big conference at the Corcoran, which I missed going to. And I came back to Philadelphia with an idea that something needed to be done. And somehow I took it upon myself to do it, and that was the beginning of my FOCUS effort, F-O-C-U-S: Philadelphia Focuses on Women in the Visual Arts.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Let's take a step back just one second. Talk about the founding of the Women's Caucus for Art in Philadelphia prior to FOCUS. I believe it was the year prior.

DIANE BURKO: Do you have that down as a fact?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yes.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, '73, that would make sense, yes. Well, the way—so at that meeting, these women and myself formed the Women's Caucus for Art, and it was an activist organization to try to get the CAA to, you know, wake up and smell the coffee, and that was the beginning, and that's why I came back with that fervor, wanting to do something in Philadelphia about women in the visual arts. And so began my effort in '72 through '73, which came to fruition in '74. Now, mind you, it was not just my effort; it was the effort of many, many wonderful women, who are still active in the arts today, people like Penny Bach, who runs the Association of Public Art; Judith Stein who just wrote a major book on Dick Bellamy; Judith Brodsky, who's a force of nature who's done so many things like running ArtTable, being the head of the CAA, the head of the board of NIFA. There was about 20 of us. Tara Robinson, who you might remember, was in the education department of PMA, as was Thora Jacobson, who ran Fleisher Art Memorial for many, many years.

So we were all young, and we were sort of cutting our teeth on this project. Freida Fehrenbacher was another wonderful, wonderful force who passed away early, professor at Moore College of Art. Janet Kaplan also, who was from Moore College of Art. We got together; we agreed upon this, and actually, what happened is I had a meeting at my house, and somehow, some reporter reported in the paper, and a lot of people showed up—oh no, they showed up to the museum meeting. The meeting I had in my house, I think I sent out emails. Do you know Anne D'Harnoncourt was there? Anne was there. I'm trying to think who else, people who didn't then become the core steering committee, but they came to that meeting. Helen Drutt was there. I mean, we have papers actually. Ruth Fine, bless her soul, has organized a summary book that—and all the archives are at the museum. And as a matter of fact Bob Cozzolino went to those archives when he was doing his article for the catalogue of *The Female Gaze*—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: *The Female Gaze*.

DIANE BURKO: —in celebration of Lee Alter's donation of her collection. There's a chapter on FOCUS in that wonderful book. So he referred to those archives. So as I was saying, we met once a week, practically, for almost a year at Moore College of Art in that library. Everyone was the head of the—we were the steering committee, so there was a social thing: there was a finance committee; there was a PR committee; I mean, you name it, we did it. And we ended up in the black; we raised $93,000 in 1973 for this event. We got the whole city focused on women in the visual arts, past and present. The academy had a show called *Up from the Basement*, meaning they brought [laughs] their collection—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —literally.

DIANE BURKO: Fleischer had a great show by Cindy Nemser. Cindy Nemser was a very active feminist writer in New York and a wonderful advisor to me when I was first getting my ideas in my head, wrapped around this—I met her originally at that 1972 conference. And there was a national exhibition, which garnered great national

attention.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Where was that held?

DIANE BURKO: That was held at the civic center, and that, in itself, was a wonderful PR extravaganza that happened to us because the director of the civic center was stupid enough, at the last minute, to take out the Judith Bernstein piece because he felt it was too risqué, pornographic. Judith Bernstein, you know, is an extremely famous artist today, and what it was, it was a picture of a screw, a hairy screw. And last minute, he censored it, and it caused a raging brouhaha throughout the city. We were wearing buttons saying, "Where's Bernstein?" This event, this series of events, was covered in *The New York Times*, in *Art in America*, in *The Wall Street Journal*, in *Art News*, of course in our papers, you know, *The Bulletin* and *The Inquirer*. So that show was a juried show. I hope I can remember everyone who was in the jury.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: You're talking about the national show at the civic center.

DIANE BURKO: The national show, yes. Adelyn Breeskin, Anne D'Harnoncourt, Cindy Nemser, Lila Katzen, who was a sculptor; and Marcia Tucker. Those five women. It's pretty good, huh?

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yeah, they all went on to achieve—

DIANE BURKO: Major—they were. Well, Adeline Breeskin, already, was established, so was Anne. But you know Marcia Tucker. So that was that show. But there were shows all over the city; there were panels all over the city; there were poetry readings; there were film festivals. We did take over about three months, so much so that there was a guy who went to the human relations board, I think. I'm not sure of what city agency it was, but he tried to sue me because—his name was Harry Niblock, and his reason to sue is that I prevented him from earning a living in June, July, and August.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: How?

DIANE BURKO: Because only women were being shown. Did we ever sue when men had been shown forever?

[They laugh.]

DIANE BURKO: It was—you know, obviously, he didn't get very far, but it was funny.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So judging from your enthusiasm, I take it you were very satisfied with the outcome of FOCUS.

DIANE BURKO: Oh yes, we were bowled over; we couldn't believe how—I mean, but it really showed. It was sort of like the same kind of plotting poor Hillary Clinton has been doing, but ours paid off.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Right.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Now since that grand event, is it your opinion that women artists in Philadelphia have done better in terms of visibility and sales and being collected by museums?

DIANE BURKO: Well, things like this are never equated that, you know, that systematically. It's like, it's not one for one. But certainly, awareness was raised, just like, you know, awareness gets raised in the Civil Rights Movement or in any kind of a human rights movement. This is what it basically was. I think, in Philadelphia, we're particularly lucky. We have a lot of women who are in positions of power, not artists, just, but we had Anne D'Harnoncourt running our museum. I mean, it doesn't get much better than that.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Right.

DIANE BURKO: You had Hope Makler; you had Marian Locks; you had Helen Drutt. Right there in the '70s, you had three—you know, these ladies who were really incredibly strong and powerful.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And even now, we have a woman CEO of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

DIANE BURKO: That's right, Gail Harrity, yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So I know that, statistically speaking, more women artists have been hired by the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority in their 1 Percent for Art program; the numbers have gone up significantly since the '70s.

DIANE BURKO: Oh, that's wonderful. That's a good statistic to know, great.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So I think that—

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: I think that there is a legacy left from FOCUS, and also the fact that, recently, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts received the Linda Alter collection—

DIANE BURKO: Right.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —of over 500 women artist artworks.

DIANE BURKO: Yes.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And the fact that they made—that they promoted and accepted that wonderful gift has made them, certainly, a leader in collecting women's art, and it has now, because of that collection, PAFA, in some ways, has become a locus for the study of women's art in the later 20th and early 21st century.

DIANE BURKO: Absolutely. And I think what was really wonderful about that agreement that came about between Lee Alter and David Brigham, and also Bob Cozzolino, I know, was instrumental in having that happen, was that Lee Alter is an incredible human being. She's an artist in her own right; she was a great collector with a great eye, but she also had vision. She didn't just give this collection to them, you know. There are strings attached, and the strings are, they're agreeing to make sure that that collection is integrated into the exhibitions that they show in the future. So it isn't like, oh, you must show all of my work X amount of times in the next 50 years, but rather, you must integrate the body of the collection into whatever you do. And I've watched; they have done that already. Really, it's admirable, you know, the way she set up the agreement and arrangement and how it's being manifest.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Going back to the College Art Association, what has your involvement been over 40 or so years?

DIANE BURKO: [Laughs.] Well, it started in 1972. I have been very fortunate to have my whole academic career in an institution that, on some level, you know, is not seen as being high end; it's a community college. But what was so fortunate about it, certainly with the students I taught and the curriculum and the program I developed, but also the fact that we had great perks and because we had a union. And the perk that I coveted was that we could go to one meeting—academic meeting a year; it was paid for; the registration was paid for; if, indeed, one presented a paper or was on the board, you got a per diem as well, and other, you know, benefits. And I was an active member of the College Art Association. So indeed, I was on the board of the College Art Association; that was one of my activities, but—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: How did you get on the board?

DIANE BURKO: I guess I was nominated, and then I was voted in. You know, that's how it's done. But a number of years ago, someone approached me; I think it was Ferris Olin. They—the Women's Caucus for Art started out of this meeting in California, but it became its own entity. It was not really a College Art Association committee. It became the Women's Caucus for Art. It was an independent body; events started having local chapters and growing, and it continues to grow. It's affiliated now with the women—with the College Art Association. There are affiliated societies.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: As a footnote, I believe the Women's Caucus for Art in Philadelphia was the first local chapter founded.

DIANE BURKO: It was, absolutely. You're absolutely correct.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay.

DIANE BURKO: However, part of the College Art Association is a group called the Committee for Women in the Arts, CWA. And that committee was founded many years ago, and for a while, it functioned, then it didn't function. I was called in to take it over and help it, and I did that, and I brought in another person. I didn't want to do it alone, I brought in this woman named Frima Fox Hofrichter. Do you know her? She's an art historian. She actually went to my public school, PS205, in Brooklyn. And it was really funny; one day I was on a panel, and I got off the panel, and she came up to me, and she said, "I know you from the third grade" [laughs].

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Unbelievable.

DIANE BURKO: I know! I couldn't believe it. I said, "What?" And I was a year older than her, so she remembers

my walking into Mrs. Levine's class because I was Mrs. Levine's pet, she said, and talking to her, even though I no longer was in the third grade. So anyway, her and I became friends, and we co-chaired the Committee on Women in the Arts. And one of my goals was to make sure that there was an award given that had to do with feminism when we give all the awards, you know, at the convocation; there's an award for best teaching award, lifetime achievement, body of work award, best book award—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —best book.

DIANE BURKO: —da, da, da, da, da. And we created and championed and got through an award for—it's a distinguished women in the arts award or something like that, which is really about leadership in art history or whatever, in terms of women's issues. So that was a big effort that I was involved with for a number of years. And of course, the most important thing in any organization, and I did this in teaching at community, is bringing in new blood, and I was very active with a little—with some help, I must say, from my friend Joyce Kozloff, who knew a lot of younger artists and activist artists, and we sort of recruited them into this committee, and it's a thriving, wonderful committee now, I'm very happy to say. Very active.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Great. So how has the art world changed in your lifetime, other than the introduction of—

DIANE BURKO: —money?

[They laugh.]

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yeah, let's start there.

DIANE BURKO: Well, that's the biggest change. I mean, you know, when I started out, art—you know, there was still a lot of idealism. I mean, I even had teachers who said, "Don't think about galleries, just make your work." Well, of course you have to think about where your work's going to go and how it's going to be sold, but now, you know, the commodification—art is style; art is fashion; art is no longer, you know—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —about ideals.

DIANE BURKO: It's popular culture, yeah; it's popular culture. But on the other hand, there's a lot of good stuff going on; images are all over the place; that's a good thing. I think people become more sensitive to beauty. But they could also get more immured of ugliness. I mean, it, you know—it goes both ways, like with everything.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Do you feel art has become more political over the years or less so?

DIANE BURKO: Oh, I think there's more avenues for it to be political, for sure; there's a lot more political art today than ever. But you know, Hans Haacke was around in the '60s in '70s; there've been political artists way before. There was *Guernica*, you know, I mean. Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Well, actually, I was just thinking of the exhibit that's up right now at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts called *World War I and American Art*.

DIANE BURKO: Oh my gosh, yeah. And the antiwar part of that, yeah, absolutely.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So we know it's been around, but it seems that there are more avenues—

DIANE BURKO: Totally.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: —to display.

DIANE BURKO: Well, there's more public art than ever before. There's more installation art than ever before, and you have museums very aware of developing audiences; they don't want to be like, you know, orchestras where they—if they can't develop a new audience for classical music, they're done for. So museums have been very, very smart in balancing the kind of shows they have. Look at MoMA. Sometimes it's like a circus there. But yet it still has great Cézannes and other things, and I think it's the mix of popular culture with high culture that has to exist because they're both valuable. I love television; I mean, television today is great. Pop culture is fine; it's valuable; it's communicating.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Would you say the biggest revolution in the art world has been the advent of technology and its applications to art?

DIANE BURKO: I think, in terms of art making—

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yes.

DIANE BURKO: —yeah. Absolutely. I mean, the fact that you can make images as big as we can now, the fact that you have art on billboards, yeah, technology is—you know, art and technology are the same thing. But think of the other—you know, going back to the money issue, look at the auction houses. Look how big that business is. You know, that's amazing.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Right.

DIANE BURKO: One thing that's amazing is, you know, in—museums now have their whole collection accessible online. I mean, that's amazing, think about that. So you can look on a screen, of course we all know it's not the same as seeing a real painting or a piece of sculpture, but still to have that accessibility, anyone can look at the collection of the Museum of Modern Art or at the Met.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And to further multiply that, you have people taking pictures on their cameras in museums and then sending it out to the world.

DIANE BURKO: Instagram, exactly, exactly.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So it's exponential, the degree of visibility today.

DIANE BURKO: Totally, totally, absolutely.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Okay. What's next for you in terms of your art making?

DIANE BURKO: Continuing.

[They laugh.]

DIANE BURKO: You know, I like to be surprised in my studio, and the work that I'm doing now is surprising me. Working with these materials in my paintings and pushing that idea and seeing where it goes and actually seeing how they're becoming more abstract is really fun. Ironically you know, years ago, even before I went to Penn, I was an abstract artist. So it's funny how full circle things are going. But I am going—you asked about trips, and yes, it's true; my polar explorations sort of stopped for a while, so that I could just be in my studio and make art, but Richard and I are planning a major trip, starting on January 31, 2017. We arrive in Auckland, New Zealand on the 2nd of February, and we will be spending a month in North Island and South Island. Then we're going to Tasmania, which has a very important museum called the Museum of the Old and the New. It's a really, very hip place; we can't wait to see it, and it's in Hobart, and also in Hobart is a Tasmanian art school, and I'll be doing some programming stuff with the students there.

Oh, and I'm also going to be talking in Wellington at the Victoria University to a—some kind of forum called Art and Society. And then they wrote to me and said, "Guess what? The international cryosphere conference is happening at the same time." Go figure. You know cryosphere means the study of ice. So she forwarded my information to the director; now he's in touch with me. Actually, I just wrote to him yesterday about the Christchurch earthquake. So I'll probably be working with them and doing something in their program as well. Then from Tasmania, we're off to Australia, and of course we're going to see the Great Barrier Reef, so you know how that relates, of course, to climate change. I also should mention I'll be climbing—flying over some glaciers in New Zealand. You can't walk on them anymore, because they're melting so badly. So in a way, this is a trip that I've always wanted to take, because New Zealand is a country with incredible landscape, and I've always been a landscape artist. But I'm sure it's going to open up new vistas, new images. So I don't know where—what the work will look like when I get back, but I'm certainly following the same instincts. We're hiring planes where we can or helicopters when we can. We're driving to edges of cliffs, as we always do. And I'm going to capture as much as I can on film, video as well. And we'll see where it leads to.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Speaking of you as an international figure—right. Speaking of you as an international figure in the art world, you recently attended a reception at the ambassador's home in Helsinki, Finland.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Just, you know, briefly tell me about how your work ended up in Finland and how you connected with the State Department.

DIANE BURKO: Thank you. Well, the State Department connected with me [laughs]. I have been involved for over 40 years with a program called Arts in the Embassies, Arts in Embassies program. And it's a wonderful State Department program, which takes the art of American artists and places them in embassies throughout the world. They don't buy the art; they borrow the art, but they do it in a very professional manner. They'd come pick it up; they crate it; they place it, and then they bring it back when the ambassador's, you know, stay is over. They have a—I guess a group of artists. They—you know, they approach you and ask you if you're

interested, and they have a, you know, a huge image bank of stuff to show the ambassadors, and they say, "What would you like?" and they work—you know, they have cultural curators, I guess, that work with the different embassies to help them decide. So I've been—you know, I've been—I was even in Iran. I had my work in Tehran in the '70s, go figure.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Wow.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah, before the coup.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Before the Ayatollah.

DIANE BURKO: Before the coup.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Yeah.

DIANE BURKO: So anyway, my work's been everywhere, and they print catalogues usually, so that's very nice, and it's been a wonderful thing to do, you know. Why not, right? It's a service.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Can you think of any other places besides Helsinki and Tehran?

DIANE BURKO: Oh yeah, it's all on—it's on the website: Russia, Africa, Iceland. Actually, in Iceland, it was funny. I was with a student group in Iceland, and I arranged to go visit the embassy, because I knew my work was there, so that was fun. It was funny; I remember when the Iceland embassy called me, I said, "Oh, this is great because I'm doing work on Iceland, and I'd love you to have it," and the guy said, "No, no, you don't understand. We want your work about America, not about Iceland." [Laughs.] So they took a Wissahickon piece, as a matter of fact. So that was Iceland. So you know, it's been Spain, I—you know, I can't remember what cities. So anyway, this piece was, I knew, in Finland. And I got an email, probably in April, inviting me to visit the embassy for a reception in my honor at the end of May, and I was—it was like really out of the blue.

You know, I mean, we weren't thinking of going to Helsinki, but this was too good to refuse, and what it was, and I did not know this, aside from the Arts and Embassies program, there's a program called the Artist Exchange program out of the State Department. And that is a program where they invite an artist who happens to be in the embassy to participate in a series of programs with cultural institutions in that city. So I was that artist. The whole show, thanks to Ambassador Charles Adams and his wife, was about the Arctic, and it made a lot of sense because, at this point in time, America was the head of the Arctic Council. And Norway, of course, is an active member. And I mean—well, not Norway, I mean Finland, you know, the whole Scandinavian group, but Finland was inactive. Finland was going to be the next president of the Arctic Council, so it was really very well thought through, and they picked a major painting of mine; it was like the star of the whole room, and we were there. We arrived on Saturday, then the—and you know, they paid for your flight, not for Richard's, but you know, we coordinated it, so they paid for my flight and the hotel room and a per diem, et cetera, et cetera. It was fantastic. I met curators from all over the city, all the major museums. I spoke to student groups; I spoke at the embassy about climate change, and then of course, we were so close, we went to St. Petersburg and the Hermitage.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Do you remember the name of your painting that's in the ambassador's residence?

DIANE BURKO: Yes, indeed, and it was a perfect painting for that topic. It was called *Arctic Cyclone: August 2012 after NASA*. Many of my images still come from the internet. NASA has a wonderful earth watch site that I'm always looking at, and they captured a cyclone that was circling over the North Pole, and therefore, it was [laughs], you know, a perfect kind of a painting. And what was really special about it is that I started it in 2012; I still remember this, in December. I like to always start something before I go away. And then I went to Antarctica in January 2013, and then I came back and I finished it, and it really became a much better painting. And it was a pretty large painting, 60x84, which is my usual large-size painting. I do bigger ones, but 60x84 is my measurement of choice, and that was the painting that was there, so it was perfect. And it actually—you could Svalbard sort of in the painting. I knew sort of where it was, yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: That's funny, you used the word "a cyclone" and the idea of circling and rotating.

DIANE BURKO: Yeah.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: And I'm thinking of you as a sort of artist cyclone.

[They laugh.]

DIANE BURKO: Marian used to say that about me. She said, "Here she is on her motorcycle." I think I've slowed down over the years [laughs].

CYNTHIA VELORIC: So to conclude this interview, I feel obligated to ask you what you would like either your legacy to be, or what do you think has been your greatest contribution to American art?

DIANE BURKO: Yikes. Cynthia, that's for you to talk about and all the historians and critics. Well, I feel deeply about our country. I feel deeply about America, more so now than ever before, the week after this historic election. And I feel deeply about our country in terms of its physical being in terms of the landscape, and I—you know, I've been doing this for 10 years. I decided 10 years ago that it wasn't enough for me to just paint paintings of landscapes, although I love them. It wasn't enough for me to just extoll beauty, although that's a way of reminding people about the country they live in. I just felt a need to make a contribution, in terms of our political awareness, of our consciousness about how we're destroying this planet. And it seems to me the only way I could do it honestly would be through the only language I know, which is really painting. So that's what I've been trying to do these last ten years, and maybe that—that's my contribution, and it isn't only making the paintings; as you know, part of my making paintings now and exhibiting them is what I call a certain kind of social outreach, so that I—especially with universities, I won't have a show in the university unless they agree to sponsor panels, discussions with the student body. That's what I'm going to be doing in Fayetteville. That was the whole point of, you know, talking to this dean and these faculty members is we—I want to bring the students in and—I did this at Kean University as well—we partnered—I suggested to the director of the galleries, partnering with their environmental program. And we did, and they brought students in, and we brought people from NASA in, and we have panels about art and science, and it's all about trying to build awareness of these very crucial issues that are facing us.

CYNTHIA VELORIC: Thank you so much, Diane.

DIANE BURKO: Thank you.

[END OF burko16_2of2_sd_track02.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]