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Oral history interview with Matt Mullican, 2019 July 1-9

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Matthew Mullican on July 1 – 9, 2019. The interview took place in the New York office of the Archives of American Art, and was conducted by Annette Leddy for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Matt Mullican chose to keep the transcript as is. Annette Leddy has reviewed the transcript; her 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

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ANNETTE LEDDY: This is Annette Leddy interviewing Matt Mullican at the New York office of the Archives of American Art on July 1, 2019. I will be writing just the names of things for our transcriber.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I'm not even paying attention.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay. [Laughs.] Okay, good. All right, we're going to start at the beginning. Where were you born?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I was born in Santa Monica, California, on September 18, 1951. I don't know which hospital. I think it's Santa Monica Hospital. Once, I was—well, it doesn't matter, yeah. That's my—yeah, that's when I was born.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Do you want to describe the circumstances of your birth or do you want—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: The circumstances of my birth: My mother was alone. My father was in Oklahoma in Chickasha. My mother was alone in LA. They were not married when I was born. My parents—this goes back in time, and my parents met in San Francisco some four years earlier, three years or two years earlier, something. My mother [Luchita Hurtado] was married to Wolfgang Paalen. They lived in Mexico City in the mid-'40s, a fancy period. She knew Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera and Dominguez, and you name it, and they were there. [00:02:04] They were—she was hanging out with those people. She had her two sons, her older son Daniel del Solar and her younger son Pablo del Solar, and, uh, Pablo died of polio. They were both going to a German, uh, boarding school, but he did not get sick at boarding school. My older brother held this against my mom for years that somehow it was her fault that Pablo died but—and, you know, the most horrible guilt that she felt, she went blind, literally blind, psychologically after this. It was really a traumatic, horrible situation, so she insisted that they leave Mexico and move to San Francisco. They moved to San Francisco. Gordon Onslow Ford was in San Francisco, and they lived in Mill Valley.

Meanwhile, my father [Lee Mullican] out of World War II—he was a mapmaker, a map drawer—with an old friend of his [Jack] Stauffacher, what was his name, [Jack] Stauffacher who was a friend—at one point, my father had to choose between going to New York—or East Coast or West Coast. He wanted to be an artist, he was already an artist and so, where do I go? So [Jack] convinced him to go to San Francisco. In fact, [Jack] was a printmaker and a typographer, and had a putty knife for spreading the ink on the plate, and this is what my father used, um, for his whole life. This was his technique, the known technique.

He stayed with Paalen. My—Paalen discovered my father as did Gordon Onslow Ford in San Francisco, and they fell in love with his work, and he became the third Dynaton member. [00:04:11] My father moved in with my mother and Paalen, and there are some wonderful photographs, beautiful pictures of them in a mirror, very surreal. They had a show, the *Dynaton* show at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and this was a big deal. Jacqueline Johnson was Gordon's wife, and they lived in—I don't know. My parents lived together with Paalen, and my mother wanted me. She really wanted me. She had lost a child, and she was desperate for a child. Now, Paalen's brother I think committed suicide. There was a certain amount—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yes, that's right.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —of madness in his family, and he was very, very aware of not passing this on to anybody else. Also, I don't think he could've dealt with kids. He was not a child-friendly person. [They laugh.] I met him once.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, really?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I met him once. According to my mom, I met him once, so but—

ANNETTE LEDDY: You don't remember it?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, not at all, not at all. I remember my last name being Paalen. This I remember because when I was born, I was Matthew Angus Paalen, not Matthew Angus Mullican. In fact my name—I had—my last name was Paalen until my father legally adopted me in the late '50s. I don't exactly know which—I think, '58 or '57. Well in any case—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So you were seven or years old, yeah?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Something like that. Well going back to—and my parents fell in love, and they had me. Now, my father—well, they conceived me, and they were all living together. So this was San Francisco 1949 or 1951, '50, whatever. [00:06:09] And I—my father moved back to Chickasha, Oklahoma. My mother moved to LA alone, pregnant with me, and she had me. My father never told his parents that I was his son their whole life, never told them, could not face this. He grew up at the Church of Christ in Chickasha, Oklahoma, I was illegitimate, and this is the way it goes.

Now, they treated me as I was my mother's second son and they were as good as—I was as good as a son, a grandson, never felt like I'm over here or they're over here. No, it was all one big, happy family. My grandparents were wonderful.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But when you were young, how did you navigate that, knowing that they thought you weren't—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, I never knew that.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —your father's son?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I never knew that.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, you didn't?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No one told—no one told me.

ANNETTE LEDDY: No one told you?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: This was later on I found out. You know, when I'm in my 30s, my mom might have told me or my—my father never told me, but my mother told me that he never, never—they never thought that I was his son, and that he could never tell them that he had a son out of wedlock. This was an impossibility, uh, just not going to happen.

And this is the interesting thing about my family is that my father having grown up in that super conservative—although they were all Democrats and they were progressives to a degree. My father's middle name is Lee. My father's first name is Lee. My—Alva Lee Mullican, that was my father's full name not Lee Mullican but Alva Lee Mullican.

ANNETTE LEDDY: A-L-V-A?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, like Alva Edison, named after Alva Edison, and Lee is after the general. [00:08:01]

ANNETTE LEDDY: Robert E.?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Robert E. Lee.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: So we've got Lee and Alva, and that was my father's, uh—those

were my father's—that was my father's name. So very conservative, and we used to go there in the '60s. I'd go into that later on, but visiting Chickasha was really something. But, okay, so you have this guy on my right side, a beautiful man, very elegant posture. Now, I'm letting it all hang out because I remember my father sleeping on the couch in the living room. I don't remember my father and my mother sleeping in the same bed, but they did, they did. They must have. Of course, they did, but later on. This is before they were married, and when my father and my mother—I mean there was a certain kind of brain thing with my dad. He just—he slept sometime in the studio, you understand?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yes.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: He had a studio up the road in Santa Monica Canyon, and his studio was in—it was above a garage. I remember visiting his studio and Mary Wescher—Paul Wescher and Mary Wescher. Paul Wescher was the first director of the Getty. They had a Neutra house, I think, or something like it, I mean a fancy modern house. I loved this house. It was so beautiful. And I—we did not have a TV set, so whenever I went to visit them, I remember watching *The Mickey Mouse Club*, and I remember exactly where that TV set was. I was entranced by it, and *The Mickey Mouse Club*, I loved *The Mickey Mouse Club*.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Me too.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I had not been to—um, we had no TV. This was in the '50s. We had a fish tank. Literally, in our living room. I used to watch the fish tank. I remember exactly where it was. [They laugh.] [00:10:00]

ANNETTE LEDDY: But not —here's the thing, I'm not getting—are you saying that your father slept on the couch and had this separation just during the period before they were, quote, married or that was always?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I—you know, my memory is that I remember him sleeping on the couch in the living room. That's all I can remember—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Even till you went—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I do not—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —in high school and so—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no, no, no, no, no, no. That all changed. Of course, they got married, he legally adopted me, and then everything was cool.

ANNETTE LEDDY: What year did they get married then? Was that like—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: '58.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, I see. So it's—it was really like—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: '57, '58.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —they were living together, but had this child for those first few years?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Can you imagine? I mean this is the '50s.

ANNETTE LEDDY: No. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: This is my dad from Chickasha, Oklahoma. This is completely outrageous. What he was doing was outrageous. He was an artist, he was living with a woman in sin, he had a child out of wedlock, another sin, and this was tough.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But I remember him sleeping on the couch and this could be a—maybe it's a dream that I had, but there was something about it. There was a certain amount of distance, although they were so well connected, but, um, they're so different. My mother who I've been talking about for the last year again and again and again because I'm asked all the time now due to the fact that she has become who she is and, uh—

ANNETTE LEDDY: A sensation.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Beyond, it's just beyond. You do not—do you—you understand, right?

ANNETTE LEDDY: She's with Hauser & Wirth, yes.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no, but she's beyond that. You know the *TIME* Magazine?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, I haven't seen the *TIME* Magazine.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, my God, the hundred most influential people of 2019, she was on the list.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, my God.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: This is a big deal. I mean, there are only two artists on the list. It was her and David Hockney. [They laugh.] What are you going to say? I mean, it doesn't end, it doesn't end. You should have seen or you should have heard this. Well, we'll go into this later because this is another story. [00:12:02]

But they're very different. My mom, hot, superhot, super emotional, heavy, heavy, heavy, heavy presence, a beautiful loving presence but heavy. [. . . –AL] And so I grew up in this, this house. My mom found the house by herself. My mom learned how to drive a car by herself. My father was not there. When I was born, it was me and my mom, not my dad. My dad came later. My dad did show up, and he was part of the family. We were a family, and I had my no weird—no weirdness about my dad. He was very loving and very connected and he was—if anyone asked me, he was my dad period, no question. And the—but my last name was Paalen.

I remember I changed my name to Palin, well, Palin. I think, Well, I have a name Paalen, why can't I change it again? I'd say, "My name—my mother's name is this, my father's name is that, and I'm Paalen," and I can play around. I remember I was in—I must have been in kindergarten when I thought about that or I was—no, when I said that—I remember saying that and I was in the first grade.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And did—so that was the question, yeah, did other kids or other people, neighbors for example seem to notice this condition?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Not that I was aware of.

ANNETTE LEDDY: No one ever said anything to you about it?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no. Only one person said it, and that was a horror show, and that was when I was a teenager. He was an awful man, and his name was Frank in New Mexico. [00:14:02] Um, golly, his name was Frank. His name will come up to me, and he—we were at the hot springs where they filmed in *Easy Rider.* You know hot springs near Taos? We used to go down there and go get naked, and it was fantastic. I loved doing that as a teenager.

He asked me, "So I haven't always understood, who's your father? Who's your father? You know, da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da." And I turned white because no one dared to ever ask me that question, and it horrified me because I was terrified of not being my father's son. I was scared, very scared. And, uh, and he just—I remember that I panicked. I was just—I will never forget that. Well, see, we're in the hot tub together, and he just asked this question, and I just—boy, that was awful. And, um—

ANNETTE LEDDY: If we go back, I just would like—you started to describe both your parents. You said your mother was very warm and hot and so on and then—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: They both were. I mean, they are both warm. They both hugged me a lot, they both kissed me all the time, we went everywhere together. They were both very affectionate, and—but they were very different. My father—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So how—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —was not as hot as my mother. My mother is like a witch—truly,

she is a witch—and my father was not. My father a great artist but not a witch. She is something else. She's on another the level, and so that's where that goes. I lived with them. They both collected art. My father—my mother first. The first piece she collected, one of the very first works she collected was *The Battle of Little Big Horn*. She got in a little shop on Madison Avenue and or downtown, maybe around here somewhere. And it was—it was a muslin, 20 feet, 20 feet long. [00:16:04] It cost $100 this muslin Battle of the—you know? It's a masterpiece. This thing must be worth millions now, and that was—she bought that when she was not even—she was—1940. She was 21 years old she bought that. So she had bought, and people had been giving her things through the '40s. My father shows up—I mean, he didn't do that, but they joined together, and they would buy stuff. So I grew up in a house filled with artifacts, I mean, to the brim, the [inaudible].

ANNETTE LEDDY: So there are a couple of questions that—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay. First of all, filled with artifacts. Is there one object that you remember that you loved in the house more than anything else?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, that's—I think that, that muslin is the piece I'd like to have—

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's the piece.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —more than anything else. It wasn't up in our house. It was—it was too big; it wouldn't fit. It's 20 feet long. Our house was not a very big house, but—and they're—and her finding that house was an amazing thing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, describe that.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: 370 Mesa Road. She lived in a hotel down the road, Roy's. This is this house. There's a hotel at the bottom of Santa Monica Canyon on the beach where she lived, where she stayed. She asked him if there was anything—you know Roy, the guy, whoever, or Roy whatever his name was. There was a coffee shop and a hotel, and it was there. He told here about a house that was on Mesa Road, and she went, and she rented it. She rented the house.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Is this the one with the steps that lead up?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, yeah. It was on a hill.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Beautiful.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Up the hill, beautiful, beautiful house, beautiful house. You could hear the ocean in the background. You could see the ocean from my porch or where I last—the last place I stayed when I was there. It was a brilliant—a brilliant home, and she rented it for nothing, for nothing. [00:18:07] Our next-door neighbor in the '60s was Christopher Isherwood, and this was the scene. Sam Francis was down the street.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's right.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: The Eames were across the canyon. I remember going to their house, Charlie—Charles and Ray Eames. I remember as a teenager going to the Eames studio with a friend of mine in Venice. This was an amazing little trip for me. So this house was brilliant and then she learned how to drive with one other person, and the other person who was also learning how to drive was Maritta Wolff, Maritta Stegman who was a writer, who was my mom's best friend, and who I loved. They eventually had a house. She had a house in the Pacific Palisades where we used to go and then she learned how to drive. They would drive and she was—when she arrived—before she arrived in LA, she knew this guy Giles Healey. Giles Healey—Bonampak, you know Bonampak? That's a very famous—the big heads in Mexico, the big ones?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: The famous, famous ones? He discovered them. Giles Healey discovered those heads. He was kind of a princely guy, a brilliant man, and very together, knew everybody, everybody. He lived in Hollywood. My mom was moving to LA. She wanted to leave San Francisco, she had broken up with Paalen, and he said to her, "Before you

come, I can—I'll introduce you to three people. I can have you—I mean I know everybody and who does matter." [00:20:01] He was also a polo player. He was a kind of a wealthy, incredible explorer-type guy, and she said—uh, she had—she said, "James Agee" because James Agee was living in LA so that was—they—she visited James Agee, the three people she wanted to visit was Irish Tree [ph], James Agee, and Charlie Chaplin, and she met them all. Charlie Chaplin offered to paint her house with her because she was—had to paint it. She bought—she got this new house, that's right, and he was going to help. My mother when she met Mia Agee at James Agee's at their house—they had a house on the beach that—or they came over or whatever, but Mia just started washing my diapers with my mother. They became best friends. My daughter's middle name is Mia after Mia Agee, a super important person in my life. I mean, I'll go into her later on. But also my mother's—my grandmother, my father's mother was also named Mia, so it's a funny thing. Mia was in two people in my life, my grandmother and my mother both named Mia and my daughter.

ANNETTE LEDDY: What about your siblings in this whole setting?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I was only with Daniel. My brothers and I were all born 11 years apart. My older brother was born in 1940, I was born in 1951, and my younger brother was born in 1962. So when I left—when we moved to Rome, my father got a Guggenheim in 1959, my older brother went off to Harvard and so he left town, he left home. So then in the '60s, I had my younger brother who was—when I was 12, he was 1, so we're all like only kids in a way. [00:22:05]

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Uh, my older brother had a second father, a different father, Daniel del Solar who I mentioned. And he—Latin, both Latin parents, looked Like Pancho Villa [inaudible], and he wore a black poncho, a big mustache, black hat, looked like Zorro or something.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But very dramatic and a big pot smoker in the—throughout his life. He was a photographer, and he wanted to be an artist so badly, so, so badly. My father never really accepted him as an artist and neither did my mother because he wasn't an artist. He took photos but nothing special. He had other talents. He was a—he was very, very bright. He got a full scholarship to Harvard, a full scholarship in 1959—I mean exceptional. Then he went off to Stanford, and he went to this, and he went to that then he was blah, blah, blah. He was mister—the Mister Brainiac in our family, and also incredibly, um, giving—I can't—what is this—?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Generous.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Not generous, emotive, strong, always he'd go into a group, he'll get to know everybody.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Outgoing—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Outgoing—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —extroverted.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —outgoing, outgoing, outgoing. You know if I—I remember waiting at an airport for him—he arrived in LA at one point—and he gets off the plane, and everyone's taking his number. Everybody, like 10 people [they laugh] taking his number and giving this—and then he getting their numbers and they—he became best buddies with almost half the airplane. This is the kind of person he was, and he was like that, but difficult for me to handle because I'm not like that.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So when he—during the period you were at home with him, for whatever, the first 11 years, I guess, what was the dynamic like between the two of you? [00:24:04]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Um, he would—I was a child; he was an adult—I mean he was as a teenager. He played with me. He would do this thing where he would have—like do this with his finger because he would end up tickling me and or he would attack me basically. And there was a little bit of—you know he hurt me by doing that—

ANNETTE LEDDY: But—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —and he was not an—our relationship was never perfect and he, I think, was jealous. He had lost his younger brother, and that hurt him a lot. I come along, and I'm white compared to him. He's dark, and his younger brother was dark as well, and so it's an interesting problem that he had with me. It was insane. But I remember there was one very particular—what he would do is he'd lay me on the floor, he would grab my arms and pull me up because he wanted to demonstrate that I couldn't keep myself up, and then he'd let go, and I'd fall back down again, and he did this more than one. He did this. I remember growing up with this, and he would laugh at me because I couldn't do it. My muscles—no one can do it. If you'd do this to anybody, they can't hold themselves up because the muscles were just not strong enough, at least that's what I thought.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, it seemed like he was trying to make you feel that you were somehow weak and he was strong.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, yeah, yeah, a little bit of that, a little. He used to warn my mom about me because I did so badly in school. I was not, uh—I did not do well in elementary school nor did I do well in junior high school nor in high school. [00:26:04]

ANNETTE LEDDY: Because you're not an academic type. You're—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, it's more than being a type. I mean, I'm not an academic. I don't have the brain for it, I couldn't spell, I'm dyslexic, I might even be ADHD, a combo, a cocktail of aberrant psyches.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And is your father also dyslexic?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No.

ANNETTE LEDDY: What was he?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: He was a writer.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's right.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: He was a complete writer. Both my parents were writers, and my father was a screen—he wrote plays. My father wrote plays. He's brilliant, brilliant that way, and I—not me. My younger brother, he is a writer. I'm not a writer. I write, but I write my notebooks and so forth.

The thing—so here I am, I'm in Santa Monica growing up in this house. My brother was there, my mother was there, my father was there, we all lived in different rooms. And I remember my—eventually, my brother's room was downstairs. That's weird. My room was off the bathroom on the left. My mother was out on the porch, but there's no room for a double bed on the porch. There's just not. There's no room. So I don't know where my—and my father was on the couch in the living room, so this was like, uh—and then the house was filled with stuff already. My memory says it was filled.

My parents were incredibly generous with me painting. I was—they would get rolls of butcher-block paper and give me a black brush, and I just painted all the time. I have a stack of drawings from when I—before I was six years old, and they're beautiful things. I mean I have a stack of drawings when I did—when I lived in Rome as well and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Were they painting at the same time, so you would just all be—[00:28:01]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —be painting?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: They all had their studios. No, no, no, no. My father never painted at home. He drew in front of the TV as he sat later, and my mother would paint on the porch, and she would do these smaller crayon resists. Those—at, Hauser & Wirth, they had a show of these.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right. I like those..

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And those—and those what she did, and she did those on her desk. She didn't have a studio, studio. And I just was taking over the furniture. For instance, I would build giant spaceships, castles and would get the chairs and put them upside down and build these giant—they would allow me to do this, very creative.

At one point—this describes something to you. At one point when I was doing a drawing, whenever I painted, I would talk. I would tell stories, "Oh, this thing is here," just like I do now, just stories and stories and stories. And my father was typing because he was—he would write a lot and he was typing, but little did I know that he was typing—he was transcribing what I was saying when I was drawing at the age of five. So I have these texts of me talking, what I said at that age.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's so great.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Talk about it, you know? This is pretty great. And—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And how do you see those now when you read them?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: They're fantastic. No, they're fantastic. I mean—

ANNETTE LEDDY: In the sense that your imagination is so wild and—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No. No, no, no. No, my imagination is not. I mean all kids have a great imagination, but I'm talking about Indians. I was totally into Indians, American Indians and Indians and then gods and bears, animals, all this stuff.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Now, I want to come back to the—your formation as an artist, but I have this question about your Venezuelan relatives and your grandparents on that side. Did you ever know them?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Okay. [00:30:00] In the mid-'50s, I'm not sure exactly when, I think '55, '56. I think I was five years old. My parents were poor. My father had not—maybe he was teaching one class a week. They had no money. They were living like hand-to-mouth, and my mom wanted to make a go of it, but they were still not married. I don't know if she had gotten a divorce from Paalen yet. They had some fancy art. She had some Max Ernst, she had blah, blah, blah. Eventually, everything was taken by either Paalen or Gordon Onslow Ford, just stolen, stole it directly from her, No problems. It's not yours anyway. Who are you? It was ours. It was our stuff. This is the '40s; this is the men-women problem.

And so she had no money, and my father and my mother, they were—and so Daniel stayed with him in Santa Monica, and my mom and I flew to Caracas. I spoke no Spanish. We arrived. I remember getting out of the airplane. I loved the flying part. I loved flying down there via probably Miami. Who knows how we got there? But getting out of the plane and feeling the heat, I still remember—I was five. The heat and the humidity were so extreme when you got out of there, and we were there—we arrived in the evening, and it was amazing. We lived in this big house—I think it was my grandmother's house, my grandparents' house—walls as thick as ever. Inside it was cool, outside it was super-hot, and I remember being in the kitchen with the family and not understanding anything. They were all speaking Spanish. I had no idea how—what's going on.

And then I remember understanding everybody and talking. [00:32:01] In fact, I only spoke Spanish down there. I forgot all my English, only spoke Spanish, and lived on the street in front of the house. I remember Hector [ph] was my best friend, and we used to play ball on the street. And we—I remember, you would have all the carriages selling hotdogs and whatever going up the street, and we would get them. I remember going to the beach. This beautiful color of the water, I remember that. They were selling oysters on the beach, and there were hotdogs. I loved the hotdogs, hotdogs with the mustard in them. Oh, I love—they're my favorite. And, um, I remember once another—big parties, and the women with these dresses that came out like the '50s, big, puffy dresses and the men with their tuxedos. Right out of the movies, these houses, and the whole Latin thing going.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You mean they look like Spanish-style houses with courtyards and—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, a little bit of that.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —that kind of thing?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, yes. Latin, Spanish style, heavies, big houses, and really strong. That was fun.

The bad part was the school. I was put into a Catholic school. The nuns terrified me. I remember being led into this room with a lot of kids, and maybe it was early because I didn't understand anything, and eventually, I learned. The one thing I remember from school that we did was that I—was that you got a sheet of paper and you rolled it up really, really, really tight like a roll and then you'd cut the inside and you pull it out and it becomes—when you get a—if you roll it, you pull it out, and it becomes like a saber, a long saber that you could hold like this. [00:34:04] That's what I remember. I remember making that long tube come out, and I really love this, but the nuns scared me. Imagine, I was already in nursery school when we left. I was living in Pacific Palisades, Santa Monica, and now, I'm in Caracas in a convent or something like that with these nuns around speaking a language I don't understand in a place I don't understand. That was terrifying.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But it sounds also kind of fancy with the neighborhood and the house and all that—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: They were wealthy. They had money. That's one reason why she came. She thought she'd be able to get a job down there. She thought she could make some money and come back with the money, and we would be better off. So we were down there for like—boy, I don't even know. What does a five-year-old know anyway?

ANNETTE LEDDY: A year—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I mean I was just—not even, no, no, not close. More like six months, maybe even just four months, five months, six months, something like this. Because after that, and I—after that, I remember my aunt, Aunt Mary and my cousin and Sonia [ph] was my—the cousin, I think that was her party. Sonia had a party.

ANNETTE LEDDY: What was the party like?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: The party was like a very sophisticated party, like a cocktail party with dancing and stuff. And then I can't remember my cousin's—my other cousin's name but—I just can't think of it. But Sonia I remember, and I remember him as well. He was not the nicest guy, no, and I remember that.

My mom and I, it didn't work out. [00:36:00] She didn't get a job, she didn't get any money, she was upset, it wasn't working out for her, so we moved to New York. And so I lived in New York in 1955 or [19]'56. We lived across the street from the museum of—I mean the natural history museum on 87th Street, 86th Street, something like that on the West Side.

We lived in a one-bedroom, not even—I mean, a studio apartment in a hotel, and I was going to—she put me into another school. I had to relearn all my English because I didn't know any English, and we spent—[clears throat] I think we spent, weeks, weeks and weeks and weeks and weeks and weeks at the Museum of Natural History.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's good.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I love that place.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Me too.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I loved it. I have very vivid feelings of being there. I loved the buses. I loved the smell of the buses. I loved the snow, my first snow. I hadn't—this was in the—this was in the winter. We had Christmas there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: All this time your parents were sort of separated or—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah. My father was in LA with my older brother.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But were they emotionally still connected?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: How do I know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see. You don't know if it was like she was leaving him or if—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no, I never felt that she was leaving him. I always felt we were coming back.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: This was a trip. It was not—I didn't think we were moving. I don't think—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Except that—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —that I was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —getting a job suggests that you would be moving?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: She was making money. She just needed—it's like what they do now. Like the Filipinos, they make money, they have to travel to make their money, and my mom had a similar idea. She was going to make money because she—her first job in New York was working for *Vogue* magazine as an illustrator and then she was also a model. [00:38:00] She did that like a couple of times. She hated it, so she never did it again, but we went down. We—she wanted to make money. I don't think—I didn't think of it my parents were breaking up or anything. I didn't think that she was moved out. My brother was not with us so that was the big indicator. Had he left, we all—the three of us had left my—left my father in Los Angeles, that would've been another thing but no.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: So there I am in New York, and I remember going to Rothko show because I remember they're very so iconic, those paintings are so iconic. I think I was at Rothko opening, and I was—and I remember at the age of six—

ANNETTE LEDDY: You mean the bands of colors, those—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Just the two, one above the other, you know? Not—he didn't do bands. He just had the discs. It's a horizon, it's like the sky and the ground, but this beautiful—and I remember seeing those. I remember going and serving hors d'oeuvres at the opening with my little tray and not being able to see anybody because my tray was so far down that the smoke and the—it's like *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, those cocktail parties, the way it looked? It was like that. I'd go—we went to these fantastic parties. My mom—I remember this, and apparently, my mom and Rothko were buddies. She knew them all. She knew everybody—I mean everybody. So I was going to all these great places, and I loved New York, I loved New York. I remember we even had—we got a lobster to eat it and then my mom—we couldn't kill it and so the lobster stayed in our bathtub for like a week before it [00:40:01] died because it had freshwater, of course it was not going to last.

And we built—and I made American Indian feathers. I made little outfits for myself out of pigeon feathers. It was a little book about the American Indians and how to do that, and I remember that very clearly. There was a scene. We went to the—another one of my favorite places in New York at the age of five was the zoo, the Central Park Zoo, and we went to the Central Park Zoo and we went to the elephant's cage. I very much—I particularly remember the cafeteria at the Central Park Zoo. But we went to the elephant cage, and the elephant grabbed my mother's purse. My mom had a purse, grabbed it, straight away—all her papers were in that purse—proceeded to eat all her papers, legal papers, checks.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Her passport.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Her—like things like this. She and I were—I remember that—panicking, running back and forth in the house. My—screaming, "My mother is eating my—my elephant is eating my mother's purse! The elephant's eating my mother—" and people were laughing. It was like a ridiculous thing, slamming the purse on the ground and then going through it with its trunk trying to get—grab and then [makes chomping sound] eating her stuff. And but that was—and then I remember going to the Metropolitan Museum at that age as well, and the cafeteria of the Metropolitan I remember that. It was such a beautiful room.

So I loved New York, I really did. I, I, I became close friends—there was a girl who I became friends with at school who I knew for a long time in LA. They moved eventually out to LA.

And then we moved back to—we flew back home. [00:42:03]

ANNETTE LEDDY: So it was like you had missed a year of—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Not even a year.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —school.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Not even a year. No, but I was in nursery school. I mean, there were not—I wasn't even in the first grade yet. Five, I was five.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You were five, so it was—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I was five, so—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —the year of kindergarten.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —kindergarten, nursery school. That kindergarten, first grade, I might have been pulled back a year, no big deal. I was 20 when I graduated from high school, so I was—I lost two years along the way.

So I moved back, and my father was still in the house, my brother was still there, and then we lived there very happily. I was in Canyon Elementary School just up the road and became close—and I had a bunch of friends that I became close with, Glenn Copeland [ph], Jody Fine, and went to the beach all the time. As a teenager, I would walk down to the beach. It was just fantastic. And that was life in Santa Monica.

I remember like my father was a—was in a play, while he—while my mother was away, he was in this thing called Instant Theatre. Instant Theatre was Rachel Rosenthal. My father was an actor in her troupe, in her theater troupe. I remember going in the car with my parents to this troupe in my pajamas, and of course, there were no seats—there were just pillows—and going to sleep—going and watching my father perform whatever they were doing, and me just crashing in the evening during Instant Theatre.

But my father was quite a talented actor and had quite—I mean, he was talented, always talented, and Rachel had this scene that she remembers. [00:44:04] I remember she told—my father told me that—or told us that hear that he could—she could hear my mother's high heels walking into the room [makes sound] while she was trying to get my father to do whatever, and that was the end. You know, that was the end of—that was the end of my father's career. She said, "You are a painter; you have to paint. What is this? You're not da, da, da." Although my father always made sculptures, beautiful sculptures, his whole time, he was always working, build—making stuff out of nothing in the backyard, always like that, brilliant. I was sucked into a normal life in Santa Monica Canyon hanging out with my friends and enjoying my time and then we moved to Rome in 1959—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I was just thinking, so you really had only a year or so in—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Like three years.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —Santa Monica.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Three years.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Three years?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Two, three years.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Then you moved to Rome and—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Then—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —how long were you there?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: A year. Again not quite; it was weird. My father got a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1959, so with that money—I mean that's what he wanted was the trip to Rome and so that's what he got, he got a trip to Rome. So we took the car, drove it to New York City and I guess they—we sold the car when we left, and my brother left for—to Harvard. He

was going to hitchhike his way across because it was not really—he wanted to leave earlier, he wanted the experience of hitchhiking. In those days, it was no big deal, so he went, and we drove, and we picked up my brother like in Ohio? Some little town in the middle of nowhere in Ohio, we picked up my brother. [00:46:00] He was hitching, amazing, and so he had the last bit of trip to—we drove him to New York City. We stayed with Mia Agee who my—you know, and we stayed at The Albert Hotel, which I loved, The Albert Hotel on 12th and University. There was a kind of awning above the—up the—across the way, and it had snowed, and I loved New York with the snow. I had loved it from my last trip there, and we were going—we were on our way to, to Rome.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And then did you take a boat?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: We took a boat. That doesn't—maybe the—I think the—I think the snow was on our way back. I think on our way there, there was snow because I remember we were on the boat going across the Atlantic, and it was an Italian steamliner, and I was with the group of kids. We were always running around. I remember someone had a birthday, and they gave us this cake, and we all thought it was the best cake until we ate it. It was a rum cake. There was so much alcohol in this cake, you cannot imagine.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It tasted horrible, horrible.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I love rum cake myself.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, of course. Now, you do, but not when you're six years old. I mean, oh, it was awful. We ended up—we landed in Rome. I remember we went to Morocco, we went to Naples, we went to Monte Carlo on our way there. We ended up in Rome and Gendel [ph], Vincent Gendel, I mean he picked us up at the—we—he helped us out. I think that was his name was—I don't remember quite. We got a house near the Piazza Navona, and there were cupids, little putti on my father's ceiling. [00:48:01] This house was like a 16th-century, 14th-, 13th-century house. The door was like 20 feet high, thick as hell. We went up the stairs. There was a little elevator going up to our house. I remember you walk in, and, uh, my father had a glorious studio, I had a little bedroom, my parents had a bedroom. At this time, my parents had married. They married before we left and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Do you remember the wedding?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I was not there. I just saw pictures. There was no wedding. They were married civilly and then they had a party. I don't think there was—and then my—and I think my father might have—uh, he could—I don't—probably he did, that he adopted me.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But were—did you—were you aware that they were getting married and this was a happy thing?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, so this was all just a secret? If there was a party, you didn't know what it was about?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I had no idea that they were not married. As far as I was concerned, they always were married. That was just a family, you know, marriage or not. And so I remember, at one point, I went to the courthouse with my father—this is before we went to Rome, and he—I remember seeing the judge. It might have been after we came back from Rome, and I think it's before. We saw the judge, and the judge asked me, "Who's your father?" and I went, "He is, he's my father." "Is he—?" "Yes, he's my father, always been my father," and I remember saying that. At one point later on, my parents said, "Well, your last name is Mullican now. It's no longer Paalen. We all—our names have changed—your name has changed." I had no idea. So in my head, all the people in my family changed their name to Mullican. Even my grandparents. Everybody changed their name to Mullican [00:50:01] in my head because everyone said, "We changed our name to Mullican," so, "Okay, that sounds good to me. I'm happy to have that name." And this was before we moved to—this is before we moved to Rome. This was just maybe the year before or the six months before we moved to Rome, and that made it—since my parents were now married and that I was legally their son, that they—I think they did all of that just not to have any trouble traveling around together.

So we lived in Rome. I painted up a storm. I have a lot of pictures. I loved the Greek gods, I loved the Roman gods. Athena was my favorite. She was born from the head of Zeus. I thought this was the coolest thing. And I went to the overseas school, which is still there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It's still there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —what they call the American school?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It was British, but it was called the Overseas School, and I did horribly, horribly. I was in a normal class—that lasted about a week. [They laugh.] I ended up being in the class of idiots truly in the basement with crippled and Indian kids who I liked very much, and this girl who had polio who could barely walk. We were in the—we were in a class of five, five people, so I was at an—dat da dat, da dat, da dat down to the bottom. I was in the basement. Oh, here I am in the basement again. [They laugh.] I have some problem in my brain, and I cannot learn normally, so here we go. Maybe the whole problem of my intellectual issue was the fact that—my Spanish problem. Maybe learning Spanish and relearning English was just the wrong timing. Maybe there's an involvement—maybe there's—maybe that's part of it. But in any case, I did horribly in school, but I loved Rome. [00:52:00]

The thing about it was I am somebody when I was growing up, I hated being alone. If my parents didn't get home when they said they would, I'd start to panic, truly panic and no wonder. I mean I've been—I was shuttled around from country to country from party to party not knowing the ground I was standing on and getting—and not feeling too good about it because I never really had enough time to really feel secure. And this was the legacy of my mom because if there was any reason why we did whatever we did, it was her not my dad. I don't think my dad was the—we have—although, he was a traveler. We went to Chile later on because of him, but I think my mom really wanted this, and this situation like this. I remember we had neighbors. There was a black man—a black woman and a white man who were our next-door neighbors lived, and I thought this was cool. And our landlady was in *La Dolce Vita*, 1959, and I think this couple was in *La Dolce Vita*. In fact, everyone we knew had been in *La Dolce Vita* because this was the art world of Rome, and *La Dolce Vita* was one of the things that happened.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And did you see the movie?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Not then.

ANNETTE LEDDY: No?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Not until I was 20 years old but a great movie, great, great, what a genius movie. I think it's amongst—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I agree—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —my favorite films ever. But that was the scene we were a part of. We were really ensconced into the Rome scene 1959–1960. "Volare," that was—that was the—it came out, [sings] Volare. I remember that was on the radio everywhere. We went to the beach. [00:54:01] I remember going to the beach, loving the beach. I loved wearing the skimpy, little swimsuit that was barely existing because I loved being a European.

[. . . –AL] I loved wearing the little outfits, the little European swimsuit because I was a little European. I wore shorts, I wore knee socks, I wore—I was a European. What else was I going to be? How was I going to survive this? This was heavy duty, all this traveling around.

For instance, I was painting all the time, when I was there, and de Kooning came over because de Kooning was a friend. He visited us. I mean, I should—I'm not mentioning people normally, but this has something to do with me. He was—he looked at my father's work very appreciatively and then he was going on and on about my paintings, my black-and-white paintings of the Greek gods. He thought they were fantastic, and they looked like his work, [laughs] you know? But this was the scene. I mean, the people around us were hot, always. I remember Isamu coming over, Isamu Noguchi. He and my mother were best friends, best friends. They were like brother and sister.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did you meet Marisol?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: You know, Marisol, uh, when I became—when I started showing in New York at Mary Boone, I was on a subway with my mom, and there was Marisol as my mother calls her, Marisol. She was there, and there was Marisol, and my mother introduced me to her. [00:56:04] She says, "Oh, Marisol, da, da," but they knew each other, and Marisol just looked at me just like with these big eyes because she already knew who I was because I was in a very public situation. So most of downtown knew who I was because of Mary Boone at the time and my show, and this was—I was beginning becoming public in a way. So she knew me as an artist already when I met her, but she—I mean, yeah, Marisol I met her there.

But the people that we knew, this is—we're backtracking. I mean, Gordon Matta-Clark, I knew when I was—when I—I'll go back to that. But so there we are in—

ANNETTE LEDDY: In Rome.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —Rome. We're in Rome and in this fantastic apartment. I remember going to—we went and shopped at the Piazza Navona for Christmas stuff. We—so I remember buying, and I got a little green robot, which I loved this little green robot. I learned how to ride a bike on the Piazza Navona because it was right around the corner from where we lived.

And that summer—so we must have arrived in October, then that summer, the following year, we—my father bought a car in Switzerland, so we went up to Switzerland and we bought an Opel, an Opel station wagon, and we camped through Europe the three of us. At one point, we picked up Bobbie Stauffacher who is now becoming famous again. She is a graphic designer. She invented supergraphics. I just saw her in San Francisco when I had my last show there. But she—I remember her and her daughter Chloe, and we were in the Swiss Alps and a fantastic time. [00:58:01] But what we—my parents wanted to do, my mother I bet and my father, but my mother was always the one, said, "Let's tour—let's follow all the prehistoric sites." So we went to Carnac, we went to Stonehenge, we went to Lascaux. We went to Lascaux. You can't go into Lascaux. They closed Lascaux in '62. It was closed to the public, but we got in before. We were there in '59 or '60. We were there in '60, 1960, summer of '60 and it was—I remember it. I remember going to Lascaux. We were camping at Lascaux, and my mom had bought—she has this story. My mom had bought some meat because we would—there was a little cooker we did and we had—this is how we did this. We stayed in London at the Crystal Palace campground, and we stayed in Paris in the Bois de Boulogne in the park there, and we stayed all these places—and Barcelona at the Happy Whale [ph] campground. I remember that. [They laugh.] And so she had this meat, and she couldn't cook it, so she—there were only—there was a couple, an old couple in a trailer that were taking care of the Lascaux Cave. There was a gate that they would unlock and take tickets, and you could go in. It was like a mom-and-pop thing, and she gave them the steak. She says, "I gave them the steak because we couldn't cook it. They were so appreciative." Maybe we got a free entrance the next day, but this was important.

In Paris, we went—I—it was my birthday. It must have been towards the end of the trip because my birthday was coming up September. [01:00:00] I suppose this would be in August, and my parents said, "We will buy you an object," and so there is the shop across the river, across the Seine from the Louvre—I remember going to the Louvre—and I bought a little Egyptian figure. So this was a shop that had all of these Egyptian artifacts in that shop, and I had like $20 that I can spend or $50 or $30, something like this, about that equivalent. And so I was going through with the woman who was selling this stuff, and I wouldn't leave. I wanted something very particular, and I was not sure about things being real. It had to be a real thing. It couldn't be a fake. I wanted to be—and then she wanted me out of that store because I was loud, I was—I guess I was not—I wasn't—I wanted a particular thing, and I was going to get it. And she said—I remember her saying, "This, this, this are real. This, this, this, this are not real. So take what you want, but please choose, [laughs] you're out of here." and I got a little Ramesses figure, was the first object I ever—I ever had in my collection, and it is Ramesses III, something dynasty, blah, blah, blah, in a little 19th-century wooden base, a beautiful, little thing. The first object I ever bought. And I slept with that little Ramesses figure as we toured around Europe. It was like my little gem as we went to Lascaux and stuff.

So here I am traveling and looking at—and I remember going to Stonehenge and going to—

and that—Lascaux was not the only cave. There were a lot of caves. This is my childhood. I mean, people ask me, "How did your parents influence you? Did you—?" [01:02:00] They were like, "So did you learn to be an artist from your dad or your mom"—

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MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —"who and how did they teach you?" They taught me by putting me in Lascaux. That's how they taught me. They taught me by me going to the Metropolitan when I was six years old. That's how my mom taught me to be an artist. My mother has a story. We went to some Picasso museum or it's a big Picasso show, and she has this—she tells this story, and I'm enthusiastic about the Picassos. There's this man who is just following us around, apparently. I didn't notice because I was going on and on about the paintings, telling her about what was going on in these pictures. He comes up, and he gives her a card, and he says, "I've been following you. I want you to send me what your son does in 10 years, in 15 years." He was so impressed with my enthusiasm about this stuff that he wanted—he said, "This boy is going to turn into something," and he wanted to know—whether he thought I would become an artist or something because I was so enthusiastic, but he literally gave her a card to tell him, so he could find out what happened to me. And this—there so I'm in my—I'm happy.

We eventually go back to New York. We do not live in New York City. We live in Upstate New York—now, we're in 1960—in Croton Falls, New York. In Croton Falls, New York, we lived on top of a hill. We lived next door from Ailes Spinden. *Ailes Spinden* was married to Joe Spinden. She was one of my mother's closest friends. She used to dance for Martha Graham, the first dance troupe of Martha Graham. Her Brother was Isamu Noguchi. So this is Isamu's sister, and we got a house near her because we knew—we were staying with her, and we found a house. My father didn't want to live in New York. I think it was too much for him. [00:02:00] He didn't want to live in the city. So we had this—we lived in a—we had a barn that he could work in, and he made all these ceramics because Ailes was a ceramicist, and he made this ceramics with her.

I went back into school again, another trauma of not being—of being terrible. And I remember—this is the Gordon Matta-Clark—that Gordon his mother, Anne Alpert and my mother were best buddies. I remember staying with Mia Agee and also she was—a lot of our friends worked for *TIME* Magazine, *TIME, LIFE,* like Mia did and James Agee. "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men," a very famous article he wrote for them. So I remember when Gordon and Batan, his twin, came up to visit us, and we went sledding down the hill. I was not even—I must have been 10 or—I must have been 10 years old or 11, and he must have been 18, 17, 18, 16, 14, 16 years old. So I remember sledding, and I remember him, and I remember his brother and us enjoying going down the hill, sledding down the hill. Eventually when I moved to New York as a young artist, he was so sweet. He was introducing me to people, really wonderful, wonderful. But I was not interested in knowing anyone he knew because that was established. I had seen his work in *Avalanche* magazine, and a fantastic artist, continuously great. I mean people know more and more how important he was. Back then, he wasn't as important as he has become for sure, and I knew his wife later on. [00:04:01] But, at the time, we went down the hill, and then we moved back to LA.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And so that was like 1961 or something?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: '60, '60, '61, yeah, moved back to LA.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You still had the house?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Still had the house. It was subletted to these people that destroyed the house. The house was destroyed. It was the most upsetting time. The house, they painted it black, they destroyed our stuff, they just—it was just destroyed. I mean, I was in tears, total tears. We had gotten a—we'd gotten a cat in Croton Falls, and the cat drove with us across country from—we bought another car. No, we had—yeah, we bought it. Did we have the—? We had the Opel. We still had the Opel, it came back with us, and so we had the car. We had the Opel, we drove from there to LA with the cat and all our belongings, moved back into the house. I hated it, I hated it, I was so—it was so upsetting and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: But couldn't they just fix it, painted it and fix it?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, but to me, all I recall is that we came back and it was all—my mom was crying. I mean it was really bad.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, [inaudible], yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, all the—all of our trees were—I mean all the plants were dead, everything was dead. It was the worst possible outcome. I thought I would be going back to my old—the sanctity of Santa Monica, which had always been there, but this was a little bit scary. And then I met some of my friends. Glenn Copeland was someone who I—and he says, "Oh, I want to—you have to meet so-and-so, and so-and-so," and these are your old friends. You know I said Jody Fine and Glenn Copeland, and I became close with them again but never like it was. I came back, I was different. I was different, I was European, [00:06:00] I was—there was a different thing about me. I was an odd person.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, you had missed all those developmental steps that they—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, I had them—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —a typical American kid goes through.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, but I had them but I had them in Europe. I didn't have them—I was growing up in Europe, but I was in New York, but I was an outsider. I was an outsider. I never—not until the last days, the last year of high school that I become like an insider again. I was an outsider, and of course, I did terribly in school, and I was always—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And just—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —in the stupid part of the class but that's—we settled in. We settled in for my early teenager years.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So that would have been—you would have been around 11 and so you were in high school for another, what, six years or something?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: When I came back, I was in elementary school still.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, so 10 maybe, you were in fifth grade.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Ten.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And then you went to Canyon and then where'd you go to middle school? Paul Revere?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah. Paul Revere.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And where did you go to—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I hated it. I hated Paul—in Palisades High School, Pali High. You know it all.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I do. So when you were in—so you come back, and you're in fifth grade or whatever, at Canyon. I mean did you ever have any teachers who helped? It sounds like you had so many people who helped you that you encountered through your family.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But they didn't help me—

ANNETTE LEDDY: But in school—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, they didn't help me. All—do you mean—do you think Bill de Kooning helped me? No. No, no one helped me. I had no idea. I had no idea. My mom told me this story when I was much older. I don't remember any of that. This was simply family life. There was no—no one helped me. And I separated my family life from my school life. My school life was the real world, and my family life was just my family life. I remember people coming over to our house and kind of in awe and shock and a little bit scared because of how it looked at that time because our house looked totally different from all the other houses. [00:08:10]

ANNETTE LEDDY: I'll bet.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: You have a New Guinea house post and an Asmat shield and a war god here and a war god there, an Easter Island sculpture.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It was filled. I mean amazing kachinas and all this—oh, it's just endless, endless, endless, fantastic place. And so they would come in there, and they would look around, Oh, my God. And then my mom was so dynamic. She was something else. My father was so sweet and tall, you know compared to them, you're like, "Oh, my God." He must have been six-six or something. He was tall.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.] Was he teaching at UCLA then?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, he started. He got his job in '63 I think, or '64, he got this job at UCLA. And then my younger brother was born in '62. We had just gotten back, a year later, he was born, a preemie, and I was just growing up with him. But I was—I'm an odd one that way and so I didn't hang out. I hung out a little bit with my friends. We would go to the beach, spend our summers at the beach, which I loved, summers without shoes, literally no shoes and going down and getting candy at the liquor store right there, and then going to the beach, and hanging out at the beach every day for years. I loved it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I just wonder so—because you had all these troubles in school, I'm just wondering if your parents ever thought to get you a special tutor or find some way to help you?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I think I did have tutors; It didn't work. [00:10:00] I did the same thing with my kids; it didn't work. They had—both my kids had lots of tutors, nothing worked. I was profoundly affected by my issues whatever they were. I still don't know what they are. I've never been tested. That's something I would like to do now. Two tests I'd like to do: I'd like to be tested that part of me and then also to do one of those background checks on your DNA. I'd like to see just where—because my mom's family—my mom has, as she says, the Orinoco, the Latin American Indian, the Venezuelan Indian as a part of her heritage. And so it would be nice to see, where—if that even shows up on the—because Spain will show up for sure, the Spanish background through my mother but maybe Africa too, you never know, but those two things—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did you have any teachers in school who were really special teachers?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: One teacher, the only teacher that I liked was Windward. Have you ever heard of the Windward School?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: That was her. She taught at Paul Revere and then she—Joanne Windward or something? Well, she was the Windward School. She started the Windward school, but she was the best teacher I ever had when I was going to—

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's so interesting.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: [Laughs.] I mean when I was a—when I was four or five, I had colic or maybe younger. I was really young, I was having—I remember. And so my mom, who she is—my mother, she knew—Charlie Chaplin was helping to—I mean come on. She knew celebrities galore, Irish Tree who lived in the Santa Monica. she lived—Irish Tree lived in the merry-go-round, above the merry-go-round in Santa Monica Pier. So my mom had my—Adelle Davis who was a famous nutritionist, a child nutritionist, and so she took me to see—so I went Adelle Davis. [00:12:11] She recommended that what she would do was that I should eat whipped brains, whipped brains. [They laugh.] So that was to help my colic. And so I loved it. I loved the whipped brains. They're very fatty. I would eat them now, and they were raw whipped brain. Can you imagine just whipping brain? And they were pink and so people thought it was ice cream and so people would ask my mother, "So what"—and I was just eating it up—"What are you feeding that child? It looks so good." And she'd say, "Whipped brains," and they would just almost vomit on the spot, I mean really. But, of course, this—

And so it happened to be that the best teacher I had when I was and elementary and in school happens to have started this other school—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So what was good—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —later on.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —about her? What did she do that was different?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: She listened. She listened. She was curious. She didn't put me into a box of being a stupid person. My class at Paul Revere, you had—Lorna Luft was in my class. Lorna Luft was Judy Garland's daughter. I never said a word to her; she scared me. But you had all these kids because we were in the bottom of the bottom class, I mean the bottom of the bottom class, and I would get—and even in the bottom of the bottom class, I was getting—I was failing and getting Ds and getting Us and getting blah-blah. I was doing—if I got a C, there was one report card where I got straight Cs, and I was so excited. No Ds, no Ds, really no Ds. [They laugh.]

But Lorna Luft turns into this celebrity Warhol blah, blah , and I remember hearing from somebody at one point saying, "That's Judy Garland's daughter." [00:14:05] I didn't believe them. I'd heard it all. I said, "No, no way, " but she was. There she—until I saw her on TV. Then I saw her on TV, and "Oh, there's—look, that is her." But you had kids in my class that were working for their parents, and they had no time to do anything else, that really had full-time jobs. You had kids that were dyslexic like myself or whatever. You had this class, I'm sure if you get into that class and you start—they're all doing pretty well now, that class because they were—they were not—they were—at the time, they were the lowest of the low, but they were smart kids. We were not dummies at all. We knew exactly what was going on.

Well, we—I remember being in this—with this group because we were in the same year in, year out, and I was quiet guy that no one paid attention to. I was not hanging out with anybody from my class. I had nothing to do with these people except that I was there every day, and no one was interested in me. It was very traumatic. I hated public school; I hated it. I was picked on. When I came back from Europe in the elementary school, I was—I wore shorts to school once, this was such a mistake. That was—oh, that was such a mistake to wear shorts like that, and I was different. I was different, I was a Continental, I was a little European type, and I was picked on horribly by boys and girls. I was really—it was awful. It was awful. Not only—only after when I got older did things get better.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But during this time, did you feel that you were an artist or that you were going to be an artist?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yes, I was an artist.

ANNETTE LEDDY: For what—when did you have that feeling first—[00:16:02]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I was always an artist.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Always? From the time—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Always—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —you remember?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: So as long as I can remember—when I was painting, I didn't think of myself as an—in a group situation when I came back from Europe or even before I left for Europe, if there was a group dynamic, I was the artist in the group. That's how they put me into that class, so we were—because there's the joker, there's the leader, there's the—there's the surfer, there's the sports guy, there's the whiz kid, the genius, and I was the artist, always.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, in a way, maybe that at least helped to offset, would you say, some of the negative stuff?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well the—the—you asked about who helped me: my mom. My mom said I was a genius. Well, people were stopping her literally, giving her cards saying I was an extraordinary person, and she kept on saying this to me, how extraordinary I was. It wasn't for her saying this, this really helped. So if I did horribly in school, which I did, that helped. That helped, and I was a sensitive child. I'm still a—we're all sensitive, but at that age, you're really sensitive.

My mom has the story about going to see *Bambi*, which I hated, and I wanted to see it so

badly. So we went to see *Bambi*, and about maybe half an hour into the movie, I—she has me looking up at her and say, "I want to leave. I'm not going to see this movie. This movie is too difficult." Once the mother was killed, I wasn't going to hang out there anymore.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But were you—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I must have been—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —sad?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I was terrified and sad. I was so sad. I still can't watch movies. I have to leave the living room with my family when they're watching a film because I was watching the *Green Book*, I couldn't take it. They were heading South in that car, I had to leave the room, I couldn't deal with it. I'm very emotional. I'm extremely emotional, and films are just too easy for me to get hooked into, and this was as a child. [00:18:07] This is—I have—I can talk for hours and hours and hours about this.

But going back, I was back in my old thing. I was an artist. There is a scene like when people came to my father's studio and I was there, I used to put up sheets of paper before I could talk, and I would talk about them without saying gibberish. But I—but he says, "When you put it up, you didn't know how to make it stick, so it stuck—fell to the floor." So when we put a canvas, it'd stay. I'd put a sheet of paper up, and it fell to the floor, and I was talking like, [makes babbling sounds] like my dad was and so I was emulating my father. I mean my father—my voice is exactly like my dad's. I used—and as a—and if someone calls me up that knew my dad now, they would be shocked how close my voice is to my father's. It is identical, identical voice. Everything about me in that sense, I owe—my physical. I'm losing weight. I've lost like some poundage in the last six months because I do not want to turn into my dad. I'm going to lose another 20 pounds, I am going to be thin because I'm 67, and I'm doing it for my health. My blood pressure is coming down. I'm going to do this for the rest of my life. I'm not going—I'm going to be paying attention because I'm too old to die like my father did. I only have 10 more years like—

ANNETTE LEDDY: How did he die, a heart attack?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Liver. He had no cancer, no—his heart was okay, but his liver killed him, and he had to weigh—it was—weigh out to here. His belly was like super big, a stick with a giant tomato middle, but in any case. So I was emulating him so much. So that's one reason I became an artist, and I think my mother's encouragement. [00:20:06] My mother took me every—they took me to all these incredible places and meeting all these incredible people. I mean that they might have been famous or not, it doesn't matter, but they had charisma. These people had—these were strong people. When Isamu came over, you were in his presence.

I remember Twyla Tharp, the dancer. She came over with—because we knew her. She and Peter Young—Peter Young was my older brother's best friend in high school, and he became an artist, moved to New York City, and he fell in love with Twyla Tharp. She was a young dancer, and they had gotten married, and they tried to go into some hotels, and no one would take them because they were not—they didn't have proof. They didn't have the marriage license and so they stayed in our barn. They stayed in our barn, and we have some beautiful photographs of Twyla and Peter in our barn, but she came over maybe five years, four years later. She came in just to visit with us, and this woman was like unbelievable, the way she looked, the way she acted. She was bigger than life. So I grew up with these people that were bigger than life, I really did. My mother was bigger than anybody truly, and now she is.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: She's always been like that, and now she is. But the thing is for instance it—while I was doing all of this, my brain as a young artist in 19—in the early '60s, I remember going to school in Canyon Elementary School and going an odd day, no reason, a sunny day walking and having my lunch. I found a table, place to sit in the sun. [00:22:01] I can tell you exactly where this table is. I can tell you sitting at the table, the cafeteria is over here under a thing. In front of me, there's a building here and then there's the playground in the background. It must have been noonish, and I'm sitting alone. No one's at the table with me, and I stick up my finger, and I said, "I will never forget this." This is the early '60s, "I will never forget this." It was the most humdrum, normal, nothing exciting, and I was interested

in the idea that I could remember something that had no consequence or no reason to be remembered. So I was already being a little conceptual artist.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.] Yeah, that is—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But kids, kids do this. But I was a kid, and I did that. For my Halloween outfit once when I was in—I, I basically got my clothes and put them on backwards. This was in '61, '62. So I went to school in my outfit where everything was backwards. That was a really simple thing to do. So I was not—I wasn't a superhero. I was—I just put my clothes on backwards, but this was my brain. My brain was always like this. The brain that I am now, I had then. I had it then. I had this kind of outsider-ish, visitor-from-another-planet-view of the world, and I will never forget this, and I never have. I remember the view. And when you say that, it's what you're seeing. I don't remember the—I remember the school, but it's where I was.

ANNETTE LEDDY: It was un-special.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Un-special, totally un-special. There was no one there at the table. I wasn't talking to anybody, but I remember putting my finger up and say, "I'll never forget this." My finger was important like this, sticking up. [00:24:00] So this was—maybe this comes—this is after Lascaux. This is after Europe. I was an odd kid. I was an odd kid, but my friends didn't appreciate this oddness, not until much later.

So, in '68, we moved to Chile, another trip. My father—Ford Foundation had this exchange where a professor from UCLA could go down to Chile and a professor from Chile would come up to LA, and we would get a house. They would put us up for a year. I thought—my father thought, this was a great idea. This will be fun, and so we all went. My younger brother was five; I was 16.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Santiago?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Santiago, Chile, and we lived there for a year. Now, this was '68, so what was going on in '68 was that—[. . . –AL] was Frei. I went to an American school, the American school called Nest of Eagles. That was the name of the school, Nido de Aguilas. I was 16 when we went down there and so '67 and then it turned to '68. Now, the trouble with being there at '68 is that the university was on strike for the entire time we were there like they were all over the world. The kids were revolting; there was a revolution. I loved being down there because I became an individual down there. I had friends that didn't know that I was an outsider, that didn't know that I was stupid, that didn't know that I was—they thought I was a normal, nice person. Girls liked me. I was kind of in awe because no one liked me at Paul Revere. [00:26:01] And I so I went. We were there, and, um, then—and I enjoyed my time there. I had some friends, and mostly military kids, government kids, and it was Frei. [. . . –AL]

Moved back to New York, and my mother had a choice. She could move me up a year or back a year, we can move him up or back because it was the middle of the year, and she moved me back, of course, because of the Vietnam War. She didn't want me to be older. I was already old enough because I was—in 1968, I was 17 years old. So this is not going to be a good thing if I—because in September of '68, I'm not going to—I'm not going to do that, so she pushed me back. So I went back into the—I went back into the 10th grade or the 11th grade I think.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You mean the draft?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: The draft, the Vietnam draft. This was a big deal. This was a big deal. And then I was in an art class, and there was a girl and I—before I was in that art class, I had gone to New York during the summer and or at some point, maybe even—I don't know when, but I went there, and I stayed with Mia Agee in New York, and I loved it. I loved it truly, and I said, "This place is for me." I just loved New York.

I remember seeing—we—when we came back, from—when we were on our way to Santiago, we went to New York as well. [00:28:02] Before we went to Santiago, we stayed at The Albert Hotel where we stayed on our way back from Rome, and we stayed at this hotel. When we came back from Rome in the hotel, it was so spiffy. It was like the very early '60s. When we came back now, it was—we're talking '67, so it was—it turned into kind of Warhol, hippie, drugs in the hallway. It was grungy, awful. The Albert was turned into this awful

place. We were all in shock. I think we ended up staying at Mia's again because she had a place on 17 King Street. And so later on, I came back as a child before I—or after Santiago and before I started school, and I was there, and that was pretty great. I loved it and seeing these little kids, these kids dressed in black with the sunglasses because it's the '60s in New York City, fantastic, fantastic.

And there was a girl across the—we—this was in the art class, and her name was Laurie Pincus [ph], and she became one of my very close friends. And then another—a boy in that class was Tony Askins [ph] and so the three of us became a fast kind of fast friends. We did projects together in this class. And, uh—

ANNETTE LEDDY: This was at Palisades?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Palisades High School. And then they graduated, but I didn't. I stayed on because I was—somehow, she could go on, and I had to stay. But these people thought I was interesting, not only did they think that I was not an—I was not stupid, but I was actually cool because of the way I was seeing things and how I was talking and what my—so we were talking about New York together, and we became close, close, close friends. [00:30:10] I learned how to drive while there. I took my photography classes, I learned how to take photographs and how to—I loved developing photograph, film and prints, black and white of course. And hung out with a whole new group of kids that all thought I was really interesting. Kids really—and I was older because I had been held back so many times, I was almost 20 years old now. They were 17, and I'm like almost—I'm 19, so I'm older.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did you have a girlfriend?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, girlfriends. One girlfriend, one—I had two girlfriends in my life, and one I married, separate from people, separate. And my—I'll tell you about that later on, about Val. But, um, no, I stayed out of that whole scene. I was a hippie. I didn't take drugs though, no marijuana, and no one had girlfriends. I mean with this group, no one had boyfriends, no one had girlfriends. It was all communal living, no sex, and some—um, Tony took acid, and he smoked dope, but I never did. I never wanted to, uh, not until later, not until later. But and he never had—no one had a girlfriend. We didn't do the dating thing, we didn't do the prom thing, we were artists. We were all like—it wasn't—there was no pressure. We didn't have to do anything. We—you could be an individual, and you didn't have to partake like you do now, you kind of have to do things. Like in the '70s., maybe in the '80s, you had to do things but not—for us. we didn't have to do anything. And I, I loved that. I kind of became who I am now then. [00:32:04]

And at that point, I started—the notebook started. I have the earliest notebooks that I have in—that are in the archive here are from that period, from high school.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I know.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah. So this was what I was doing—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Is Glen from then?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, no. Glen is later—

ANNETTE LEDDY: You think that Glen—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Glen—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Glen is later?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh yeah, Glen's much later, much, much later. There's a world between the high school and Glen. Although, you will see things in that work. Like you had the finger in the sky—I will never forget this—where I had ideas like the one where you have—um, I did one notebook in one day, and it's exuberant, full of color, very fast, and full of ideas. And it's in the—it's there, you'll see it. But there is one where it has a—it's a piece of film that I've glued on to the page and then an arrow saying, "Two nurses leaving hospital," and then underneath it I think it says, "Man in a wheelchair.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And Baldessari, I mean really, it looks like, and I did it with colored

pencil. It's so much like John's ideas, but this is before I was—I was in high school. I had no idea who John was. I had—when I was—my last year at Cal—at, at, um, at Palisades High School, they had a careers day, careers day, where—and I always wanted to be an artist. I was already—I chose to be an artist in a very particular time when I was in Santiago, Chile. I was with a very close friend of mine, Carrie [ph] Ebersol—I think that was her name—and her mother was a painter. Her mother I said—because whenever anyone asked me what I would want to do as a child, I said, "Commercial artist. [00:34:09] I wanted to become a commercial artist." Before that, I wanted to become an archeologist. When I was in Rome, I wanted to be an archeologist, so it's a—what I became was a kind of combination archeologist, commercial artist. That's what I am. [They laugh.] You put a slice in between, that's what I turned into.

But she said to me, "It's much easier for a commercial artist—it's much easier for a fine artist to become a commercial artist than it is for a commercial artist to become a fine artist, much easier." So, at that point, in my head, I said, [makes sound]. I said, "I'm—" And from that moment on when anyone asked me what I was going to be, I said, "Artist." I stopped wanting to be a commercial artist because of this little logical thing that happened in my head when she said that. And so by the time I was back, I was going to be an artist for sure, and in fact, I was an artist. I was working all the time on my own stuff outside of school. Piles and piles of work that I did at home. I would work in my father's studio even at UCLA, and I was obsessed. I was obsessed.

And then the only place—and then I—the only place that I wanted to apply was Cal Arts. I had heard about it at some point from somebody, "the new Disney school," and that was the only school out there that did not look at your grades. No grades involved, only your portfolio. You could have had straight Fs not a problem. So this was the school for me. I couldn't get—I had—we had—I remember when I was in Paul Revere, the guy said to us, the teacher says, "You know none of you are going to turn into anything." [00:36:05] It's the history teacher.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That is so horrible.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: "Don't try. Please don't try." This was with Lorna Luft in the class, right? "Don't try because you're simply not smart enough. You're not intelligent enough—"

ANNETTE LEDDY: That is so mean.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: "—to do this."

ANNETTE LEDDY: —[inaudible].

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Isn't this amazing?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I mean who dares to say this? He was being funny about it, but you know to do—and I didn't take him seriously, but I remember him saying this to us.

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's horrible.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah. And so then—but I—you know, whatever. Eventually I wanted to go to CalArts because—and he said, "The only way you could do it is if you go to a city college. And you do the two years in a city college, maybe you'll be able to go to college but don't try, don't try." So then—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Cruelty, you know?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —in—at Pali High, they had this careers day and so I said, "I'm going to be an artist," so I go to the careers day. And so I go into this class; I remember exactly where it was. It was on the second floor, and I knew where it was. It was a very important moment for me at that school. There was a guy, he must have been in his 20s, he was a kid, and he was going to talk to us about contemporary art, and what he talked about was *The Xerox Book*.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, cool.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Can you imagine? *The Xerox Book*. He went through every artist

and showed us the book because he had a copy, and he showed us about *The Xerox Book*, and I was—my jaw dropped. Then—with that, then I learned. I mean this was it. This is what I wanted. This is, this is too good, this is too good everything because I loved Warhol at this point. By this point—at the age before I went to Santiago, I got a book on Jasper Johns as a Christmas present in '66, '67, so I was very involved. My favorite artist when I was and high school, one of my favorite was Peter Max, a terrible painter, a terrible artist, but I was in love with his colors and the way he did it, and so forth. [00:38:08] I even went and saw him talk at UCLA once. But Warhol, and I had books on Warhol going back to the mid-'60s. I remember going to see a Pop art show with my best friend Jody Fine and my parents at the Dwan Gallery. We went and saw the big hamburger and a big—an Oldenburg hamburger and an Oldenburg ice cream cone and a Tinguely, which was a radio in pieces hanging like this, and it was working. It was playing—but it was revolving through the different channels. I remember seeing that. I was so impressed with this.

So when we got home from that trip to Westwood to see—the Dwan Gallery was in Westwood, we—my friend and I started making Pop art. We made it together. Jody Fine and I made Pop art. We came up with our own ideas. So I was aware of Pop art, and I was aware of Frank Stella, and I was aware of Jasper Johns, and I was aware of even Marcel Duchamp. And I was, of course, aware of Isamu Noguchi because we had gone to see his shows, and he came to the house—the most elegant man you'd ever meet in your life. We went to The Noguchi Museum before it was a museum when it was still a studio. I went with Valerie. We went there, and he showed us around, amazing. Noguchi was in the audience when I did my first hypnotic performance. He was there as well as some other people from my mom's generation. They thought I was out of my mind. But this is later on.

So there I am and then conceptual art, I'm still in high school. *Avalanche* magazine, the famous *Avalanche,* was being sold in the organic market in Santa Monica. [00:40:06] [They laugh.] I found in the supermarket the co-op supermarket they had—

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Co-opportunity? –AL]—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —*Avalanche*—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —that place?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, I don't know but this is—we're talking '60s, '70s, so I don't know, but it was a co-op market in Santa Monica and they had *Avalanche*. How the fuck that they get *Avalanche* magazine? But they had it. And there was Bruce Nauman on the cover, and I bought them all. I bought Bruce—I bought the Lawrence Weiner, Bruce Nauman, Joseph Beuys, Vito Acconci, Yvonne Rainer. These were all the people on the cover of this magazine, and I was taken and so I knew about conceptual art. I knew about Earth art, I knew about Heizer, I knew about everybody, and I'm just barely out of high school if not even in—still in high school. And so I wanted to go to CalArts.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did you go to Al's Café?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no, he was much later. Oh yeah, he is much later.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And that was '68 [ph]—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I know, but I didn't know who the hell he was.

ANNETTE LEDDY: All right. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I was not there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I know. I'm just asking.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, but I discovered it because he came and talked to us. Allen Ruppersberg came and talked to our class. I was so impressed, we all were, he's a real artist —

ANNETTE LEDDY: This was in CalArts?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: At CalArts, yeah, this was CalArts not in this. But here I am, I just—and then I got into—I got into CalArts. I submitted six notebooks plus boxes and boxes of stuff, and I got in.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Cool.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Also, at the same time as I applied and I got in, uh, and I was—that was it. When I got into CalArts, it was like I made it, phew. I was like I've been running for like 20 miles to get into this front door, and I made it in, and it didn't close before I got there. I was so excited. [00:42:00]

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, that's so great.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But then at the same time as my last—there's this program at, at all the public schools. Um, they had this scholarship, and the scholarship, it was called New Masters Scholarship. And so every high school submits one student, and I got submitted. I was—I was—I wanted it, and they allowed. I'm amazed that the school recognized that I had talent and that is should apply, and I won. I was the —I got the first prize in the—all of LA County schools, I got the first prize. It was a thousand dollars, and at that same time, I graduated, and I graduated in the bottom tenth of my class, bottom tenth. And at the same time, I beat everybody in the entire county as an artist, so clearly, things were flipping. [They laugh.] I didn't have to worry about my brain. I didn't have to worry so much about my brain.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did you worry about your brain? You haven't actually—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yes, of course, I was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —talked about that.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —no, socially speaking very much so because I was ostracized. I was an outsider my whole life.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But did you think, What's wrong with me? Why can't I—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, I never thought that—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —learn this?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no, no, no, no.

ANNETTE LEDDY: No?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, I never. I just thought I was stupid. I was not smart enough. I was—it's not stupid. I was told I was stupid my whole life, I mean, officially. Unofficially, I was told I was a genius my whole life. My mother said I was a genius. She says, "Look, I don't—I don't—I mean it, you're a genius." She used to be so straight about it. Thank God, that she offset the other. At least I was equal. At least, I'm a stupid idiot and a genius, so somehow, it matches up.

So I got into CalArts, and I got there early. I was there at the very beginning, the first year at the new campus. [00:44:04] Driving out to CalArts, they were doing roadwork on these freeways. They had these, um—this grid system that were in the hills to keep it from falling like they have in LA, and I thought those were earthworks. I thought, these were fantastic, they looked like earthworks to me. And this—because the school is here, and they're into earthworks, and they're doing it around me already. I'm so excited to be part of this thing. I —that summer, I had dug into the ground in making these photographs, these earthworks. I was making earthworks on the beach, truly with the idea of making earthworks. I was taking photographs of nothing. I was doing all this kind of Conceptual art crap because I knew about it, and I wanted to become part of it.

And so there I am at CalArts before it opens, and I'm in the hallways, and they're still putting in the carpets, you know? The carpets were still—I have photographs of the carpets still being rolled up. I got there a week early or maybe five days early before school officially started, so I get to be used to be being there. My, my roommate was in the music department, and he was a tabla player. You know a tabla is the Indian drum, so that's, what, his specialty, that's why he was at the school. It was a—I mean come on, a tabla player? You're going to—that's what your roommate does? I mean he's not—[laughs]. It was fantastic.

I remember walking in and seeing these black paintings in a studio. Someone else was

already there working, and they put the tape on it to hold it up, so you can just tape it on to the wall. And I thought that that was part of the painting when I saw it up on the wall from the street up into the window because you could see the studios. That was Ross Bleckner's studio. [00:46:01]

ANNETTE LEDDY: Wow.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Because he had just—he was just starting school too.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Hold on one second. I have to see how much time we have on this. Okay. I think we have only about an hour left on this particular tape. Do you—where do you—do you feel like you want to do CalArts?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, yeah, I'm excited. I think we'd be stupid to not do CalArts.

ANNETTE LEDDY: All right. Let's then—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Let's continue.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Let's continue.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I'll be an hour.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —an hour, an hour easy. I mean maybe it's a half an hour for CalArts, I don't know. But CalArts, so I'm there. Now, you know I'm an artist, I'm aware of myself, I remembered that I said these things. I mean when I was in high school, I was coming—I was doing performances, events where literally what I would do would be tours and may—and where—people—because I could drive at this point where people would—I would give them LA tours. And a tour was like the rush-hour tour where we'd literally drive on to the highway and get stuck in traffic, and this was the tour. We were touring traffic.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And we'd go down to the airport. We would go to different places and so this was early—I didn't know what it was. It was—I called them tours, but this was like performances. But then, again, I—when Allan Kaprow did those ice pieces, remember in LA those—?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: *Fluids*.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: The—I was there, I went.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So you were exposed to—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Of course I was, yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —this, yeah, all the time?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I was exposed to everything.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So wait a minute. The year you started is, what, 1970?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No—yeah, fall of '70, fall of '70. Or maybe '71, maybe even '71. I bet you it's '71. I bet you it's CalArts in '71, fall of '71 and so—you can look it up easily enough. [00:48:04] CalArts had already existed, Villa Cabrini because they had a—because the building was not done fast enough, so they had to get this other school to do the first, and that was the hedonist. That's the sex school. That was where they'd had orgies in the—you know, I heard all about this.

ANNETTE LEDDY: In the swimming pool, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: In the swimming pool or whatever, yeah, they had it. This was the—that's why we've never had a pool. When I was there, there was no pool because the head secretary of the art department was giving someone some sex on the pool while Roy Disney was touring around, [they laugh] and this was not a good thing. So in any case, so I'm there touring, and there's Ross so then I thought, I wanted to make—I was in the hallways at this—look at these hallways. And so I was making art in the hallways truly, and what I did was I got masking tape, and I pulled it down to the floor. So from this—from the window to the floor, it looked like it was leaning, this masking tape. It had all the tension, so it was like a stick. And so I was making these sticks in different parts of the school as if it was my studio because that's the way it was. And I remember—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Because you're so enthusiastic—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I was, I was totally enthusiastic. I wanted to get to work. I wanted to get to work, and I was just—and so Ross was walking down the hallway, and we talked about it. He walked—this was school—before school opened. He said, "What's your name, and what are you doing?" I said, "This is—I'm working on the sculpture thing." Now, he was in the graduate school, and I was in first year, before first year—I was right out of high school—but there was no differentiation between. There were no grades, so you were not first year, second year, third year, or fourth year, even graduate. It's all the same, all the same situation,. You are all artists, we're all dealing what we have to deal with to work there, but we all were doing what we wanted.

So when I arrived at CalArts, Baldessari was not there, he was on—he was not in the school. [00:50:06] He was on leave. He was in Europe that semester—and so I worked with Alison Knowles. She was my teacher. Peter Van Riper and Alison Knowles taught at—ran the graphics lab. She was a Fluxus artist, and I started to make these silk-screen prints of these photographs that I had taken over the summer of this sand being dug up, beautiful, big prints. The other person that was in the graphics lab at the time was Barbara Bloom. So Barbara and I became friends, and this is before John came back. I was making kind of conceptual art stuff and doing this graphic stuff and living in the dorms. I still didn't smoke dope, and the school was a phenomenon. It was a phenomenon. You had—all the Fluxus people were there. So Allan Kaprow was there. You had—Emmett Williams was there. Nam June Paik was there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Name June Paik was there? Wow.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Nam June Paik was there. You had—I mean the list goes on and on, a tremendous painter, tremendous painter—no, no a dancer, a tremendous dancer who was the—who influenced Richard [ph]—who influenced so many people? I think she is the most influential artist on the performances of Bruce Nauman. She did these—this walking kind of thing and she did—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yvonne Rainer?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, not Yvonne Rainer. There are three of them. She's a tiny woman, and she was there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: The blonde. [00:52:00]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: A tiny woman, she was fantastic. In any case, she was there, but the school was filled with these people. And then you had the dance department and you—I remember later on, you had these queens [ph], these male dancers, these black male dancers, that were like six foot five. I mean done to the [ph], I mean done, and I they never took off their leotards as tight as they could be. And they were—and they might as well been wearing full makeup, but they weren't. They were so powerful the way they would strut down the hallways like they were in the army or something, I mean full speed ahead. Your jaw dropped when you saw these people. And then—and Pee-wee Herman, Paul Reubens, he was a hanger on of that group. He was in the back of the triangle, and he was not at the front with these guys. And Ed Harris was there, the actor. Mandy Patinkin was there. Hey, I remember, I remember these people from the cafeteria. And then Edward Schlossberg was there who, you know, he was—he ran the critical studies department at CalArts. But you had all these fancy and then you had—later on, you had our little group, the Baldessari class, which became its own thing. That was really the conceptual art group—

ANNETTE LEDDY: The—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: There was no—because that—

ANNETTE LEDDY: The Post Studio class.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —the Post Studio. And that was just—that was his name for it but then—this is before Michael Asher was there, and he had—everybody came out to talk in his class, and that's when I saw Al for the—Al Ruppersberg came for the first time, and he talked about it and fantastic. I just thought he was a fantastic artist. I met him. Joan Jonas, Richard Serra, Vito Acconci, all these people, Rebecca Horn. When anyone came to New York from Europe, John would find out and would offer them a trip to LA and a place to stay. [00:54:10] There was so much money that he could afford to fly them out, give them a hefty salary, and fly them back, and put them up in a hotel. So we had all these great people coming to hang out with us.

Now, we—there was a bar that we would all go to called the Irish Harp, and the Irish Harp at CalArts, there was this, uh—these four-leaf clovers that people would put their—you'd write your name on, and you would put it up, and it was filled with these four-leaf clovers. And in those four-leaf clovers, you would have everybody, all these artists with amongst everybody else, but you would have say, as I said, Vito Acconci or, or Rebecca Horn or—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Was it—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —whoever—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —on the campus?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no, no, no, in town, far away. No, there was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: In Los Angeles?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no, in Valencia.

ANNETTE LEDDY: In Valencia.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh no, this is Valencia. We're talking Valencia. This was really kind of far away. And it was really a fantastic, fantastic thing. It was a moment and then you had the feminist group in there as well. So John's class, you had the feminist—the Woman's Building was being produced,. They had the feminist workshop, which was with the—with Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro, and that whole bunch. They were there, and I enjoyed, and I would—and then the painters, John Mandel was teaching a painting class, Pat Steir came out and taught a painting class, Paul Brach had a painting class. And I would sit in on the painting classes just because I didn't know what painting was. I grew up with it, but I still didn't understand what they were talking about when they were talking about abstract painting. I would just go there and listen to the language because this didn't make any sense to me. [00:56:03] It was like alchemy or something, weird.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So describe the work you produced there and also how it evolved over the time that you were there.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It started—well, ideas. It's like—the first was a book of ideas, and the ideas were coming fast and furious. I was just coming up with—like digging in the—I dug in the ground over that summer. I was starting to do these screen prints and then my first notebook, which is here—you have it. It's in the archive—where I was coming up, but they were all pieces that I was thinking about. Like a dynamite that's—a live dynamite box that if you push the button, you would blow up the whole building, something like this or a sheet of metal being hung from the ceiling and being hung from the ceiling about a half an inch off the ground. So it's on the ground, but it's hung from the cleaning. Or putting a 35-mm screen, a movie screen in the landscape and having a 35-mm film shown on that screen as a sculptural piece. So it would be a black-and-white or a color shot but in the middle of nowhere. That's what—that was a sculpture, a piece of mine. So these were all like sculpture pieces. Drilling a hole through a building and then shooting a bullet through the hole, you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I like that.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —stuff like this, you know?

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

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But always ideas, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and they were fun. I mean they were adventurous. They were like what I did when I was in high school with that—and I had that notebook and I did—there were ideas, lots and lots of ideas. [00:58:05]

ANNETTE LEDDY: And how did people to these at CalArts?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No one saw these. No one saw these books. These books were private, and I was just there in the class. My first class at CalArts was Jack Goldstein's class called Temporary Structures, and that was the name of his sculpture class. The first day of class—the first day of school, literally the first day of school, early September, I'm waiting for that class, and I'm early. I'm the first one there of course. [They laugh.] Well, I'm in the dorm and so there I'm waiting and Dede Bazyk, a fellow student—she has since died, but she was a big part of John's class as well—and James Welling. So Jim Welling walks in, he's barefoot and walked in. We're still waiting for the door to open because Jack's late, of course Jack was late, so we're just hanging out in the hallway. So Jim has a little, a little cap, a little knitted cap—and it must have been super-hot. It was—we're talking Valencia in September, it's hot, and he—but barefoot, and we're all getting to know each other. But the funny that the first people ,the first person I met at CalArts waiting for a class was Jim. We're still very close friends.

And, um, I had—and we were—and it was my idea—since I had done these earthwork pieces on the beach, I said, "Maybe we could all go out to a dry lake bed and make work out there, you know? Why not?" And so Jack said, "That's a great idea." And so we all go out there and make art out there in the dry lake bed, and I brought a roll of string, a ball of string as just a throwaway idea. I dug into the ground and made some stupid thing and made—not interesting at all. [01:00:00] But I had this roll—ball of string and so Dede and I just went as far as we could go. I thought it would go on forever because whoever does this? There's never enough room for a ball of string to be pulled, but this was the place to pull it, and she was not even—but like, God, you're still there and so the rings [ph] of string. So then I took photographs of this ball—this string with the desert behind. It was a beautiful series. It's in this new book I'm doing on my photography.

And someone—Dave Trout and Roman—Dave Trout was in the class, and he eventually became a punk rock star of a band called The Weirdos, an LA punk rock band. But what he did back then was to put carrots upside down. They were beautiful orange, just sticking out of the—out of the dry lake bed these orange carrots. It was beautiful. Jim went off out there in the middle of nowhere. He was on his haunches. He was like on the ground with this looking down and as if he's looking at something on the ground. And Jack was literally going between projects in his pickup truck. So there he was and so Jack—I said, "Jim—Jack, what's Jim doing out there? Jim, what's he—? He's out there. I don't know what he's doing." I thought Jim was—Jim was the first artist I met that I was intimidated by. The first artist that I met that I said, "Hey, this guy is weirder than I am. This guy is as good as I am. This guy is good." I was impressed with Jim, and I said, "What's he doing?" And so Jack said, "I'll find out," and he goes out there, and Jack's leaning outside the truck, right, doesn't even get out of the truck, and Jim is on all fours in the ground, and he's taking pictures of pebbles. There are these two little pebbles, and he's taking many pictures of these two little pebbles on the ground, and he's measuring the space between these two pebbles. [01:02:01] So he is going minuscule instead of going—he's just going in instead of like out.

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MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Obviously, what are you going to—? He's doing the opposite of where we are. And so then Jack comes back but he—can you see Jack leaning out the—leaning out of the truck asking, "So what's up, Jim? What are you doing ? And then so—and then Jim—and then Jack drives back, and I said, "What's Jim doing?" "I have no idea. I don't know what Jim's doing. I don't know what Jim's doing." But we were driving out. Jim was—we were driving, and Jim, Jack, and I drove to the dry lake bed together, so we were clearly, you know, this—we were the group. We were the key people in the class, and we became friends forever until Jack died. But the thing is that in the dry lake bed, Jim wanted to get out of truck and to sit and to stand holding on with the wind blasting him as Jack drew—drove on the truck, and Jim had terrible acne. Like I had bad acne as well, terrible, but he had—and

with the wind, his face become great pink, red pink. I mean it was really crazy. And so I—everything this guy did, I was interested, curious about.

We were getting ready to leave and so he pulls out a bag, out of a bag, he pulls out an orange, puts it on the ground, and starts taking photographs of this orange with the camera down on the ground with it. And I said, "Oh, my God, this guy is so out there. This is such an interesting—pulling and putting an orange?" And later on, I found out he had talked to a friend. He was going out to California and what he—and he says, "Look, I'm going to take a photograph of an orange, send it to you" back in Pittsburgh where he went to school. And he was just taking a photograph of an orange at the dry lake bed to send back to his friends, but I had him making a masterpiece because it was just such a weirdo thing to do. [00:02:04] But I could go on and on about how great—what all the weirdo Jim things of what he did. But that was the first class, that was the first, and Jack's message was we don't ever make things. We only rearrange what's already there. That's all we do. We do not make—

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —anything new.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —so great.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: So we understood that we're not—that's why it's called temporary, Temporary Structures. So that was the concept that I kept running in my head. Now, that was—while I was there, I was also at the graphics lab. So all my ideas about sculpture that I'm talking about in my notebook were much more associated with Jack's class than they would have been with Alison Knowles in the graphics lab. And Jim and I, we're slowly becoming friends, it was so fabulous and then John arrives the following year, in the spring. This is the first semester. In the spring, John arrives and then David Salle joins the class. I mean we all joined the—we're all in this class together, Post Studio Art. And, um, there was a Wittgensteinian [ph] scholar teaching at the school, and all the kids wanted to take his class, a bright guy, very bright guy. I knew him a little bit later on, and kids like a Judith Stein who was—Branca, Judith Stein, Jill Ciment—these are all women—Susan Davis, David Salle. I mean, this group was harsh to say the least. It was a strong, strong class, you simply had to defend yourself. [00:04:00]

ANNETTE LEDDY: And so they would attack the work that you—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: They wouldn't attack.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —presented?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: They would ask questions. They could be the sweetest questions in the world, but if you're not prepared, it is like a sledgehammer. It doesn't matter. You can say, "I have a—why did you do this? Why not that?" "Oh, why not that?" but you learned. What I learned was to cover my bases and to really push myself. So this Wittgensteinian class, I only mentioned it because I didn't who Wittgenstein was. I had no idea. I felt I was—oh boy, I'm a stupid guy, that's coming back a little bit. I know I can't compete with these guys. They call know Wittgenstein, I don't know who Wittgenstein is and but I—and then Lichtenstein was mentioned and some context, and I was so happy because I knew who Lichtenstein was in spades. I knew about that work backwards. I had books on his stuff.

And the class was, I mean some of—one of my favorite stories about that we—there are so many. We've been—it's in print already because I did this for John's book. A lot of John Baldessari books, we had conversations. In fact in that book, there's a conversation we're talking about CalArts, and he would take us to the Forest Lawn, the Place of Living Art. We would go to these bizarre trips to bizarre places that are fantastic, and it would be our group and we would all—I remember we went and saw *Mad Love* [ph], this Alain Resnais film—I think it's Alain Resnais. It could be someone else—and it was a four-hour movie playing in Hollywood somewhere, and we all went to see it, the class on our own, we went. I don't think John came; he might have been there, but it was a four and we—and there was an intermission because it's so long, but we didn't—no one sat with each—we all sat separate. No one in the class sat with anybody, so we were all alone looking at this just to have that experience, fantastic. [00:06:02] That was amazing.

CalArts had the Bijou, the Bijou Theater, they had a theater. Because I was in the dormitory, I didn't know—I mean what am I going to do? I don't have a TV and I'm—you know

recreation. So I went to the Bijou every night. They'd have three films a night printed. I mean not—they had no video projectors, so it had to be filmed.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Sixteen mm.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Godard, I went through all the Godard films, Alain Resnais films, Renoir films, Phil—

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's so good.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —you know everything. You would think you know Disney that it would not—no, this was the highest of the high. I remember when I saw *Contempt* for the first time, I thought it was atrocious. I didn't understand what he was doing, completely didn't understand, not at all. And this was—but I learned so much. And they would have—Debbie Reynolds would come and talk. The auditorium wasn't even full. Gene, the famous dancer, choreographer, actor, Gene—what's his name —he came and talked.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You mean—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: *An American in Paris*.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —*Singing in the Rain*? Yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, *Singing in the Rain.*

ANNETTE LEDDY: Gene—I want to say Hackman, but that's not it. It's Gene, oh—[they laugh]. We—it was, you know? [ph]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: We know who we're talking about.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: He came and talked, but you had all these famous people come and talk, and you could get a seat. And I saw—I learned so much about movies. It was amazing. They did it because it was the—and it' still going on. And you had—apparently, at the same time I was there, you had all these very important—these film people that were going to be come gods were going to school there. I never got to know them, never hung out with them. But there was this—for instance, um—well, okay, that's CalArts a little bit. [00:08:02]

I'm going to go back to CalArts, but I'm going to go into other things that were going on at that time for me. David Bowie was—[side conversation].

ANNETTE LEDDY: The lights changing? I got that? Am I losing my mind?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no. They all went down.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's really—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Maybe someone turned on an air conditioner. Okay, but in any case, would that be affected? No.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I don't think so. I have—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Okay.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I'm just going to look at the time, I'm just—what is the point of having a readout if it's too dim to read it? That's what I don't understand.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: [Side Conversation.] I can tell you, what is it?

ANNETTE LEDDY: What time is it? Just tell me what time it is on your—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It's 2:30.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay. So I think we have about half an hour more on this tape—on this card.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: There were two things happened amongst many other things. I became very close friends with David. Nancy Chunn ran the art—she was the secretary of the—of Paul Brach and so I became very close friends. She and David were boyfriend-girlfriend, and she could choose any two students for the first year. I wasn't there yet, but the two artists that she'd choose just from their portfolios getting into school were Eric Fischl and David Salle. Those were the people she chose just—you know? So she has an eye. [Side Conversation.] Oh no, it's getting brighter again.

And it was really—so I hung out with them, and one of the things they did was E-S-T, EST. EST was this self-help kind of group thing, kind of a hodgepodge of New Age religion type of thing. It was nothing that you would become a—you'd become a part of it, but they used hypnosis, they use all the—it was philosophical, EST program or whatever, and I did that. In fact, the first—the first time I did it, I met—I met Allan McCollum. [00:10:04] He was in the EST group too. So I've met Allan while I was still at CalArts and he was there, and I knew his work from Nick Wilder because he was showing already with Nick Wilder at the time. And so we all were doing that, and this was another part of my education, the EST thing. I never become—I didn't lose myself and my brain, but I was really—it comes—I think it's important in how it influenced me to a degree as to *Entering the Picture* because that's all they—they didn't—that's not what they talked about. But that mindset of looking where you are and what's going on and what are we all doing here, this is a little bit of—that was there, but we were also at CalArts having that. So this whole thing was like a package, you could say, the two. And then I quit EST within three years. Two or three years, I was out of there, but I learned—

ANNETTE LEDDY: How did it affect you? What did you learn from it?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I just learned about—it was like a philosophical—it was like a class in philosophy. That's what it was. It was just a class in philosophy mostly eastern but still—and without names. It was about like so—

ANNETTE LEDDY: But it's a self-help movement. Did you find it—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But it wasn't—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —helpful?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It helped me a little bit, but I found it—and you'll get—you'll get into—you're supposed to be somehow more aware at the end of the class than you were at the beginning, and it was not cheap. At the time, it was expensive. It was two weekends that you did. It was intense. And I went with David, I went with Jim. I went with—we all went, we all did it. And in my notebooks, you'll see little EST cards. They're in there. I kept them in there because that was something that was a part of my life at that time.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But this hypnosis, did that affect your—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I didn't even know.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —[cross talk].

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I didn't even know it was hypnosis. I didn't even know that was what they were doing, but when you go back and you start to do it, there were things that I did there that were definitely self-hypnosis—going through your body, doing this whole thing, I mean, really, getting relaxed and doing the stuff. [00:12:09] It's very meditative, you know trance-like.

And then at the same time, when I was at the end of my high school days, at the beginning of—I was still hanging out with my high school friends, and I was going to CalArts, I discovered David Bowie. And that's something to discover David Bowie at that time because he was not well known at all. It was—I never got into Led Zeppelin. Led Zeppelin was not my thing, although I bought some records. The—I had heard that some friends of mine from high school said that this is—he's coming to LA, and he's more dynamic than Mick Jagger. That's what we had heard and so I said, "Got to go," and I bought a record, and I loved the record, "The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust," and never played on AM radio. Nothing, nothing ever made it, and barely made it to FM, total cult following. They had no following, I mean really to get into—this guy was from another planet you can say. And so we went—I went, and I saw the Ziggy Stardust. I mean this is a claim to fame that I was actually at the

Santa Monica Civic for his concert in LA in 1971 or [19]'72 or whatever it was. It was a remarkable, very influential concert for me, and amazing. First of all, when you go into the theater, they were checking all bags for guns because Ziggy Stardust is murdered. [00:14:05] He's murdered onstage. That's how he dies, he's shot. And they're also checking for photographer cameras because they don't want people to take pictures but I don't even —I just remember they're going through—

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ANNETTE LEDDY: Um—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, I've got—I'll do David Bowie and then we'll do CalArts. We'll continue CalArts because there are many more stories of CalArts.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I know, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Are you worried about the overall length of this thing?

ANNETTE LEDDY: I think this has been such a fantastic interview.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, I'm enjoying it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I mean so far it's just so interesting, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Okay, so here I am. We went and saw the David Bowie thing. That was so fantastic—was that this was a period where all the people playing rock and roll had a million amps on the stage because they represent power. He had no amps; it was an empty stage, okay. And he had them up—they were up onstage, but they were behind a black curtain. He was not using them. He wanted to take the music context out of it and bring in the theater context, so he was taking them offstage. This was a big deal. Then—so you have the music that starts is the—from *A Clockwork Orange,* [sings] the "Ode to Love" or whatever it's called. And this—but from *A Clockwork Orange,* from the—from the movie, from the movie *A Clockwork Orange*, this song. Now, he was very famous for having this orange hair, and that he actually looks like he is a hoodlum from *A Clockwork Orange* period. I mean he has the style that is not so far away from Malcolm McDowell.

And so you had this—and you had little searchlights that were going all around, little searchlights that were going like this, World War II, Holocaust, all these little things that were going. And then you see they were getting onstage, and it was a black-and-white strobe, *bop, bop, bop, bop, bop, bop*. You see them as they're tuning up the instruments, the way they always do, and he's there, and so—but with the black-and-white strobe, you—it looks filmic. It looks like you're watching a movie. [00:02:10] And then, *bam,* it's full color on the stage, and they are not at the beginning of the song, but they're in the middle of the only LA—the only radio hit they had ever had, which was "Hang On to Yourself," which is—which would've been the last song you want to—this is the orgasm song. This is the song at the end of the concert where everyone goes crazy, and he's starting up, and he's starting up before you can even think about it. So this is the one that everyone wanted to hear at the end, and he's putting it at the very beginning, so it's like you're lost. You're—

And then the next song, he's up there the way he looks, the glitter and the androgyny, a man, woman, puppet master blah, blah, blah. He's up there, and he does, um—he sings "Space Oddity," and he does it just on a—with a guitar on a stool in an empty stage. It was like, Oh, my God. And at the end of the concert, he ends with "Rock 'n' Roll Suicide," that's the last song. And at the end of it—and so we're at the end, and I'm with my two friends Tony and Mark, and I—we looked at each other, and I said, "That wasn't music. This isn't —this, what was it? This was not rock and roll. This was not music. It was not theater. This is something else. Something else was happening." We stood up, I walked down the—I walked behind me, and there was a little girl about so tall dressed exactly like him onstage to the—I mean, crazy like a little puppet. And I said, "Oh God, where are we? What is this?" but I was taken. [00:04:01] I was taken and then I started. I saw—I took David to see him once, David Salle, and I saw every concert up until—uh, boy, I saw the Thin White Duke, the end of The Thin White Duke. I took Mia Agee to see him at Radio City, and, uh, I'm sorry I never met him. He was a brilliant man, and I think very influential to me.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And how—explain how it affected your artwork.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I think not my artwork but just the approach. I mean the alien thing, you know? It's like from outer space. Everything is a—everything is negotiable, everything. Sexuality is negotiable, the persona is negotiable, gender is negotiable—what we're dealing with now. This was 50—almost 50 years ago, and he was putting it out there. I think it was that, and the fact that I was in love with Warhol, and he just took it a little bit further, you know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I mean same—same thing. I learned about Velvet Underground, and everything like that, but this was happening at the same time and then we would be going to—the class went to—um, we saw a lot of bands, Whiskey a Go Go. The class went to Whisky a Go Go more than once, the CalArts—the Post Studio Art went to the Whiskey a Go Go. [They laugh.] And then as I said, Cliff Roman and he—Cliff Roman, and they became The Weirdos. They were part of a punk rock band.

I remember—to change the subject about the CalArts, CalArts said, "If you get into this school, you are an artist. You're no longer a student, so don't act like a student. You're an artist." [00:06:00] There was no assignments, zero assignments. No one told me to do a thing ever. I was—it was my job to make my work, which was I was happy to do because I was already working on my own totally, and I made it. So people treated each other with a certain respect, but within that respect, you were just a normal person. For instance, I was trying—I had a BMW, 1800 Ti. I got my father to buy this car in Oklahoma. We were in one of our trips to Chickasha, and we were driving, and I said, "God, look there's an 1800 Ti." I was into cars; I still love cars, and, "Wow, this is fantastic," and I said, "We have to—" and we bought the car. We bought this car. Well, what a mistake. This car was just atrocious, but in 1967, you tell people this car, and they drooled. This car is fabulous. This is a super, great car. In any case, it never could start because the battery was too small for the engine, and so it was always—never could—never ever start. I would routinely, if ever I drove out there, have to tour the entire school to find someone to help me with jumper cables. I remember going to this guy in the cafeteria and saying to him, "How do I—? Do you have jumper cables?" He says, "What do you have?" I said, "A BMW 1800 Ti." He said to me, "Drive it off a cliff." [They laugh.] That was his answer to me, "Drive it off a cliff."

And I saw Mimi Schapiro—I remember the hallway—she was walking in the other direction, and I stopped and I ask her does she have jump—can she help me, I have to get to Los Angeles, and my car won't start. And she looks at me with her—with her—she just looks at me, and she says, "Why don't you fly home on your Conceptual art?" and then she kept on walking, and she was—I mean, oh, my God. [00:08:05] You know I was not—she was not talking to a student when she said this. She was talking to an artist that she disagreed with and, uh, but this was CalArts, you know?

I mean I did a project. The House of Dust had a kind of a performative event like a happening, and I—my piece was putting five roasted chickens in a row in the green grass. That was my piece and then people could eat it slowly, and the whole thing disappeared, but that was my artwork. Everyone accepted it. There was no problem. I mean I did all kinds of things like this. Now, CalArts—I was in the performance class, and it was being taught by Wolfgang Stoerchle and Harold Budd. Harold Budd was from the music department and Wolfgang Stoerchle was from the art department. He was a sculptor, performer-type guy. Wolfgang Stoerchle is someone who tried to get an erection in front of an audience. He did all the—he tried to piss and [cross talk]—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I know who he is, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: He tried to do all this crap. Well, I did a performance because we all did performances in this class. Half the students were from the art department, and half the students from the music department and so Jim was in the class, David Salle was in the class, and I was in the class, and some others from the art school. And so my piece was holding up a railroad tie off the ground. I'm demonstrating gravity; that was what I was doing. And so I'm sitting there with this half a railroad tie in my arms for like hours. So within the first 15 minutes, 20 minutes, people get bored, what am I doing? I was watching you holding on to this thing. And they're making fun of it as if they're going to carve their initials into the piece of wood, and so forth, and so on. I'm just holding it up, and eventually, it gets on to my knees, and eventually it gets on to my feet. [00:10:05] I'm holding it off the ground. I have to just hold it off the ground; that was my rule. But my feet, I could just stand

there forever with my feet. I'd have to wait—that's a whole other game. At one point, Wolfgang has to leave, but he doesn't want to cut down my performance, shut it—cut it off because it's still going on, and he tells me how to close the door. He says, "Okay, now, to lock up, all you have to do is turn this knob, open the door, and close it." And so I've been in there for half an hour by myself before I leave. No one's watching me. I'm holding this thing off the ground by myself in a room. Isn't this pretty fantastic?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And I'm doing of all things demonstrating something so common that it doesn't [inaudible] the demonstration at all. I mean, our living—we're living with this demonstration of gravity. But this is the same person who said, "I will never forget this." It's the same person, and that's deep in me. That goes back. When I was an infant, I think it goes back. And so at CalArts I could—I survived because people respected where my art was coming from. They may not have agreed with it, I might have made clumsy work here and there, but I was an honest artist. I really was. And so David never tried to kill me. David was always curious about what my logic was. Jim would always—was always curious. Jim was doing—they were doing great things. David was doing some of his best work and so was Jim, brilliant work. I mean, there was a piece where Jim invited me. He wanted me to document a piece of his, so we went out to the hills behind CalArts, and he was down and he got naked and he started a fire, tried to start a fire as a caveman would. I'm just filming him start a fire naked far away, and I'm filming it. [00:12:05] I mean what a bizarre thing. It's like putting an orange on the desert floor. His brain was so—I mean what he was pulling from was fantastic.

And there was one class where—this was towards the last year at CalArts where John—we went behind the school to start to make art, and, uh, and there are some photographs. The only photographs of the class really is our—when we did this and followed him. But when John ever traveled and he came back, he would bring a bag of catalogues, books and catalogues, and he would give. If ever he did anything, he'd each give us one. So if he made a book, he would each give us—each of us, we would—he would ask us questions. We were the first people he would ask about anything, so he was very interested in our comments, and we were not stupid. We were tough as nails, and we were not stupid. One of my pieces, I did—we had a class. He was very generous that way, and he made his art in the same studio we did. All those, I am making art pieces, that was all done in our classroom.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Wow.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: You could tell by our cinder blocks in the background because we all had the same cinder blocks in ours. We had the same. We were all making art in the same room because we all could get the portapaks, and that was fantastic. I—you know so that's—I was in one—there was one class that was a group. We did a group thing where—a group show in our classroom, and I wanted to bring the sunlight into the room because there were no windows in our room. It was—there were no windows. It was closed up. You would never know what time of day it was because the class had no windows. And so I said—I wanted to bring the sunlight into the room. So we got—Suzanne Kuffler was outside out on—outside of the building, and she brought the sun into the hallway. [00:14:08] And then Jill Ciment was getting it down another hallway, and then there was a mirror here that shined it into our classroom and then another mirror that shined it where my piece was. And so there was about maybe a yard by—one-by-two-yards spot of sun in our class. It was there in the room, fantastic, right?

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I wanted to document this, so I tried to burn a sheet of paper with a magnifying glass, but it was not strong enough. The sun was not strong enough to burn a sheet of paper. Outside, no problem but not inside. So I got out a dried leaf and I got the—and I burned the leaf with a magnifying glass, and that was my piece in the show. That was the burning leaf was a piece in the show. But that was—that would be the kind of thing that would've come out of the earliest notebook, bringing the sunlight into the room.

Uh, the works that I was doing at that time, I was interested in light, light patterns. All I see are light patterns, so I was breaking down the visual. So I was playing with different mediums in relationship to—like a colored, a wall of colored sheets of paper and then having only green light in the room, so all the paper you would not see. It would not be the colors, but it would be a color under a green light. I'm doing a show in Hannover at the Gesellschaft,

on the—at CalArts from this period. That's going to be—it's opening in August, and now, this starts now. The CalArts thing is starting.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You mean the show is about CalArts? Oh.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: From the '70s. It's from the '70s, '70s, CalArts '70s, and I think the piece of the light patterns is going to be in the show.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Wait a minute. But is it just your work from CalArts or everyone's? [00:16:02] And where is it?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It's in Hannover.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Hannover. Oh, that's so interesting, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And it's going to be traveling to, um—it's going to be going to be going to the Kunsthaus Graz. It's going to be traveling around I think this show, but there's—

ANNETTE LEDDY: But come to California or no?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, I bet you it doesn't. I bet you it doesn't, and I don't think if I—I don't know if I'd be in it if it did. Because in Europe I'm a much more important artist than I am in LA for sure. I'm kind of like a minor artist in the United—this is how I feel. I've already—I've already felt this my—I've almost felt this my entire life. I know Al has a similar kind of feeling about things, but it's part of the game.

But I want to go back to this thing with the—with this—what I was doing when I was at—when I was there. It was—it's a really fantastic—I did a piece where I played the building. There was a tube, uh, there was a piece of wood, and I smashed it on the wall, and you could hear the echoes, *pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop,pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop.* And I—every meter, I hit, and it went around the entire building, and the echoes changed. It was a very beautiful, very simple piece.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, that's wonderful, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And so—and then there was another piece where I had a sheet of white paper blowing in the wind. I just took pictures of it, but it was really—that was what I was up to, and I was doing all this—these different kinds of things. And then I had this idea. Um, I was—it was during Easter of '80—of '73, '73 Easter. I had gone up to Ventura County with Jim Welling. [00:18:07] [Side Conversation.]

So I'm going to—um, we're coming back from Ventura and I—I'm in the car with Jim, Jim Welling, and I got this idea. I got this idea for a piece, which is a car's tire, a detail, a drawing of a car's tire that never existed. It's a detail—a detail of a car that never existed. And, um, then I would have a frame around it and then I'd have little x's around it about what was happening. So this car—it's a detail of a car's tire that never existed. Who's driving the car? Where is the car coming from? What's the make of the car? What's the time of day? Is there anybody in the back seat? Is there—what kind of horsepower does this car have? So it's a detail from a fiction, and I'm expanding it. I'm saying, "I want to go in there, I want to go into that drawing."

When I had this idea, within weeks, I had the idea of the stick figure, of Glen. I'm in this class called Post Studio Art, and the class itself—I didn't have a studio because I was an undergrad, and so. And the people that had studios, I mean I could go on and on about that, amazing stories about these kids. I didn't even get to talk about Barbara what she did. But, in any case, this was an idea that I had and so I said, "I would make a studio and have a fictional person in there, and they would do experiments in the studio about the reality." [00:20:10] I wanted to prove that stick figures live lives. I wanted to go into the picture. I wanted to show the details of things that don't exist.

So if you want to say—because at the time, objects were all important. I mean, you had Minimalism and then Post Minimalism where the object—the form of the object is really the key point here. Robert Ryman is the obvious person or Carl Andre or any number of people where the object really is the end-all. It is the end of the object. It is the end of the object. And so what does my generation do? What are we thinking, or how do we approach this?

How can we approach this? Then there's Conceptual art, how do we approach Conceptual art? It's all been done. Lawrence Weiner said the sculpture can be a statement. You don't need to have the sculpture anymore. It can be an idea. The idea can suffice, is suffice. It's important enough to have the idea.

So, now, we come along, the next generation after this idea art stuff, what are we going to do? It's all been done. Reductivism has played this to the end. There is nothing, and everyone knew it. It's over. Reductivism is finished. Now, it's a slow slope. It's—painting was dead—this was clear—and now art was dead. Art had been done. The '60s Conceptual art, they were so aware of the timing of what they did and when they did it. Al has '60s dates, which are fantastic for Al, Al Ruppersberg. I mean his work is early, early enough to survive. [00:22:02] We were all '70s; we're all too late. What are we supposed to do now?

So my idea that I came up with is I wanted to prove that stick figures live lives. So what does that mean? If I'm saying all I see are light patterns, I want to prove that stick figures live lives, and how does that—? It's all about the subject, and it's not just the subject, but it's life. It's the life, the subject of life. And so what I'm doing is if say Joan Jonas and Robert Smithson are all involved with the mirror, how the mirror is functioning, and the mirror is the object, but I'm more interested in the image in the mirror, which is mental, the picture. And so in *Entering the Picture* and walking around it and talking to people or having Glen, a person in the picture that is talking to me or performing for me or relating to me, or if I take a comic book and I cut out details from the comic book, so I have a representation of air in a comic, gravity in a comic, light in a comic, food in a comic. So I'm not so much interested in Superman flying through the air, but I'm interested in the air that Superman is flying through. This is what I'm interested in. I'm interested not in the physical form but in the physical subject, which is mental. All pictures are mental. This is something I understand now. So whenever you see a picture of anything, it is mental, that is for sure. [phone rings] [00:24:00]

[Side conversation.]

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MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —this as you would like to appear on your record.

ANNETTE LEDDY: This is Annette Leddy interviewing Matt Mullican in the New York Office of the Archives of American Art [AAA] on July 2, 2019.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Okay. I remember where we stopped.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Good.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: So I'll go back there, which is at the beginning of what I consider to be my work at CalArts. I was still a student. I was in my second year of being a student because I accelerated. I graduated one year early, so I was in the first graduating class of CalArts. And so I—but I started in '71, not '70, and, uh—but by '73, I was really involved with this imaginary universe of the picture and going into the picture and taking details out of it and claiming that the picture was real.

Now, if you look at any object, any painting, any picture, any object, there are two things going on, and this is the basis of most philosophies. One is the material, and the other is the subject, so you have the form and the subject. America loves form. It just devours it. In fact, when things become form, it's perfect. Maybe because of the literalness of it. America likes literal American US artists very literal in a way. Especially today, I find it extremely literal when it comes to politics and identity and everything else, you know. But going back to this issue, as I said, I follow Robert Ryman and the Conceptual artists who took the form into the subject in the sense when Lawrence Weiner had a cut in the floor and then he—um, then the next stage was he didn't have to make the cut in the floor—he can simply say it. [00:02:13] He could write it down, and that would be suffice, which is the basis of Conceptual art that you have this, but that is a huge jump to go from something that is physical to something that is mental. Everything is mental; this is for sure. But the point is that what my problem—our problem was, and I would say my generation, was how to follow this giant jump that took place in the late '60s, which is how something that was based in sculpture became conceptual and or it became Conceptual art.

My—so what—when I had this idea of the details of the imaginary universe or the fact that

when I expanded on the image of a car's tire, what I was doing was going into the picture and saying pictures are real. More recently, I read the book on Philip Guston, a wonderful book on Philip Guston as a—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Who wrote it?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: His daughter. It was called something—it was about his studio. And he says that in—and maybe not even in that book but then I became, kind of, really interested in his thinking. He was saying that, um, in the late '60s, artists were really, really, really involved with material. So when the painter described what they did as an abstract painter, they said the kind of paint they used, the scale of the canvas, the—um, and that's it, that's the painting. [00:04:04] That is how you describe the painting. And he said that for him that is wrong—that a painting doesn't exist in its paint. It exists in the mind of the artist in connection with the mind of the viewer. The paint is the material, but that's all it is, and that he considers in that painting, and this goes back to da Vinci apparently. They said painting is mental. It is—it doesn't exist in a physical place. It is represented through paint, but in itself, it is not there.

So if I have a painting of a nude, the nude is not on the wall, and we know this. This goes back—you know *This is Not a Pipe*. This is an obvious reference to this. Jasper Johns is based on this whole—this problem, this theoretical problem, this philosophical problem. But it also goes back to Pompeii when you had the trompe l'oeil garbage on the floor that they put in with the tiles. They did this. So what I'm interested—and in the late—in the early '70s, I was aware of two things: One was—and this idea of superreal, the superrealists. The superrealist painters were Richard Estes, Chuck Close, painters that made it look like a photograph that you looked at it and you said, "This isn't a painting. What is going on here?" It is something else, and that was considered superreal. But then you also had the superreal on the other end, which was Frank Stella and Carl Andre. They were called superreal because they acknowledged the fact that the material is all that is there. [00:06:04] So you had these two ideas of super reality.

And so what I was interested in having grown up on television and having grown up in my family's home with all these fantastic objects, I was interested—so how do we follow Lawrence Weiner? How do I follow? How can—what can you do? I would say how do I follow—and then but in a larger sense, how do you follow Minimalism, how do you follow Post Minimalism, and how do you follow Conceptual art? I mean, what do you do? It's a pretty simple problem really what you end up doing. So what I came to was this idea that pictures are real—putting these two things together pictures are real because that's all we ever see. It's a conceptual framework. So I was going to say that I wanted to prove that stick figures live lives. I wanted to enter the picture. And so this is—this was my—and when I realized this, I said, "Oh, I've got a future. I've got a future." And I had it, and I felt it, and it was my light bulb. The light bulb thought of my life was that—being in that car and having this detail of a car's tire that never existed oddly, and I knew that I was set. I knew that I—and I even wrote it down in my notebook. You have it. It's—I've done it, I figured it out, I know what I'm going to be doing for the rest of my life. Another thing that I remember from that—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So that was Glen, right?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, that's not just Glen.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's not Glen?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no, it is Glen. Don't say it's just Glen because it's not. It's the whole range of things. It's the pictures. [00:08:00] It's—Glen is part of it. Glen—I wanted to prove that Glen lives lives and I create—I gave him a name. This was a stick figure, and I gave him a name, and I gave him a place, and I gave him a mind.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I love Glen really. When did you first developed Glen? Was that at CalArts?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I said that yesterday. It was—it was '70. It was at CalArts, and it was in '73. It was March, April '73, that's when Glen came up. The same time—April, May, March, April, May '73, which is pretty much the same time I thought about the details. Now, Glen is—I gave Glen a name to objectify him to make him more real than if he was just a stick figure. I gave him—it—he has a gender, he has a rough age, he has an identity, he has all of these things. And what we do whenever we see a picture of anything or anybody, we project those things on to that picture just through the language of that picture. So what

happens is that if you see how this all is functioning, it's like we can't help it. We just identify with pictures of people. We just do it. Our brains are all set up for it. You can see a face, a photograph of a face and I can ask you, "What is that person thinking?" and you have a pretty good sense of it if they're—if it's a photograph, you can say just by reading, and I say reading, the face and then through that reading of the face, you have a relationship to them, and you have an emotive quality. So when Glen is pinching his arm or putting a pin in his finger, I feel the pain, and this is an important point when I go into this combination, uh, following this idea of superrealism—that when Glen pricks his finger, I feel it, so but—[00:10:10]

And this goes into the next—I'm going to just talk about this period because things were coming up fast and furious. In my book, in several of my books, the first third of the book is something that takes place over two years, the first third. So a third of my output happens in two years. I mean not physical output but in conceptual output for sure.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, explain that, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, the thing is it's just that those ideas come up fast. I was 22 years old, 20—I was—I was, yeah, 22 years old and things were—it was just like I discovered this thing, and I felt like I saw a vista. So you're walking around in that vista and you're picking up this and that and everything else. I knew because it was a feeling that I was after, a feeling of if with this detail of an imaginary universe, this detail, I felt the presence of that place, and that in a way was what I was after. So if I have a—I have a drawing of a house and then I have another drawing of a room in that house, both house—the house doesn't exist, but the drawing in the house—that meant I entered the house, and I did a drawing of it, so I was inside the drawing, and I felt that this was funny. This was interesting for me, the going into the house.

What happens is that when I—and it's a feeling that I had that I was interested in that I could do this. That feeling is so related to virtual reality. You're going into this house. [00:12:01] Glen is an avatar. Glen is a person that I—it holds me in its structure, and I'm aware of that. I made 500 drawings of Glen, about, and he did everything. I went through a psychology book, I went through a biology book, and I went through all the possible states of mind and all possible physical aspects of his biology. So I went into his blood, his liver, his brain, his eyes, his—the whole thing and then I also went into, as I said, his neuroses, his fears, his loves, his, his, his feelings in general, his—Glen is acting like a shit or something. Glen is trying to surprise me. And so I was doing that and this was all in '73, '74 that I was doing these drawings. And it was about going into the picture and then, *blam*, expanding on it. But this is a feeling that I had, and I kept—and it kept up. And, you know, that jumps the gun to virtual reality, but it really is—it does go there. It really does go into the virtual—into the virtual world.

So then what I did is that, okay the first one was the—all I see are light patterns, which is they don't have to be any symbology involved with the light patterns. It's just that when I see you, I do not see you. When I'm looking at you, I don't see you. What I see is light reflecting off of you, which separates us from each other—it reduces. Also when I say all I see are light patterns—and this is the beginning of all my lectures—I say when I'm looking at you the audience, it's no different than when I look at the floor because I reduced you all into a phenomenon. You are not living beings anymore. [00:14:00] You're simply light. So when I look at the chair in the corner, you're no better or no different from the chair. You are—the difference between you and the audience and the chair is that you are moving, and that you are moving means that you're alive. You are not dead.

ANNETTE LEDDY: When you say this, are you talking about a kind of physical way that you observe the world all the time, or are you talking about a decision to view it that way?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, I think we do this all the time. I think we—that's all we ever see are light patterns. I mean—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, I see. Okay, so—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —it's a—it's like—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —it's like kind of philosophical.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, it's a point of view. It's a reference. I mean I've always done

it, and I will always do it, but the interesting thing about it is how that refers to I will never forget this. I mean it's like so when I'm looking at you, I don't see you. What am I looking at? I see the light reflecting off of you. So if I say, I'm only looking at light reflecting off of you—and this is what I was saying back in '73—then this is the iPhone life because that's all we're involved with, and that's the only thing that we have is the resemblance of people that are in our phones that we're talking to and the resemblance of people's voices that we listen to. I remember having this realization that when I was talking to my mother—I was in Europe talking to my mother in Santa Monica—that I heard her voice, and I was talking to my mom. But the sound that my ear was hearing was being—was emanating from the phone I had next to my ear. The sound itself, the sound itself was only existing from that little spot, only there. Now, okay, but that's—her sound has been translated through electronic through the wires, and she's talking on the other side, and so now I hear her. [00:16:04] So she's the subject, she's here, but the object, the sound is in my phone. The two are separate.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So is it a little bit like a simulacrum, that everything is simulacrum?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Define simula—sim—simulacrum. I can't even say the word. [Laughs.]

ANNETTE LEDDY: You know that in other words, there's a reality that is essentially a cover of reality.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, a reality as a cover of reality—I mean media represents reality, and in that sense, of course, and it does a very good job of it because we are very happy, and in fact, we participate within that medium, very, very quickly. I'm very much interested in how—when I look at a picture, how I see it. As Guston says if he paints an arm or a leg, we all see it, but he's not painting an arm—just an arm and a leg. He's painting another kind of arm and a leg, which is very particular, but that's his work. When I have Glen and he's putting a pin in his finger, that's—the pain he feels is particular. That's what I'm interested in. At the same time, so Glen, just the fact that I gave him a name and I—and Glen, the name Glen comes from my best friend, Glenn Copeland when I was a child. That's why—that's where Glen comes out of. No one knows this, and it doesn't really matter, but my two best friends were Jody Fine and Glen Copeland, and I haven't seen Glenn in 50 years, 40 years. [00:18:00]

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did he become an artist?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no one became an artist. None of my—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Jody Fine—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —didn't either?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, he became a glass blower. Yes, he became an artist.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And what did she become?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Like who?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Jody.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Jody is a man. He became a glass blower. Yeah, he became a glass blower. But the thing is this issue of this—the subject. And so my generation, what we were interested in was not necessarily the mirror but the image—what we see in the mirror which is mental and so it's a jump, so it's a jump into the subject. So my work is not about the form. It does—a form is very important in my work. I mean look, I work in granite, I work in glass, I work in—I should just have a list of all the materials. In fact every material, imagine it all [ph]. If you can imagine the material, I want to work in it because I'm interested in this relationship between this—the subject and the form, and so obviously as many forms that you have, it sets up a relationship to the subjects.

And I got in trouble for the subject, I did, and I'm still getting in trouble. I think, and I could be wrong, but I think that the last art movement that was really exploring the subject was the surrealists *This is Not a Pipe*. When you get into the landscape of the mind, if we say all

pictures are mental and then you go into Surrealism, yes, that's where—that's it, that's the subject. And so there are some people that have never really thought I was a very important artist because they see me as a surrealist. They see you as an extension of Surrealism, Oh, you're just like a surrealist. But the last time that the subject—and I consider the artist that took the subject further than anybody else was Jackson Pollock. [00:20:08] I think, for me, he took it to the edge. I mean that is like the—you're going to fall off the cliff as far as you get there.

I learned about this through Paul Brach at one of his lectures at CalArts. He was saying—and he didn't—he just said—what he said about Jackson Pollock is that Jackson Pollock had an edge around his canvasses, a wide edge, those—this madness that is going on inside. And then there's always a wide edge. And then the next artist that come along that really dealt with materiality in the same fashion maybe at the time, and this was still in the '50s, was Frank Stella. What Frank Stella did was he started at the edge and worked in, and the difference is huge between these two. One is from the subject to the form, and the other is from the form into the subject. This is from the outside in or from the inside out.

And America—I mean what happened when Frank Stella did this was that painting ceased to be about the brain, and it became about the form. It became about the canvas, shaped canvas. It became about art. It didn't—wasn't about the world anymore. It became about art. It became about Pop art and Minimal art. It was all about this, this cultural—this cultural condition of art making. That's really what's I mean—that's what really separates me from Baldessari is that Baldessari is really about extending the language of art. I mean he—when you get really down to it, he's always, I am making art, I am making art, I am making art, I am making art. I am—there's a fantastic video, I remember. [00:22:00] It was just so much fun. And then I will not make any more boring art or wrong or the—it's about the—it has a lot to do with the context of art where he puts two painters together like Picabia and Mondrian or whatever if he did that. But this is—I'm—in a lot of ways, I share so much with John. He was my teacher, he was my father, he really was. And I—I'm different. I'm a different person because I don't—I'm not trying to—it's—the agenda ceases to be about the process of making art. It's—I'm interested in the subject, which has to do with life not about this. I mean of course the subject of art is what he's involved with, but that's not what I was interested in. I was interested in the subject of so what am I looking at when I say I will never forget this? What is it about being alive? So my thing has to do with that which is I think with my generation to an extent that is something that we all did to a degree.

Now, going back to—I was—this is about my generation. I was staying—I was sleeping over at a friend's house in Geneva who was Adelina von Furstenberg. She had invited me, a fantastic person, and she has a wonderful collection, and she had a Joseph Kosuth. She's done many projects with Joseph, and he had given her a print of his, and it was a print of—it was a paragraph that described itself, which is very typical, self-referencing itself. So as a—it was a paragraph, so it said what kind of paper it was on, what was the typeface of the paper, what was the weight of the paper, how big was the paper, how many nouns are in the paragraph, how many adjectives are in the paragraph, how many periods are in the paragraph, how—you know? [00:24:19] It was extensive. It was quite a large list on this print. Now, there were two things that were never mentioned in this paragraph. Number one was that it was an artwork, never mentioned it. Now, the whole point that being there was that it was an artwork, but he could not say that, and that he made it, never said made by Joseph Kosuth, never said it. So the two most important things about that piece were not mentioned.

My generation comes along and says, "You missed out. if you're talking about this thing, you've got to talk about it being art, and you've got to talk about being an artist. It just kind of just number one." And so there you have Sherrie Levine always right into authorship, right into the name, right into—I mean all that stuff comes—she's perfect following Joseph in that sense Sherrie Levine, this appropriation business. I was just amazed when I looked at it and I said, I could—and of course he could not put his name down—it's presumptuous—and he could not say it's an artwork. What is an artwork anyway, I mean really? What is it?

And so I, uh—but these were things that were on my early posters. They all say Mullican on them, my posters and say, "Why are you so—?" I mean Valerie, my wife, she always thought I was such an egoist, egotist, because I was putting my name down, but I'm just stating the obvious. I was interested in stating the obvious. [00:26:00] Yes, I'm an artist, and this is a poster, and of course, the poster represents me, and thus my name has to be on the poster, very simple.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And to me that as—I've always liked that part of your work, but it—to me it feels like branding in a sort of—or participating in branding.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I'm representing branding but I'm not branding. I'm not doing it. It's not used in the real world but—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right. Yeah, I know that.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Now, when I—when I was doing all of this at the very beginning and getting to this feeling that I had, and I was doing all these drawings, and that was happening, okay. This was in '73 something and then I moved in—in the fall of '73, I moved to New York. There was an exchange program with Cooper Union, and I moved to New York City, and I stayed at the apartment of these collectors of my father's, the Anthoines, Robert Anthoine.

ANNETTE LEDDY: How do you spell that?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Antoine, A-N-T-H-O-I-N maybe or I-O-N. If you write Anthoin like that, and you type in my father's name, you'll see it because he was a collector. He also collected Wolfgang Paalen, had a lot of Paalen—Dynaton is what he collected. So he had lots and lots of Gordon Onslow Fords, some of my father, plus a lot of other things, but those were the things he was really into. They had a house on 74th and Lex and so they offered me to stay there.

Now, so this—I consider this to be my first trip to New York as an artist, artist, artist. And so I take the—I take the—I fly in, and I get in a taxi, and I originally am staying with Mia Agee. And so I'm at the—I'm in the taxi, and I get to 17 King Street. [00:28:04] It's just outside—it's in SoHo basically, it's in the Village, and I get out of my taxi, and no one is home. I've got my bags in hand, I'm ready I feel like, and I felt like I was going to Paris, and it was in 1880, and I wanted to—I just was such a romantic about this. This woman—I think her name is Barbara Lipper. I better—we better double-check on this. She became Barbara Heizer. She eventually married Michael Heizer, but I think her name was Lipper at the time. She's getting out of a taxi, and she sees me, and I say I'm who I am, "Matt Mullican, and I'm a friend of Mia's, and I'm staying here, and I'm only going to be here for a couple of weeks," and she lets me in. She is the head secretary for Leo Castelli. And so we would have—she'd have her friends over, and I remember in the back—Mia had a wonderful kitchen in the back, really all glass kitchen, a really old-school place. I remember they were all sitting around and her—one of her best friends was Roberta Smith. And so Roberta Smith and Barbara Lipper and the—Roberta worked, I think, for Paula Cooper at the moment. This was before she was writing as a critic, I think. And I think the other woman was working for John Weber, and they were just hashing the—I mean just every—

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Cross talk.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —bit of gossip you can come up with, they we're having it. [00:30:01] I was just like, God, this is fantastic. [They laugh.]. At one point, I said, "What about Joseph Kosuth backdating his work because I'd heard that at school that he didn't make these things in 1965 as he says he had?" And they all looked at me with—didn't smile, didn't say anything. It was like they're not going to say a word and who the fuck am I—do I think I am even bringing that up in their presence. I'm a kid, and I shouldn't know anything about anything. Yes, right or wrong, it doesn't matter, and they're not going to tell me if they knew, and they don't know, and I'm not going to say anything about this. Leo—I mean because Joseph worked for Leo Castelli. They were working—he was working with them. And I never got to know Joseph Kosuth; I never did. I said—I say hi to him here and there, but that's about as far as it goes. He scares me, Joseph. He's too fast. John is very fast as well, but these guys are—and I cannot—I'm not that fast.

ANNETTE LEDDY: What do you mean by fast?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Joking fast, playing games fast, you know where—like pushing and pulling and telling jokes and performing. I couldn't do any of that stuff. So I arrive in New York and I'm—this is—and this is after I had already come up with Glen and all this stuff, so I had a future, and I was so excited. And then, eventually, I made it uptown and I went to class at Cooper Union, and there was Troy Brauntuch.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did you know him?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Barely, barely knew him, but we became fast friends, and he's still one of my very, very best friends, and we were at Cooper Union. We were supposed to be studying with Hans Haacke, but Hans Haacke had a—had a—was off. [00:32:05] Uh, he couldn't, um—he was on sabbatical, so we worked with this guy named Robert Israel who was a theatrical production designer. He worked with Robert Wilson, and he was a genius, genius-type guy, wonderful teacher. Thank God for him. Another one was that I studied with was the filmmaker, the famous filmmaker who was very influential on Warhol, Jonas Mekas. And Jonas Mekas was a terrible teacher, the worst—I mean he spoke without any inflection at all. He might as well have been reading whatever he was talking about *na, na, na, na, na, na, na, na,* and there was no discussion, and he's a great man, but the class was boring. I couldn't deal with it.

So I was in my—I lived uptown on Lexington Avenue at the Antoines' apartment, and I had spread my papers all over the living room floor. I had this—it was a three-bedroom apartment. I had two bathrooms, three bedrooms, a dining room. It was incredible, and I was living in the lap of luxury uptown in a beautiful apartment and I was—that's where I fleshed out Glen. I got all these books, and I was putting all my stick figures around, and I was going, and I was really into this issue of entering the picture.

At the same time as I was doing that, my dream life was—I was interested in the details of my dreams. So if I had a dream about walking and I was walking down the street, in the dream, I was interested in the plants that were growing up between the cobblestones. [00:34:09] I was interested in the air that I was breathing. I was interested—and a few times, I actually entered my consciousness where I did breathe, and I did smell and I did, and I was almost to the point of where I was a willful participant in my own dream, but I didn't—it was very rare, barely there. And with—and hanging out with Troy. We went to—we—at the same time as I was doing this, we were going to every gallery we could go to. We would start up on—at, uh—the gallery that was furthest north was Bykert Gallery. That was as far up as you get could and then we walked down to the Upper East Side and then we went down Fifty-Seventh Street and then we went down to SoHo, and we saw everything. Every gallery that we wanted to see, we could see in one afternoon, and we did this every month. We did this three or four times. We went to every museum, talked all the time—it was fantastic.

So my dreamlife was really interesting. I was interested as in—like the details of my—of the pictures, I was interested in the details of my dreams, and at the same time, I was taking photographs of where I was living. So I was taking photographs of my bathroom, my kitchen, my living room, my TV set, books, telephone, my clothing, my shoes, my—the refrigerator, the inside of a refrigerator. And then I went outside, and I was taking photographs of the street. [00:36:04] Now—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Can I just say that in doing this—so this is how it sounds to me—you're making your real life into a picture that you can then enter?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: What I'm doing—yeah—I mean it's like I'm trying to understand the—I'm trying to figure out reality. Okay. I'm trying—getting into the pictured reality, and I said, "But what about my reality?" and so I took pictures of it. In a funny sense, that was—I mean that was really kind of an important thing to do for me to do that. And in doing it, I was very much involved with the feeling, and this is what I talked about yesterday that really originates from those tours that I gave when I was in high school. It's the same thing. When I was touring like the rush-hour tour, when I was having a rush-hour tour, we're sitting in a car not going anywhere and not—and we're just looking at the people everywhere all around us sitting in cars not going anywhere, but we are a visitor. We are visiting that context. We are not trying to get anywhere. We're just there as tourists, and I did this.

Okay, now, we're going to back even further because this is a very important point in my work, and today seems to be all about my art [they laugh] with a little bit of Cooper Union stuff thrown in and my friends. But when I was, uh—gosh, about the same time I said, "I will never forget this," I was in summer camp, and we were going out to Disneyland during summer camp. [00:38:02] It was part of this camp called the Explorers' Club [ph], and the people that owned the summer camp traded for my father's painting, so I was able to go to a fancy summer camp. It was really great. And so we—on our way to Disneyland, I'm in the back of the bus with my friends and they said—someone said, "It's only 30 miles to Disneyland" and then someone else says, "But it's 400 miles to San Francisco." This must have been the early '60s and then someone else said, "But it's 3000 miles to New York" and then someone said, "It's 6000 miles to London" and then someone else said, "And it's how

many miles to the moon?" and then someone said, "And how many miles to the edge of the solar system?" and then someone else said, "And how many miles to the edge of the universe?" And then they said, "Well, that's as far as we can go." And when they said, "That's as far as we can go," I was saying, "My name is Matt Mullican. I'm on a bus going to Disneyland. My parents are Luchita Mullican and Lee Mullican. I live at 370 Mesa Road, I'm 12 years old, I'm male," I felt like, *bam*, I'm here.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You were oriented within the context of the universe.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: This is a feeling. This is a feeling, and I felt for the first time in my life that I was outside my body and that I was in this world. I talk about it, and I get that feeling just talking to you now because I'm talking about that. It's the only feeling that I've ever had that transcends life as it has been declared to me. [00:40:03] It is outside of all the documents, all the stories, everything that people have told me about being alive. This feeling transcends it all, and I was shocked by it. And I don't think it's—I do not think—I think children get it more than adults for sure because we're younger and we're newer into the system, but there was somehow a synaptic gap in my brain that allowed me to feel this way.

Fast-forward to 1970, and I am doing my tours, and we do a tour where we go to the LAX airport. We walk around the airport and then we get into the car and we drive below the airport to the beach. There's the beach underneath the airport where the planes are all going above you. And I was with Tony Askins who I mentioned earlier, and I was I think with Erin Morita [ph] and with this other girl. The four of us were at the beach, and I was lying down looking at the night sky watching the planes because they're going right over. It's a fantastic place. I was looking at the sky, and I realized that the sky was touching my face. And when I realized the sky was touching my face, I got that feeling again but in spades, much stronger than it was when I was a child, much stronger. It was creepy, powerful. I turned to the right, and there was a tin can in the sand. And, again, "I live 370 Mesa Road, my name is this, I'm da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da." [00:42:07]

Um, now, my work when I was taking photographs of the house I was living in was giving me that feeling as well. That's what I was after. I was taking a photo, and I 'm alive. This is absolutely cool, and I talk about this in the notebooks what is going on. I remember talking to a friend of mine after I had this experience at the beach, and I was describing it to her. As I was describing this feeling to her, I started to get it, and it was even stronger than it was at the beach, and I started to laugh, and I started to vomit laughter. My whole body was convulsing, and I was laughing, [makes gagging sounds], and I was saying there—and I remember—one of the few things I remember saying was that there's no difference between right now and 500 years ago, none. It's the same time. Everything is the same. There is no difference. And I said, "Spanish galleons—Spanish galleons are now the same time, the same place, everything is the same, it is now." And I said, "You know, I'm feeling my parents. I'm living at home still. My name is da, da, da, da, da—I live in—my name is Matthew Mullican. I live at 370 Mesa Road. I'm 19 years old, da, da, da," and—you know? But it was like the most powerful experience. It was just unbelievable.

So then after I stared working with Glen, and doing all I see are light patterns and all of that, I found myself taking photographs of reality. [00:44:08] because I was interested in cartoon reality of kitchens and so forth, so why not take pictures of those things? But those pictures that I was taking came right back to this feeling. It really did. They come right back to this feeling that I had, and I was thinking, God this is the only thing, this feeling that I've got when I went out is the only thing that seems to transcend everything else, and should I make my art about this? Should I make my art about—should I make my art about this feeling? Because it's really something. It's so powerful, and I wasn't sure if I should or not. I was at this question because—and so.

Then, I went—there was a show at Ileana Sonnabend, and it was a show of the French artist—God, why can't I remember his name? I'm putting a block on it, that's what I'm doing. Annette Messager is—was his girlfriend for years and years and years, shows now with Marian Goodman, um, did stuff with his childhood. Oh, gosh what's his name? The French artist, you don't know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: [. . . –AL] Well, describe his work.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: He does a lot of photographs of children, intense—I don't like them as much. He does shadows. He does—he was replicating his childhood by making little

objects that he used as child, and his memory was not good, so they're a bit fuzzy in the way he made them. He made posters. He was influential to me. He made posters of himself.

[. . . –AL] His, um—in any case, his name will pop in when I'm not trying to think of it. He had a show at Ileana Sonnabend, and what it was, was all the furniture from an apartment in New York City behind velvet curtains, these velvet, not curtains but velvet—what are the—?

ANNETTE LEDDY: —ropes.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Ropes, velvet ropes. You had velvet ropes, and you had all this furniture. There's a bed, chairs, the whole apartment, and I went in there, and I said, "Oh, my God, he's doing what I'm doing." He's getting—he was that feeling as well. He is doing what I am doing because I got the—I saw that show, and I said, "Oh, my God, I felt it. I felt it because this is what I was in for. I said, "What, what, what?" And then I said, "Oh, I can't—I can't wait any longer. If I'm going to do this, I've got to do it. I have to make this choice if I'm going to do this or not." And I decided, yes, I will do it. This is my work. This feeling that I get is at the core of what I'm doing, and I—and I did. I made that choice. Now, after I made that choice, the feeling came much more often, really did.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Hmm, that's so interesting.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And my—I gave myself permission and I don't usually—I mean I'll give lectures on my work, but I—to go into this feeling is so subjective that it's a little bit scary because it's a feeling that I'm after. [00:48:11] It's—there's no theory here. There's no—it's not about art at all. It's about the world and about how I feel in the world. It actually sidesteps art, and so. In my work, all my stuff about stick figures has something to do with pictures, although pictures are involved with this feeling. So this was something that I was very much involved with.

So one of the things that I did in the fall of '73 as well as taking photographs was the *Birth to Death List*, this woman's life, which was basically this—the woman I would say is originally a detail of a comic strip. Someone—so it wasn't even the main character in the comic strip; it was someone in the background, and that would be her life that I would do. So I'd take one very tiny detail from a comic and then expand it into these lists of a woman's life. I made it a woman rather than a man to separate myself from her. I'm not a woman, so it's not me. I know it's not me because it's not a woman. And I got in trouble in the late '70s with the feminists, how—what do you know about being a woman? I remember at NSCAD at Nova Scotia School of Art and Design, I gave a lecture there, and they were pissed. The women were pissed because I'm not a woman, and I'm talking about a being a woman, but it's not about being a woman at all. It's about being alive. Yes, but they—this is where we are now. This is the way—I'm sure I'm going to start getting hassled for this again, but, um—

And so this—and I wrote it, and I wrote it, and I wrote that list through all these books, the same books I used for Glen, a psychology book, a biology book, uh, and a book of—about the world weather, and so forth. [00:50:18] And I wanted to touch on—the first sentence is her birth. The second person [ph] is her house, home, the third sentence is learning to crawl, the fourth—it goes from there. And this was again about that feeling, the feeling. Whenever I read that list, three-quarters I get the feeling, the feeling would come back. And so this was really after I made that choice to have this be a part of my work.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But when you say you're not a write for example, I read that, that seems like a writer wrote that.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, it could—you know? Lynne Tillman had never ever, ever thought of me that way, and then I read this list at MoMA that I was invited to do something by Louise Lawler, and Lynne Tillman was just shocked about how strong it was. She was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's really—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —shocked.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —a terrific piece of writing. I mean I had the same response.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: You know, it's an artwork, it's an artwork, it's an artwork, it's that. But I was told my entire life, as you know from yesterday, that I'm—I can't write.

ANNETTE LEDDY: See, it's so hard to understand all that only because you seem so driven towards intellectual inquiry—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I am—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —so that it seems hard to understand—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Isn't that something?

ANNETTE LEDDY: —how school could have been so—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —so bad.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —awful. But what was it about specifically? Was it memory or just—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, just I must have been dyslexic, I might have been ADHD, it made it very difficult for me to learn and I—and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: For example, you'd have to read a passage about history and then you'd have to answer questions. [00:52:06] That would not be possible? I would think that that would be possible.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Right. No, it's not possible.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Because you would—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I just—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —answer things in a different way?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I didn't—I—yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You would have—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I would have—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —perception—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —I have a very different point of view. My point of view was a little bit off, and this was a cookie-cutter education as good as it was, and it was pretty great. Pali High was a good school. I mean, God, they got that guy talking about art and they got the—you know, come on. This is a smart man who they—that school is good. I tried.[Laughs.] I really tried.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, I know because it's—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It is slightly difficult to comprehend. But for instance when I was in Chile, I loved geometry they—and the theorems and proving things, and I was out there proving all kinds of theorems that made no sense, I felt like. There I was and I—but I was just not articulate enough, articulate enough. I was not thorough enough. I misspelled words. I—spelling is still a torture for me. I—and I learned about this part of my life with my children. Both my kids are dyslexic, and they both are, and my daughter is dyscalculia, which is the same thing—it's like dyslexia for numbers. So if you ask her, what's 20 and 4, she may not be able to tell you because it's all garbage to her. It's all—you know?

When I learned about my own children, then I learned about myself. [00:54:01] And that's why I say, I'd like to be tested to see, okay, what's wrong. Why am I like this? What's happening here? But this is—I think that's part of it, but what all of that did was made it more difficult for me to deal with a kind of academic viewpoint. And in a way, I was never—so many people were asked to give talks at the Whitney program, and we're there all the time, and I knew the people that ran the Whitney program, and I was never invited to talk. I was never invited to talk because my work is too subjective. I'm not a theorist according to most people. I am—I'm inventing my own language, I am inventing my own world, and that's about as far as it gets.

Now, this is—I am, as they say, the most creative of the pictures generation. Now, creative could be a curse because it's dismissed. You can be dismissed as a creative person. That's

not really being—I'm not as intellectually on top of things as my contemporaries—I'm just not.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, it doesn't—I don't really agree with that but—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But that's how they see it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —I just—what I'm trying to understand is I—certainly, okay, so I have my ideas about how you fit into pictures and so on, but how do you see yourself as part of the pictures? It's jump sting a little ahead but I'm just—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Let's stay with—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Stay where we are, okay.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I mean I think because I—

ANNETTE LEDDY: We'll do that later.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —no, I just—no, I just pulled back. I already talked—I'm dealing with my feeling now—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay, let's do that.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —and I'm—and there are many more issues that are going to come up that make this very clear. [00:56:01] Because at the same time as I did this stuff with the taking the photographs of my house and getting that feeling and cutting up comic strips—I have a piece, six or seven [ph] *Dead Comic Book Characters.* That's so fantastic. And then—I mean there are so many of these works because I was interested in the life that they had led. I was interested. So a subject that comes up at this point is life and death. The major element of Glen is that I—is that he's alive and so this picture is alive. And at that point, I wanted—I did a drawing of a dead stick figure to see the difference between a living stick figure and a dead stick figure.

And so then, I wanted to take—to do a drawing of a real dead person and so I called up the city morgue. And I even wrote down in the notebook my fantasies about what the morgue would say to me after—I was so nervous about calling up the city morgue that I wanted to take photographs of a cadaver. And, "Oh, my God, what am I—? What's going to happen? What are they going to say?" and I have all these fantasies. They refused. They refused. They wouldn't—you know privacy issues, blah, blah, blah, not possible.

Um, and I—eventually, a friend of mine—I think this was in '74. It could have been '73 or it could have been '74. A friend of mine was going to medical school, and, um, going to medical school, he had a cadaver. We were talking at a party, and he said to me, "You know I have a cadaver"—because I was saying—I was talking about—"but the face is all wrapped up in formaldehyde and gauze." [00:58:10] And I'm all—the most important part of the cadaver is the—I mean is the face. The face is everything for me. And so he wrote—he called me up and said, "We've just unwrapped the face, you better get up here quick because we've already cut up the back of the head." So I get on the next train, I go up there, I have a place to stay, I was perfect.

And so I walked into the room and there are all of these stainless-steel tables. The whole room was like stainless steel and bright lights. It doesn't look gruesome at all. It looks absolutely like—and it's not haunted. Lots of dead people here but no—there's no ghosts for sure. And so I go to his table, and it's a man. I'm happy it's a man because I'm a man, so I like this relationship. And so I turn—we—he's on his face because they've already started to do the back of the head.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, you're going to have a hard time. [They laugh.] So we have to turn him over, and in turning him over, his right arm falls off, falls to the floor really, truly. I pick up the arm and put it back on the body, so you have his whole—both arms there. It was the left arm, it was his left arm. And then what I did to the cadaver, what Glen did to himself—I pinched the cadaver's arm, I shouted in the cadaver's ear, I put my hand in the cadaver's mouth, I covered the cadaver's eyes. I did—I dealt—I put my hand on his chest,

his heart. [01:00:04] I slapped his face. I—so, now, the issue, I blew the hair on the back of his head. That was it. That creeped up my mom more than anything that I blew the—that really creeped out when I told her the story. And the thing about it was that the next day, after I did all of this—and I put my hands in his guts. I put the skin—I have a bunch of photographs. I took a lot. He took a lot of photographs of me doing this.

I made it to, uh—the next day we're talking. He looked poor, he looked sad, he looked like a homeless person. It smelled, it was crusty, it was blue. So you had—the him-ness and the it-ness were in your face. Now, we were not even aware of this flipping back and forth between the two, the two things, this issue, the two issues. But this is at the core, this issue, the object, person, the real person; the body and the mind; the body and the soul; the body and the psyche are really presented because we cannot help but see this person. When we call him he, we are talking about the image. When we're calling him it, we're talking about the object, and when I look at you, I can call you it, that's what I did when I say—when I'm saying all I see—all you are is a light pattern, you are a phenomenon, you're not even an it. [01:02:03] You're not even an it. You're not even that far. You're—

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MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —certainly not a she. You're something else. But with the cadaver, it just threw it in my face. It just threw it my face, and it was such a strong thing. In my lectures when I talk about this, I said, "This is the first subject. The first subject is the—is the first subject I think is the integrity of the psyche of the other. That's the first subject. That the other being everybody but me that that's the first subject. I mean to a degree, all art has to deal with that. In fact, humanity has to deal with that. That's such an important part of humanity." And I got—and I got there just because I was following my instincts, and I got to a cadaver.

And then I—in the meantime, talking with people because I've given 2[00], 3[00], 400 lectures in my life, something like this, and in talking about it, the people that were doctors would tell me stories, and one of them is the phenomenon of a flesh fight. That in the medical school, there'd be—at one point, the tension would be so great that people would throw bits of meat at each other in order to deal with the fact of what they were doing—to make it really into objects and to keep it away. The doctors told all the students that all the cadavers were not human. They were—because every cell in their body had been transformed through the formaldehyde, so they are now models of human beings. They are not human beings. They are no longer human because every call has been transformed via this process of embalmment of this—with the stuff. That's why they have the head wrapped for the first half of the class. [00:02:10] The head is—you don't see the head because that makes it more human. The head makes it more human. If you don't have a head—when you're taking the head off someone, you're taking away their soul, their identity if souls exist. That's a debatable point. But they're taking that—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, it's the part that most expresses their individuality let's say.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And that's also the part that we—our brains are wired to read faces more acutely than we are wired to read anything else. I mean the—we don't read a glass of water. We—but I can see, I can tell you a lot about what you're—how you—what you are feeling and how you are being just by looking at your face. Because my—I'm set up for it, we all are and so we cannot help but do that. So if I see a picture of a person's head, I'm involved with them. I can't help it. I go into it. So with the cadaver, it's even worse because it's a physical thing right there. This is really an interesting problem and so I did this.

Now—and then later on within six months, I took a photograph of a doll's head, and the dead man and the doll's head are together. The two photographs are together, one next to the other. The doll has her eyes open; he has his eyes closed. The doll is a woman; the cadaver's a man, and I thought eventually that I wanted to—and I did show it once in this context that they were to be—the place for that photographs, those photographs was to be in my bedroom facing that the wall that I faced when I'm in bed, the upper right-hand corner of that wall is where these two photographs should go. [00:04:18] It's an odd thing, but—and why upper right and why not the upper left? No, the upper right-hand corner, but the wall I faced from my bed, this is—that's a very specific context.

Now, there I am—how many artists—I mean I'm going to—I'm not going to jump out of that. I'm going to go to the next thing that I came up with, which was I was doing drawings of

fictional reality, and I was talking with some friends, "Okay, so what is the most powerful fictional reality? What is it? Where—?" And they said, "Religion is the most powerful. The highest level of the creative process is the creation of a deity. It's the creation of a god" and so I said, "Oh, uh, okay." So then I said they were—and I was showing details from these fictional realities. I said, "When I was a child, when I was five or six or seven"—as I was saying earlier—"I believed that I chose my parents." I had seen photographs of my mother and my father and Paalen, beautiful photographs—I've mentioned them earlier—photographed in Mill Valley in 1949. It had Paalen as that man was my mom's—my mom—and they were married, so that's weird. [00:06:04] That was a little bit of a giveaway of sorts like, God, it's my—and there's my father right behind them. That's an odd thing. So I—maybe this idea of choosing my parents had come out of this whole weirdo changing of names, doing this, doing that, and so, but it was an idea I had.

And my idea of where I was—and this was a child's idea—was that when I was a child, I was on it—before I was born, I was on a conveyor belt with other children before they're born. There were chutes with names over the chutes, and I went down Mullican. I went down that chute and that's—I chose my—so. But this, this scene is very reminiscent of a Warner Bros. cartoon where robots are being made. Bugs Bunny, very much like a Bugs Bunny cartoon. But it was—it did answer the question where was I before I was born? Where was I? I said—I would ask my parents, "So where am I in that photograph?" "Oh, you didn't exist yet." "What do you mean I didn't exist yet? I've always existed." [They laugh.] A child, they've always existed because they start something—you can logically say that I was born at a particular time, but the feeling is that we've always been here, you know? It's just a feeling that one has. And so I said, "But I've always been here," so then I came up with this answer for myself.

And then the next thing I did was death—it was not death. It was fate, and fate controls my life. I believed in fate when I was a child, so when I stubbed my toe, it was because of fate or if something went wrong, I missed the bus or whatever, it was fate or if I hurt myself, it was fate. [00:08:13] And so in my head I had fate as a man, as a figure looking at a TV set, and he could see me on that TV set moving around in my life always. I come on TV, on fate's TV set, and he had a big lever that he was pulling, and as he pulled that lever, that will control everything that happened to me. So fate was controlling everything that happened in my life, and you could see me live my life in it, and I had a birthdate and a death date. The death date in some drawings from the early '70s, mid-'70s was 2035. Now, that was some 45 years ago, so I had plenty of time. Now, I'm getting close. It's only 15 years. [They laugh.] So I don't know. We'll see.

He was controlling my life so then I said, "Well, you know—" I was working with death and I said, "At my death, death obviously meets fate. Death and fate meet up and they were in a —" Now, from those first two scenes, this—the conveyor belt and the TV set were from childhood and then—so that's really from the '60s, maybe early '50s, maybe '50s. Those images are from my psyche from the '50s, but this next one is from '73 or ['7]4, something like that. So it was like, Okay, so since I'm involved with death already, what about if death meet—fate meets death? The figure of death, the figure of death as not being a dead person but the allegory of death, and they meet in a semicircular corridor, and they decide if I go up to heaven or if I go down to hell. [00:10:06] It's like a big Y shape. And so that answers the question of where was I before I was born, why do things happen the way they do while I live my life, and what happens after I die? Now, so it was like a cosmology. It was like a—it was a deity. So I represent—I made my own cosmology. This was in the early '70s, and thus, I made something that it was because of my interest in fiction and my interest in the subjective.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And just your interest in existential questions.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yes. [Laughs.] Yes, I'm going way back.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Which you seem to be really—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —interested in.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —preoccupied with.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, what else is there, really? [They laugh.] So I got in trouble for this. I got in trouble for this because—

ANNETTE LEDDY: From who?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: From everybody. I still feel it. I still feel it because I'm representing god, and the cosmology grows. It's changed. In the '80s, it was updated, and I'm still working. I'm still trying to figure it all out. It's still going on and on and on. There are details. I'm doing a series of watercolors this summer, which are going to be really following this chain, the whole thing. I'm doing a project at Crown Point Press, which is an honor, and they want to do a portfolio with me, and I want it to be all about the cosmology. So I mean it's still —and I'm still trying to figure it all out.

And—in any case, I got in trouble. At CalArts you could do anything. You had people—and I'm still at school, right? You could do anything. You had a guy, a visiting—some guy visiting the school was collecting the semen of professors jerking off. [00:12:00]

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah. [Laughs.] I've heard these CalArts stories, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, and he was collecting it and putting it into the wall like under the plaster. [They laugh.] And at Cal, you could get away with anything. Wolfgang Stoerchle asking something to do—give him a blowjob, a male to give him a blowjob as a performance, so you could do anything, no problem. But I think that—but dealing with the subjects that I was dealing with was off the grid. Oh, heaven, hell, angels, before birth, life, death, fate, this was off the grid. This was something else. And it was—all the spiritual crap and it was—you see, I have just—it's funny, it's funny when I show a piece of *Death's Cape,* and I burn it in my—in Glen's studio burns—he burns a piece of death's cape, he plays with it. That's funny, but at the same time, it's real.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But was this in some way connected to growing up with all these artifacts from Latin America that are all about—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: That, that very thing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's it.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: You know when I was trying to figure out this project before I even did it, probably, maybe it influenced me as a child that where was I before I was born. Certainly, my mother's interest in what—in that is very evident in her work now, so she could have gotten me into my brain. My mom has this idea that I was born fully done. That I—when I came out, I was who I am now. I mean that's how she'd say it. She didn't teach me anything because I was already there. That's how she sees it. But she did teach me, obviously, she did teach me, both my parents taught me everything. I grew up in a house full of objects, these, these, these, these from all over the world, artifacts from Egypt, from China, from Japan, from South America, from Central America, from North America. [00:14:11]

ANNETTE LEDDY: And they're all about deities.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: This is art going back more than 200 years ago in most cultures, okay? You go back 300 years, all western art is about deities, most all of it, okay. So I'm trying to figure out what art is thanks to my teacher John. So what is art anyway? What are we doing here, and what's the—what's the role?

ANNETTE LEDDY: So how did John react to your dealing with fate and then—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: He grinned, he grinned. He thought it was cool. He's a smart man, and he has no investment that way. He's not invested in the students doing what he does. And I was going as far away from him as I could possibly go and then I'm becoming spiritually—here I am, me and whoever doing this crazy stuff, something, so.

But there were others that were not so kind. I remember Konrad Fischer [ph] came up to me at an opening at a party. It was a party for—it was a party for Kasper König, and this was the '80s, late '80s, late '80s. He would—he wanted to—mid- to late-'80s. He wanted to work with me. He was drunk. Conrad Fisher was drunk and so I don't take anything—I don't think he was quite serious, but he did illustrate a point. He says, " I would like to represent you, but I don't want to represent that. I will only represent this." He would only represent all my signs, all that. All the formal stuff is what he liked. The hot stuff, the cosmology was off limits for him. [00:16:00] He didn't—

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's so interesting, right?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: He did not want—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I mean this sort of—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —he didn't want to do them.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —judgment.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, well of course. This is Germany, of course. And so [laughs] I grew up there, I have. I mean, more than half of my life I spent with Germans, and they are huge champions of who I am and what I do, really. I am an important person there.

And so this—so this point of view is still really interesting. It's really interesting. And I remember, I—I'm only making it worse in my recent work. I mean, 15 years ago, I went into such detail about the cosmology, what happens before we go to heaven or what happens after the demon, *da, da, da, da, da, da*, all these stories, it goes on and on. I was giving a lecture at the Linz—at the Lentos Museum in Linz, Austria, and we go into the room that has all this stuff, and Peter Kogler brought his class to visit with me, and Peter is a wonderful close, close, close friend. I think Peter Kogler and Tory Brauntuch are amongst my—and Jim Welling are amongst my closest art friends. There are many others, but I mean Peter I love. And so he brought his class and he—and I started and they were into my work and into my brain. But when we got into the room with the cosmology, they got scared. The students, they got scared. They backed up. They backed up, and he saw that they backed up. He noticed they backed up, and he said, "You're a conceptual artist, right?" "Yes." "This is not real. This is not a real cosmology. It's not supposed to be real." "No, it's not supposed to be real. I don't want anyone to believe in this. This is a model for the possibility of doing this. This represents this thing."

ANNETTE LEDDY: Or is it about this impulse to create cosmologies that—? [00:18:01]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It has that in it but—and I think it has to do with art because art if you go back more than—if you go back over 500 years to the beginning of when we were a species, art was involved with this. This was at the core of art. Now, in today's world, I'm one of the very few international artists that even acknowledge that this is the facts. That this—that I'm one of the every few artists that represents god in my work, very few, very few represent the soul, very few, very few, and this is a problem for people.

So they all backed up, backed up, but I lost them. They—I was off limits after that. They were not really involved in my work because they thought I turned into a New Agey creepy guy. [They laugh.]

ANNETTE LEDDY: Interesting.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: So it was—that was like a real kind of interesting point. But that—and I had a conversation with Friedrich Petzel recently, and he's—he confessed to me that he has had problems with this aspect of my work, and the problem—this cosmology business. It's some—it's trouble for him. Somehow, it makes him nervous, and I was so appreciative of him being so honest with me because he was—I worked with him in Berlin—and a wonderful man, but he was being honest. We were—he had been drinking, we'd both been drinking, and it was a big event that we were a part of, and he was—we're just talking face-to-face.

And then I realized that the problem is that he's a formalist, and in fact, most people are. [00:20:00] It's about the form of what—John Baldessari is a formalist as much as he'd like not to be because it's about art. It has to do with the form of art even if it is like that. And I am not a formalist. I work with form, I'm interested in form, but you could say I'm a subjectivist. I am about the subject. It's about what do I feel when I'm alive. What is it? What is that feeling that I have? What does it mean to be alive? I'm not interested in the subject of my work being about the work of art, and this puts me into trouble, this subjective issue. This is why the academics, they can't deal with me.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But you say in Germany, they really love that.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: They appreciate—they appreciate it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Because it's really—in one way, it's about systems in general too. I mean —

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But so aren't we all?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Just look at this. How many times buttons have you pushed today already just in your life, how many, and those buttons are all part of systems. I—okay, in any case, this is the most extreme part of my work is this cosmology as it turns out. Now, there are lots of other ones. There's the dead man; that's pretty extreme. [They laugh.] That's pretty extreme. The cosmology I really—and then, you know, in terms of material that I've worked with, the most controversial material that I've worked with, is stained glass. I wanted to work with artsy-craftsy materials. In the mid-'80s, I worked with ceramics, stained glass, cast metal. I made tapestries, I made—you know I made all this crafty stuff, and I did that because I was interested in how the material would infect the sign, how the sign would be changed. I'm interested because I was already into already—well, we're jumping ahead now. [00:22:01] I want to go back to the cosmology.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay, so why don't you—do you want to just describe the—? I mean, I know the five levels and all that, but do you want to just—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: That's not the—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —briefly describe—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —cosmology.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —the cosmo—? Oh, it's not? Okay.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Not. Well, the cosmology is this before-birth-after-death thing. That's the proper. There's the, the, the cosmology—the other cosmology is—

ANNETTE LEDDY: 1983—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —it—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —you developed that one—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I came up—the one with the—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —with the different colors and the different five worlds.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: The five worlds, and that is—

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's not it—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —that's—no, it doesn't really talk about the future, and it doesn't talk about the past, and it doesn't talk—

ANNETTE LEDDY: But it talks about the universe.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It talks about, uh—it talks about language. It is a language about language. It has to do with language, but it doesn't talk about experience necessarily. I will talk about it. I will get there. We are still in the '70s here. [Laughs.]

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay. So you're in your first cosmology, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, I know. This is not even—I mean this is the—because the cosmology in the '80s is changing. Fate changes. He's no longer with a TV set. He turns. He becomes some—he becomes somewhere—he'd go somewhere else, and that's another story, but we'll get there too. But, now, I'm in the mid-'70s, still we are, and I have done—I came up with this idea of the cosmology. I have drawings of, uh, physical experiments having to do with physical reality like demonstrating gravity, like what I did as a performance early on. So I was interested in demonstrating the reality that occurs in the picture. And so I was doing all these drawings, I don't know, like 200, 300 drawings of experiments and the world. And I—these drawings were—there was about maybe that many

drawings. [00:24:01] That's a lot of drawings. That's maybe 15 inches, 10 inches steep of drawings, and consider how many drawing sheets of paper that is. And so the first ones I did were in Glen's room, but then I did drawings of [. . . –AL]—of history. So I did drawings of the Big Bang all the way up to the present, details. I did drawings of science fiction. I did drawings of comic book details. I did drawings of the future, drawing of things that have yet to happen. I did drawings of the world in 2025, I did drawings of the world in 1754, I did—so I had the capacity to do all this stuff within my drawings because they were a window into the subjective world, and I could go anywhere within that—this idea. They were all done with the Rapidograph, and then I did a drawing of for instance five objects on a table in that room. The first object was a magnifying glass, which was real. The second object was an object that never—it was and h, kind of a sculpture of an h with a swoopy edge, and that never existed. And then the next drawing was one of the fate's control lever and then a drawing from a dream, which was a telephone—my first nightmare when I was a child, the worst nightmare of my life really. It was a bad nightmare.

ANNETTE LEDDY: What was it?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: The—it was a telephone. I was in the Alps, Swiss Alps or somewhere, and I was pulling a giant telephone on my shoulder like a—[00:26:06]

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's so great—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —like—and there's a huge phone, and there's a dragon that is chasing me, and it's going to eat me and kill me and hurt me, and I'm trying my best to pull this phone away from the dragon. And I woke up in such a sweat, I was screaming, crying—I mean it was awful. But it's my—one of my earliest memories of a dream. That is so funny. [Laughs.] And so I had the telephone there, and so this table held all these objects in this room.

Another series of works would be drawings of death's cape, and what I did to death's cape was to stretch it. I dunked it in water, I lit it on fire, I tore it up into little pieces—I did everything to death's cape that Barry Le Va, Richard Serra, and any number of artists did to materials in the '60s. Now, this was kind of sacrilegious because I turned their work into, um—it wasn't—I represented that idea, but it was a metaphorical representation. It was not even a real. You know, it was like what's worse. It's like I went—I really was playing, having fun with Richard Serra for instance clearly because he is the one who did—he was the most, um—he was very conscious of what he was doing, what he was doing with materials, very much so. The great list of bending, shaping, cracking, the list of adjectives that he did, a very important list. [00:28:02] And so I did that list with death's cape, and why not in a fictive universe? It was trouble. I mean not that I got in trouble for doing it—I love that piece—and but I—this, I was—I could do anything I wanted in this world that I was creating. So it was a—this was—we're talking '70s still, '75, '74, '75 that I was doing this.

One of the things that I did that I have to talk about now was I did a show. My first exhibition ever was in—at a place called Project Inc., and it was an invention of Paul McMahon who was a friend of ours. If you look at David Salle's resume and Jim Welling's, we all had our first shows there, I think. Maybe they had a show earlier, but my first show was there, and it was up for one day, one night. He would get people, and they would come, and I did a performance in this evening, which was *Entering the Picture*. This was in December '73, and it was a Piranesi print out of a book, not of—not an original but just a print of an arch, and Paul would stand—sit—I was sitting in a chair facing Paul, and he was sitting in a chair holding the print in his hand. I put my mind's eye into the print, and immediately when I entered the print with my mind's eye, I was 14 years old. [00:30:00] It was eleven o'clock in the morning, had rained the night before, and my father was working on site, and I was walking towards my father. I was walking towards my father working on uncovering this arch. They were uncovering this arch, and I go to—and I guess I'm wealthy enough that I don't have to work. You know I don't have to work for my living. My parents are wealthy enough that I can—

ANNETTE LEDDY: But you're 14, so you—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —I'm 14, but back in that day, I think 14-year-olds had jobs, I'm thinking. I mean that's my logical mind saying this.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, it's probably true, yes.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: [Laughs.] But I'm going to this arch and then I climb a hill, which you don't see in the picture at all. And I'm looking down at the top of the arch, and you can see big puddles on the top of the arch, which you cannot see in the picture, of water, because it had rained that night earlier, and the ground was a bit loose and muddy. So while I'm on top of the hill, he takes a match and lights it up, the arch. The photograph is lit, and I felt like just the heat on—I close my eyes—the heat on my face from the lighting of the print. And then—and I thought, Well, this would be like in *The Twilight Zone* —like you enter a picture, they take the picture away, you can never leave the picture, some science fiction thing happens, but of course, none of that happened. After that happened, I went down the hill, and as I went down the hill, I noticed my feet. The shoes on my feet were kind of sandals, but I had stockings on which was weird. It must have been cool enough, it must have been the fall, so I had stockings or some kind of stockings. As I went down the hill, I was like skiing with my feet. Skiing didn't exist then, but it was like with my feet moving and then I would run around arch a couple of times and ran home. [00:32:05] And that was the first time I did the performance, and this was in '73, of *Entering the Picture*. Now, this is probably the first time that I put myself into a hypnotic trance.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did you call it that and think of—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —that?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I didn't think about it at all that way. But that's—I think that's what was going on because I did it. I did—I've done some conversations with hypnotists and doctors and so forth, and they said, "Yes, you were putting—you put yourself into a trance, you were going into the picture," and so that's that. Now—which eventually leads to that person, this, this thing entering the picture.

So then, I'm in—so now, we're going back. So that was in '73; now, we're going back to '75. I'm doing all these drawings of history and of science fiction—'74 and '75, and I did my first —my second—my third exhibition. My second exhibition was at CalArts in '74, Gallery A402, and that was a hodgepodge of stick figures and colors and all kinds of things. That was in April, I think, '74 and then my show at Artists Space. Now, when I moved to New York with Troy, we became friends with Jack Goldstein and Helene Winer. Helene had already moved to New York from—she was at Pomona. She ran the program there, and I think she even showed Al [Ruppersberg].. She's a—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, she did.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —really important person in my life. I will say now for the record that she is amongst the most important people ever in my life. [00:34:01] I mean, people talk about Douglas Crimp as being the father of Pictures [Generation]. It's not, not Douglas Crimp at all; it's Helene Winer. She chose Douglas to talk about artists that she chose. He didn't choose these people; she did. She is the person who chose these people. She is the people—she is the person to discover us—it's Helene not him. So she was like Mom. I mean she was really important to me. She gave me—she—I subletted her place at Westbeth, and she had subletted from Howardena Pindell, and I destroyed it for everybody because they found out that I was living there. That was the end of Westbeth for Howardena and for Helene because I was found out, and I had to leave because you're not allowed to sublet at Westbeth. You can't do it. It's illegal. You're not supposed to.

In any case, Helene, Jack, I, and Troy became buddies, and I introduced Troy to Jack and Tory to Helene. Helene was so smart, so, so, so, so, so, so, so much fun to talk with. I enjoy—I mean, they're philosophers. I know some philosophy, some philosophers, and I have such a great time discussing ideas with them. They're not—they're academics even. Sometimes, I get in touch with some where you can actually talk, and they can get past the fact that I might—about me. They might be intrigued by it, this issue that—what I'm doing, what I'm trying to do in my work. They can understand it enough. Like the Germans understand it enough to be intrigued by it, and that has given me longevity. My cosmology has helped me no end in my longevity as an artist. [00:36:01] It's really—the way that I do what I do has helped me no—I'm still young, I'm still making, I'm still understanding, I'm still trying to figure it out. This has been a great help because I've been making work for almost 50 years now. Like Al is older than I, and it's his, and it's his will, and his curiosity that have kept him young and had—that's why he's still around. We talked about Al and some galleries that I'm

working with, they want to work with Al because Al is still interesting. I'm still interesting, and I think I'm interesting because of the kind of things I do. This cosmology thing, this really comes from, if my cosmology comes from anybody, it comes from my mom and her collection of stuff.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But, also, it's kind of like you said, you created this—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —boat. I called it a boat. I was sitting, I was waiting, and this is good that you say that because I'm in line with Jim Welling, James Welling. We're sitting, talking about—this was in '74, and we're not sitting; we're waiting in line. And I'm describing to him getting our food, and I'm describing how I want to make a boat. I want my work to be a huge ship, which can float because fashion is fickle, and I need a ship that can float because at this point, Donald Judd was being—was not considered so interesting. His time had passed. I said, "If Donald Judd's time has passed, what's going to happen me?" Of course, we all thought we were the next thing. You don't become the next thing if you don't believe it can happen.

As a young artist, I remember seeing Rauschenberg talk to a group at the Cooper Union. [00:38:00] This might have even been that time I was there. It was a huge crowd for Rauschenberg, you can imagine, and he said to us, "If you're not the most important person in this room, you shouldn't be an artist." [They laugh.] You have—being an artist, this is a little bit of a sidetrack, but the combination of an artist is the two parts of me—the person that is in the basement of that school feeling like they're worthless in combination with the genius. This doubled together so that artist can say, "Yes, I'm the most important person in the room." They can think that but isn't it a tragedy? It's a tragedy that I am the most important person because I'm so fucked up. It's the high and the low mixed up together, which I think is the ingredient that you need in order to become an artist. I think it's part of being an artist that you have this dichotomy in your psyche between the two. And so that's a little side point for the record, how I feel.

Because students ask me all the time, "So what do I need to be an artist?" and I tell them, "It's social. You have to become part of this, of the crew. Get your own, get your own tribe together, and go out there," and that's what we did. So when I went to New York, when—and I met Gordon Matta-Clark at some openings, and I had met him before, and he knew who I was, and I was told that right, *da, da, da.* And he started introducing me to famous people, but that's not my scene. I want to make my own scene. So I was the first one to arrive, Jack and I, in the scene and then slowly but surely, all our friends showed up. They all showed up. David showed up, Jim Welling showed up, Troy showed up, we all—and then that's how it goes. [00:40:07] The Pictures people, it all gathers steam, and people are doing similar things, and so.

But Artists Space, Helene was the director of Artists Space. I was her first exhibition at Artists Space as the director, and she made it because up until 1976, Artists Space, artists really chose artists. So someone like Sol LeWitt chose Jonathan Borofsky. That was the best one. Mostly, artists chose people that looked just like them, and it did not make for good programming. It was not interesting. So Helene, what she did was she created a panel of artists that she controlled, and they went from studio to studio and then they decided who would be—who would do shows. So in my studio in the basement of 17 King Street because that's where my studio was at the time, they came, and it was Jennifer Bartlett and even Bill Wegman, I think, maybe not, and like five other people, Edit DeAk I think. She was not an artist, but she was on the committee as well, and they chose me to do a show at Artists Space. And, uh, this was in March '76, and that was really the most important exhibition of my life.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Really, I'm sure.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I think it was. I think this Milan show that I just did last year is in the top two or three, but this one is for sure very, very important. [00:42:02]

ANNETTE LEDDY: What did you show?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, I'm going to get to that now.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Okay. Now, I was doing all these Rapidograph drawings. I was

taking photographs, and if I had a photograph of a person, I realize that when you see that person in the photograph, that you know it's a real person, and that person has a name. You may—and if it's a person within—a famous person, you know that person's name. Oh, that's John or that's Bill, or that's whoever, that's Glenn, Glenn Ford, or it could be any number. But that photograph is considered.

So I was making photographs, and the next thing I was doing was doing these Rapidograph drawings. So if I do a drawing—or a cartoon, I did cartoons, cutout cartoons of a person, and that person, the cartoon has a name. The next one would be an illustration, my Rapidograph drawing of a person, a man, and that person would have a name as well and then the next would be my Glen the stick figure. The next, Glen the stick figure in his studio and framed. And then the next one was Glen the stick figure unframed, just a stick figure drawn on the wall or on a sheet of paper without any frame, without any context.

And, uh, then the next one was a sign, a man—a sign of a man. So the sign of the man was all men represent—it's like the bathroom sign of a person, so identity is now gone. And then the next one was the most reduced representation of a man I could think of, which was a head and body, a head and body, and then the next one would be color, okay, shapes and color. So this is a reductivist reference. [00:44:02] So if I name them all Glen, if I name the color Glen, if I may—if I name the sign Glen, if I name the stick figure Glen, if I named the photograph Glen, it would be we are giving identity to all of those things. And, uh, all my exhibitions that I did in the '70s followed this route. So my show at Artists Space started with photography and worked all its way around to color on the wall, through signs, through photographs through stick—Glen the stick figure, through all of this.

Now, if I have all—and I made charts of the different forms, which is the beginning of what you call the cosmology, with the colors. This is the beginning of that. The chart would have all the different possibilities of when we look at it, what we feel, how we see it. So when we see a photograph of a person, we know it's real back then. Now, it's not so real because with the digital photography, things are—it's not—it's considered evidence. So if I have a person doing a bad thing, if someone—if a couple is having sex, and it's a bad thing, or if a person is hurting someone else, and it's a bad thing, and it's a photograph, that's evidence. But if it's a cartoon, it's not. So if I have a photograph of my—if I see a photograph of my parents fucking, it's going to make me feel a particular way. If I see a cartoon, it's not as tough of that but if—

And so, if I have Glen—so one of the things—questions I asked, if the photograph has a pin and he's piercing his finger, and he feels pain, okay, if—no, no, this is not—no, no. [00:46:17] If I have all these—if I have all of these—all these images on the wall, and I get à la voodoo a pin, and I prick the photograph, I prick the cartoon, I prick the, the Rapidograph drawing, I prick the stick figure framed, I prick the stick figure unframed. I prick the sign, I prick the head and body and I prick the colors, who feels the most pain? Who feels the most pain? And most people, because I used to demonstrate this, say between the stick figured framed and unframed because the photograph is too reduced. It has a world—it's living in another world, but the stick figure framed, that change from framed to unframed is where the psyche is. And we are—what we are feeling, who feels the most pain is our projection into the material.

Now, the other idea is, okay, there is a photograph of a person putting a knife into their arm, cutting a knife into their arm, cutting their arm with a knife. And then there's a photograph of than, then there's a cartoon of it, then there is a stick figure of it, then there is a sign of it, then there is a—the color of it. But then, again, you go the other direction, and you have the video of it, the film of it. And then you go to—and you keep going that way and you say the theater of it, someone on the theater cutting their arm and then someone in real life cutting their arm in front of you but really cutting it, not fake, but really cutting their arm. [00:48:16] And who feels—where do you feel the most pain?

When I was doing my lecture, when I was showing films from the '70s, Lynne Tillman was in the audience, and she left during my talk—during my film. The film was called *Bleeding Green Blood,* and it was me with a pin piercing my finger and not being able to—getting any blood out of it, and it took the longest time and then finally, I was going like this and blood came up. In the midst of doing this, she got up and left the room. She couldn't—she was not going to be there watching this, and she came up to me afterwards, and she apologized. She says, "I didn't mean to disrespect your work. I'm not—but I could not watch that scene, I couldn't watch it. I couldn't do it; I had to leave. It was making me too upset. I was—I was feeling it too much." And so this is that feeling. So who feels the most pain? Obviously, the

most is in life, that's the most pain in reality.

So what they're calling this now, and this—I was figuring this out in the '70s, right? I was—all my shows were following these chains, this way of doing things, but then they came up with this idea of mirror neurons that we have in our psyches that when you see something, you participate within it. So if I see a photo—if I see—when I go to a boxing match, I feel the boxing match. [00:50:01] That's why sports are so compelling because we feel the physicalness of it and then the conceptual element of it brings it up. So if you see dancers, you feel the dancers dancing. We cannot help but do this. This was a theory, and I don't know if it's still hip, but 15 years ago, it was very hip. Ten, 15 years ago, it was very hip, and I was interested. This is what I was involved with. I'm interested in how do pictures—in how do they do this? How do—? Because when I see a photograph, I invest life in that photo. When I look at you and I only see a picture of you because my eye only sees the light reflecting off of you, I invest in who you are. I see you as real. Now, the question about who you are and where I am is now being brought up more and more and more and more with computer, uh—with artificial intelligence. I mean this issue of is there a there there, is there's a person in the machine, are—do robots feel? And I say robots—I personally don't believe that robots have any feelings whatsoever. They represent feelings, but that's not the same thing.

Now, so all my exhibitions were following this chain, and I had it, and then late in the '70s, I did a performance at The Kitchen with hypnosis. I wanted to make—in the chart, I have the theater and then I have the real world, as I said it just now, where you cut your arm in the real world versus when you cut your arm in the theater. I thought, what is the most extreme theater that I can do? I said, "Well, when the actors believe what they're acting is real, that they are the character that they are representing," and I said, "This is hypnosis." [00:52:06] So I said, "Well, what I would like to do is—" and so what I did do is to—the first idea I had for this was Anne Clark had a beautiful apartment, Gordon Matta-Clark's mother had a beautiful apartment on 11th Street in the West Village. It was one of those apartments that's divided in half. It had a drawing room in the front, and in the back, there are three rooms in a row, so there's a natural kind of stage. And I thought I was going to bring the people into the living room and look into the end room and have the person in the end room in a trance state believing that they're doing something not aware of the audience, and this would be a performance that I would do with the hypnosis.

What ended up is that I had three people acting out the *Birth to Death List, Details from the Imaginary Life* in front of an audience at The Kitchen center. I had this found this hypnotist through the *Village Voice,* well yeah, the *Village Voice.* His name was Jerome Waldman. And it was—and he put me in a trance for the first time, a formal trance, just in the process. He found three people to play this woman's life because I had three because it was—it would be too much for one person, too extensive a list. I had about 30 statements that were acted out in front of an audience, and it was 1984. It felt like new. It felt like so bizarre. Her birth was traumatic, very painful and learning to walk, learning to crawl, looking out of—these scenes were acted out in a trance state. [00:54:07] And at the—and then I had people in the—Isamu Noguchi was in the audience because my mom was there, and Isamu is a good uncle because he was almost like my uncle and he was there. And so Harry Holtzman was there who was this guy from—who was a person from—who brought Mondrian to the United States and who—and he used to—from then on, he would call me Bizarre Bazaar [ph]. That's how—that was his nickname for me, Bizarre Bazaar. Amy Taubin was in the audience, and she hated it, hated it. She thought that I was manipulative, and that I was controlling these people, and how dare I do what I did. I got in such trouble for like the manipulation of these people's psyches in front of an audience.

There was a black—the woman was black, the man in the middle—so the child was a black woman but so black and so white at the same time that you could not—I mean I didn't choose her, but you could not—you were jumping white, black, white, black, white, black when you were looking at her. It was really funny to see her. And then you had—the next person was an American Indian, and the third person playing was an extremely effeminate male, a dancer, a man-woman really if there was one. He was a man-woman. One of the things was looking in the mirror. When he looked at the mirror, when she looked at the mirror at that point, it was so extreme. It was like Bette Davis. I mean it was so done [ph]. [00:56:01] And you realized that when you're in a trance state, you're—and you're turned, and you said you're a chicken, you don't become a chicken—normal chickens don't do much—but you become a cartoon of a chicken. You understand? Okay?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And you become a cartoon of a chicken. So he—so these people became extreme examples of what they represented. At the same time, there's the weirdest thing of being there and not there because they're in the trance state, so they're like this.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But it sounds so good, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And I was—I was the father, I was the brother, I was the husband, I was the—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And were you hypnotized?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —boyfriend. No, I was not hypnotized. I was everything. I was the—I was part of the set. The most—it was the most complicated, difficult process, the whole thing for me. Going up to that performance was nightmarish for me to do. I was never more scared of doing a performance as I was with this one. And it was the—not until very recently like four years ago did I do hypnosis with other people because after that, I vowed never—I didn't want it to be about control. I didn't want it to be about actors. I wanted it to be about living. I wanted it to be about the subject, the subjective. And so the next performance I did, I had myself hypnotized to be four years old in front of an audience, no problems. And then I gave—and then the last performance I did in the—I did a—I did two performances in the '80s and then that was the end of it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay. May I ask—? I remember hearing that you were in—you did a performance I think at the Tate where there was a model of your family's home that you grew up in. [00:58:06]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: This was at the—this was at LACE in LA.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, it was at LACE? I see.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It was—and I made a model of the house I grew up in because it had to do with me entering my childhood. So I'm only—so I'm on the floor, and I'm in a room, which is the same size of 370 Mesa Road. So I have the kitchen where my mom always was, where I hung out on the floor, where my bedroom was, and I made a model of that environment. This was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And what happened—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —really that—it was good. I did that performance. The most memorable thing about that is that Maritta Stegman, Maritta Wolff who has always been so nice to me, and she came with Bernice [ph] who was the father of Jody Fine who was my best friend when I was growing up. And we were—we went to a, uh, a garage sale and—or sales because we used to go from house to house, it was fun, and I was tagging along. And I was so excited because I thought the whole thing had gone so well, and Maritta said she hated it. She said, "I've said it, and I'm happy I said it."

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, what did she hate about it?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, she thinks it's a bad theater, bad, bad theater, stupid theater. I mean what are you doing? It doesn't make any sense. It's crap.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, was your mother there?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So what did she say?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, I didn't let it go. I mean I did, I let it go. I let it. She just had to say that she didn't like it and then we didn't—I didn't dwell on it. I'm not going to talk to someone who was very important to me as a child. This woman was a very important person when I was growing up. I loved going to her house. She had these beautiful birds in a cage. I loved it. I loved always going to visit her, really did. [01:00:02] And I'm not going and—

ANNETTE LEDDY: To have a fight with her about this—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I'm not—no. No, no, no, no.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That makes sense.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I'm not going to pollute that water. The water is clear, but she also didn't like the *Birth to Death List*, so—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Who did not like that?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And she's a smart woman. But, you see, I treaded—I was treading on her territory, and I think her territory is very conservative in a way. And so, in any case, that came out of it, and it was the first time I used a particular hypnotist and I used—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And what year was that when—approximately?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, who knows?

ANNETTE LEDDY: It was sometime—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I would say 2000-something.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, that was so recent at LACE?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I did the Foundation for Art Resources, was in the '70s and then I—and then in the mid-'90s, the hypnosis, I did a series of hypnotic. I did it for a whole week in the mid-'90s, and that's when it really came back in spades, the hypnosis.

ANNETTE LEDDY: What do you mean by that?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: That means that this woman invited me. Barbara Vanderlinden invited me to do a series of performances with the hypnotic state, and we found two hypnotists that I could work with for a period of a week. We went all over the city and did different contexts, and I did all these pieces one after the other. It's a whole—it's a whole bunch and bizarre, a bizarre environment. That was really heavy for me and that was in the way the beginning of the Renaissance of the—the—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So we need to go back because I'm getting confused now, and it's my fault because I jumped forward with that LACE idea. If we go back to—we're in the late '70s. You do the performance at The Kitchen—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Let me—yeah, I'll do it. I'm going to do this. I'm going to make it all make sense, okay. Don't worry, I can do this. I do this. This is what I do. I give lectures and this is—and I have to keep all the stories going in the same direction. [01:02:01] So—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I'm sorry, I'm making you—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —the person who's listening—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —jump ahead—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —this in, I don't know maybe—

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MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —it's 2050 when they're listening to this, right, 2045? It depends on what happens to my career after I die but—you know. In any case, it's 1978 when I do this and I—and the second performance I did, I was by myself doing it. I incorporated some other performances, and also I did some performances at my show at Artists Space where I entered the *Entrance to Hell*. It was a drawing of the entrance to hell, and I entered that picture, and it was a long process of entering that picture. Also, I, I asked for a volunteer from the audience to play death, in a performance of death pulling the soul out of a dead man. And so what I did is I did a drawing, and it was all done without words because I didn't want to have any words. So I did a drawing of death, which with a skull as the head with a black cape pulling something out of the mouth of a man with the eyes x-ed out, so obviously the man is dead. And I made this and then I made it kind of a—the thing coming out of the mouth was like a figure, and then I had a clock that said three minutes and I—with my arms,

I pulled it out of—like this, right? I had a white—a strip of white gauze, and I soaked it in water, and I asked for a volunteer from the audience to play the person, to play death. And so this woman volunteered, and she is Pamela who was one of Mia's best friends, Mia Agee's best friends, and she was dressed entirely in white, entirely. She even had a white glove on her left hand. [00:02:02]

And she gets up there. I put the tarp over her, I stuff my mouth with gauze, I go three minutes, and people are laughing. They know what's going to happen, and I lie down, and she starts to pull this fabric out of my mouth. And the shift from people laughing beforehand about what I was doing to what was happening when she did it was like night and day. It was so far apart. It became such a serious thing. It was not serious beforehand and then it became serious, and it becomes serious because two things were happening in that room: One of the things is that there's a volunteer from the audience in my exhibition, and I'm stuffing my mouth with gauze and then pulling out the gauze from my mouth. The other thing that's happening is that death is pulling the soul out of a dead man, and it is happening. The two are one next to the other like the cadaver, like the cadaver, the living cadaver, the cadaver with the face and the cadaver without the face.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So there was a hushed silence?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, it was quiet. You couldn't—you could hear a pin drop.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Wow.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It was a powerful thing, and it was a surprise for me. And then another one was the demon and the angels fighting over the dead man's soul. That was the other—that was the other performance that I did at the time. In any case, they were about visualizing the deity, the—this cosmology. That's what they're a part of. And so, I did that at Art, and I did that at The Kitchen as well. I did that—those performances in The Kitchen as well.

And at the same time, um, so the—and I had gotten a skeleton. I bought a skeleton.

ANNETTE LEDDY: A real one?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: A real one, and in the '70s, you could buy one. [00:04:02] I bought a skeleton, and it arrived. I bought it from—I got it from India. I bought it, and I unpacked it in front of the audience at The Kitchen, and I put each piece on a surface just building up a surface and that was the end of that piece. Another powerful work because it was all in plastic bags. It was all—you know everything was inarticulate, and I put it up in an inarticulate way. It did not create a person. It was random. You've seen pictures where it's random. It's seemingly a random—just a gathering of bones. So I did that at The Kitchen as well, and I read the *Birth to Death List* at The Kitchen, so it was really—this was a performance in '78 or '79, a year or a year and a half after what I did with a bunch of people at the—with the hypnosis.

So, now, I have a cosmology. I've got this kind of syntax of language going from sign to photograph to film. I have all of this stuff going on, and I have a vocabulary of signs because I had done approximately, maybe 120 signs in the mid-'70s before my show at Artists Space. So I had all of this stuff, and I thought, Well, if I put a sign of a man on a, on a sheet—it's always been on sheets of paper, but what happens if I put the sign of a man on a flag?" It changes. [00:06:00] Everything changes when you put it on a flag. So I said, "Okay," and up until now, you couldn't do certain things. Up until '78, you couldn't—'77–'78 there's a line in the sand that no one has evert talked about, but I think it was when Pop art stopped its shadow, the shadow of Pop art ended. There's a shadow, a Pop art shadow. Then you could start playing with subjects that Pop art was playing with and not get in trouble for that. So Pop art shadow, I think, ended about that period.

So I was inventing four—I invented packaging designs. So I—there are two lists that I followed: One is the table of contents from a *Graphis* book, *Graphis Magazine,* which is a book, a journal on graphic arts, a Swiss journal, *Graphis*. And the table of contents, so they listed book cover, record cover, poster, product design, packaging design, but it was quite a long list of things that they—that would qualify within that. I said, "You know, I could put my sign in any one of those contexts," so I could have a packaging of wine, and I did, I did that, or labels like this or book covers like that and so this was like—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And this is the head with the circle?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It could be any sign, not just the head with the circle. It could be this. The head with the circle represents the subjective but the—it could be any sign. Because I had 150 signs, like 200 signs already and so I could just put—but it wasn't about that, but they were—all been on paper. They'd all been in the same material, but if I started to shift materials, then the implied meaning changes. [00:08:04] The form changes, see, because you have the—you have three things going: You've got the subject, you've got the sign, and you've got the form, so I'm playing with this back and forth.

And then I went through the yellow pages to flag shops, flags, I typed in—I looked. I didn't type in yellow—back then, you had yellow pages. So I went to a page of a banner showroom, and they listed everything they made, banners, pennants, patches, uniforms, flags, the—a whole—buttons, and I could make any of these things. So I made buttons, I made flags, I made posters, I made all this stuff because those things represented my ship. I talked about my ship I wanted to create. My shows were like my ship. It's my, my work. Whatever the work is, it's my work. And so these flags represented media, branding, as you say earlier the branding. And so then I started going these posters, Mullican Heaven, Mullican Hell, Mullican Subject, Mullican Object, Mullican—you know? And there's a set that are in the collection of, um —they're actually—that original set are in the collection—who has the museum downtown, the museum?

ANNETTE LEDDY: The Whitney?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, downtown LA, downtown LA. Uh—

ANNETTE LEDDY: You mean MOCA?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: The other one, the one that you pay—you don't pay to get in. It's the famous collector, he has a museum there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, um, Broad

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Broad, Eli Broad. He bought it at auction this piece. Originally—this is the little add-on, but Mary Boone when I worked with Mary, and this is another story. [00:10:03] But when I started working with Mary, she calls me up and says, "Saatchi wants to buy a bunch of work from this from the gallery, and he would love to buy those posters. Are you willing to sell them?" I was not willing to sell them. And—

ANNETTE LEDDY: You mean to him?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: To him, yeah, sell them to him. And I was not willing to sell them. They're too important for me. They're the most important thing. They really are the beginning of all my signs. I mean, this is it. And so we—and for nothing, for $1000. She says, "It's nothing I know but—" Because she's already selling work for 30, 40 grand but from—this was going to be for $1200. She says, "He'll—it's going to—he's making a book on his collection. It'll be very important for you to be in this book." Well, I never got into the book, never got into the book, and he sold them at auction the following year.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Which he had done so much so, right?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, a year I mean, and then he, uh—and then he—what else did he do? And then this guy, this collector, a Swedish collector bought them, a very good Swedish collector bought them, and I was very happy finally and then he died and then Broad bought them. Do you think Broad has ever shown those posters? No. He has never shown those posters, and he won't show those posters. And you know how—?

The nice thing about my show in Milan is that people got to see my ambition. I am an ambitious artist, fuck you, really. I mean, I am an ambitious artist. I may not be wanting to make a lot of money, I don't care about the gallery, I don't have to show with Gagosian because that's not ambition. That's common sense. That's normal stuff. But as an artist, I am ambitious. I do things—I do things big. [00:12:01] Look at the subjects I'm working with, heaven and hell and death and stuff, those were big, and people don't get it here. They don't get it. The Germans get it. They understand.

I was talking with Rosemarie Trockel. We were at an opening together at a dinner, and she

asked me, "So where do you live?" and I say, "I live between New York and Berlin. I live over the Atlantic" and she smiled. She says, "I've always thought of you living in between." So she understood that I am putting myself smack in the middle between the subject and the form, between life and death, and between the cosmology and what Fischl would show, you know? I'm in between. Americans don't like this in-betweenness, they don't. They may think they like it, but they don't. They want things that are literal. Americans love literal information. Please, just the facts, ma'am, that's all they have, and I have—my life with Mary Boone, I was fine. I had done everything. The person who brought more people to my studio in the late '70s than anybody was Julian Schnabel. He brought more people to my studio. He brought everybody. He was the most generous person and he—because he kind of got it. He got my work. He really liked my work, and he got it. He thought I needed a gallery, so I think he helped me get into Mary's. I'm sure of it. When I got into Mary, then he stopped being my friend. I mean, we were friends, but he got his job done. He wanted to get it done, and he got it done. We have not much in common except that we're both ambitious. He's ambitious too.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah. [They laugh.] [00:14:00]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But you understand this?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, I do.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: You don't understand it—I mean you understand it because most people don't understand it with me because who am I? My—I was looking through an auction catalogue. You know Julie Mehretu make $5 million a painting. I do well if I make—sell anything for over 50,000, so is she a better artist than I am? Is she a more important artist than I am? No, she's not, and I know that. I've always known that because I lived my elementary school life, and I know that I've been told I'm an idiot my whole life, I can withstand this, and it's okay.

And so when I entered Mary Boone, I had my first show. She was supposed to sell it out. She didn't sell it. She sold like three pieces. Everyone understood that she sold everything I ever made. That's what everyone—that was her thing, right—I sell everything. In fact, to get anybody from me, you have to get on the waiting list. It does matter who you are and what you want, but you've got to get on a waiting list because I sell the most important art period. And she—but—and she—and I represented to her, thank God—she knew that I was not a commercial—I wasn't in that for the—she wasn't representing me for money. She was curious about the work. She's a smart person, she had heard enough and so I did my shows with her. I worked with her for six years. Halfway working with her and even with my second show or my third show with her—and she did show me every two years, which was more than a lot of other dealers did. They might have shown me once like some and then others not. It's just the way it is because it has—it does come down to money unfortunately in this world because we've put—we've made art into money, and so obviously, money is the most important element of art, and that's where we are. That's how we—that's how things are going, so.

But the thing is that I was working with Michael Klein. [00:16:01] Michael Klein I met Michael Klein in like '83, '82, '83, '84, and he says to me, "How much money are you making with Mary?" I said, "Not much," and that's truly not much. I said—and he says, "I can make you 250,000 a year, I guarantee it. I can do this." Wow, 250,000 a year, that's a lot of money, I can do it. I worked with Michael and he—and but I had to give him a salary to do this. I had to pay him a salary to work for me. He was—it wasn't going to be from sales. So I gave him a salary that he got and then he—and he did it within a year. Within two years, he did it. He was making—he sold enough work and he—at one point, he had the best gallery in New York I think. No one knows it, but the gallery—Paul Thek was in the gallery when I—at one moment, at one time, Paul Thek, Marina Abramović ,Vito Acconci, myself, Robin Winters, Pat Steir, um, the list goes on. I mean—

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's an interesting mix.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —you know? No one remembers anything. No one remembers anything of how—what an amazing context he had created. It was in the Cable Building where Al was. Al was in the Cable Building and so was he. I don't know how I met—I forgot how I met Michael, but then at one point, I went from Michael to Barbara Gladstone, and this was the end of my relationship with Michael. They were both working with me and then I

went with Barbara because he just couldn't—he couldn't deal with it. [00:18:04] It was just a monstrous thing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: How long were you with Barbara?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Six years. She gave me one show that whole time. I like Barbara very much. If I'm in a party and she's there, I enjoy talking with her tremendously. She's a brilliant person at what she does but, um—and she actually knows what she's doing. This is another thing about her, but she's not kind. [Laughs.] If you're a dealer, if you're an artist working with her, she's—she plays—she calls it as she sees it and—you know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: So like what would she do?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: She would—she wouldn't show you. She gave me one show, and that was it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did she give you a reason?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, she—later on, she told me because I did something to her in Europe so no, with another person that she didn't appreciate. But generally what—this is not—it's not unusual because every show costs something, and one—at the bottom of it, she said she's a businessperson. That's just the way it is. Michael at the bottom of it was—they're all obsessed, and she has a great eye. Barbara has a great eye. She has a great ear. I was surprised when she wanted to work with me. I was totally surprised because I thought that I was persona non grata in this country, and I still feel that way, but this was—this was a surprise, and I was taken aback by it. Because at this point, I had quite a European situation going. My—in Europe, my first show in Europe was with Tanja Grunert, and my second show at Europe—in Europe was with Ida Gianelli. And my third show as with Chantal Crousel. These were my first three galleries in Europe, and they're all—and Ida Gianelli, a fabulous person, very important dealer of her time. [00:20:04] She was Germano Celant's girlfriend, and she had a gallery in Genoa, a beautiful little space.

Germano did a show called *American Un-Expressionism, American Un-Expressionism*, and that was a show that included all the Pictures people. He invited—I mean everyone was—everyone could go, and he would put you up, but you had to get there. You had to fly yourself there. I was the only person that actually flew myself for that opening from the whole bunch, from the bunch of us, and the bunch was the bunch. This bunch was name—the fancy artist that was in that show. The show was a phenomenon. I was the only artist that was there, and that's where I met Lawrence Weiner because he was there not because of that show but for a show on film. And so I was sitting at a table—this is my first trip to Europe, first trip, and I'm sitting at a table with Lawrence, Ondine, and Jack Smith, the three of—four of us. We were staying at the same hotel, and we would have dinner together. If you can imagine Ondine, the Warhol superstar who was the nicest man you'd ever meet, fantastic, huge, giant. He was big because when he stopped taking speed, he blew up like a balloon, and he made his money by touring around with *Chelsea Girls*, and they showed *Chelsea Girls* at this film thing, and that's why Lawrence was there, and that's why Jack Smith was there. So I got to meet—this was like—this was my first trip to Europe, and I was so excited. This is like when I arrived in New York City, right, when I met with all those girls from the galleries. [00:22:03] Now, I'm in Europe, and I'm with this guy who I thought was like—you know Lawrence Weiner. He's like—he's why I became who I am because of what he did. I had to deal with what he did. We all had to deal with what he did now.

And the people in that show were—the show that I was in from Cindy to Robert to—Cindy Sherman, Robert Longo, Jack Goldstein, Tory Brauntuch, David Salle. You name them all, they're all in it, all this show. Everybody was in. And we met Cindy and Robert—we all met Cindy and Robert in the '70s. This is—I should—I have to put this into this recording. After my show at Artists Space, and before my performance at The Kitchen with hypnosis, I—no, it was after my—it was after my performance at The Kitchen. It was after, so it was '77 or '78—Helene put together an exhibition of the artists from Artists Space. And it was Jack—it was me, Jack Goldstein, Paul McMahon, David Salle, Jim Welling, Troy Brauntuch and myself. Maybe Jim wasn't in it, but I think it was those—

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's the Pictures—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —that was the Pictures [Generation]. We were the Pictures. And so we go up to Buffalo, New York, to Hallwalls, and we put up a show at Hallwalls. They invited

us to put up a show, and I went up there, and I went up with Troy. And there was Robert with a huge beard, potbelly, and he was with Cindy who had a very severe, little black haircut. I mean, she was really elegant, but very severe, and Nancy Dwyer was there. Michael Zwak was there, and Paul, and then Charlie Clough was there. [00:24:06] And we got to meet all these people for the first time. They were nobodies; they were just putting this thing together, and they had invited lots of people up to Hallwalls for shows, but when they invited us up, they came back with us. Within six months after our visit to Hallwalls, they all moved to New York, and they would sleep at the Artists Space. They slept—I remember they were all sleeping in Art—they put a show up at Artists Space I think, and they slept there, or no, they didn't do a show at Artists Space, but they slept at Artists Space. There was—it was like communal, and we became fast friends. We were always friends with Robert and Cindy. I have known Cindy since then. Cindy sewed my banners. When I made my banners, I would—because she actually had a sewing machine, she made flags for me. She made her own costumes because she was dressing herself up. And so she had access, and she could sew and so I asked her if she could do it for money, you know, "Can you sew me some banners?" and she did. She made some of my banners, early banners. I don't know which ones, but she made some of them. And—how are we doing with time?

ANNETTE LEDDY: We're going to—we only have about 15 more minutes, so maybe we can—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Okay. Isn't it—? No, but you know we can have—do another session.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Obviously. We're only till like 1980. [They laugh.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: So, we go back and then Cindy—and this becomes the group, late '70s. This is the pictures generation before—this is well before the picture show at Artists Space, where Cindy was working as the secretary for Artists Space, and she was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right, for Helene, right.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —dressed—for Helene. And she was—and she would dress up. She would look like whoever, but she would always dress up to be somebody else behind the desk. [00:26:04] Is that fantastic? I remember she went to a party at a friend of mine's, Alice Philips' [ph] house, and she went as Lucille Ball, and she was amazing. I mean she was amazing. Nancy Dwyer was the one who went across the country with Cindy when she did the *Untitled Film Stills*. And it was a trip, they went to LA, and a lot of those *Untitled Film Stills* are shot by Nancy. She shoots them, but it was a shot set up by Cindy. Cindy set it all up, and Nancy just took the picture. But this was the scene, and I could've—I could've gotten five, six *Untitled Film Stills*, no, never got one. I don't have a piece by her. Now, they're a half a million dollars each. Well—you know?

So why—? I had a universe that I created, and Mary couldn't sell a thing, and Cindy, half a million dollars. Okay, it's a little bit—a little bit odd. But as I said, I grew up with it and I never—there was one—there was a birthday party that Mary had for one of the artists in the gallery, and I heard from—Troy was in the gallery by then. And I wasn't invited. She had forgotten to invite me, and I was the only artist that was not invited to this party. She apologized to me, and I was hurt by it, but it was a hurt that I had already felt many times in my life. I really felt this way.

So coming with the genius, which I'm convinced by, I'm totally convinced by this. I would—I couldn't survive without that, and I'm only being honest, comes this other half, which is the popper. It's the guy in the basement of that overseas school, you know? [00:28:04]

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

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: So the two coexist, so I can take it and, you know? So, now, I'm in Europe. I'm the first person. There, I'm the only one who actually moved to Europe, but then, I have a show with Ida and then I had a show with these different people.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Wait a minute. You didn't move to Europe at this point, did you?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No.

ANNETTE LEDDY: No?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no, no, no.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But I was there every two months. I started—I took advantage of my position at Mary Boone, and that was a position I could take advantage with because everyone knew her, and they also knew my work. I got into "documenta" in '82. This was a very important show for me to be in. That was—the curator of the show, one of the curators was Germano who had done the show and so he got me into "documenta". And that "documenta" had most of us pictures people in it, and, um—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Maybe this is the moment to talk about this question then. How do you see yourself as fitting into Pictures, as being part of Pictures?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, it's a word I've used in my work since longer than anybody else, *Entering the Picture*.

ANNETTE LEDDY: *Entering the Picture*, oh, that's true, yeah, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I mean proving that stick figures live lives. I am this idea of superreal, the Superrealism of the subject.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Definitely. I mean, of course, you tend—one tends to think of—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And then—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —pictures as being about media-generated images, right?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Right, and I—then I have my—then you would have my signs, my international signs. That's what it would be, which leads to an interface, which leads to the iPhone, totally the iPhone. When people come up to me—someone came up to me at a party and said that they had seen all my shows at Mary's, and that they really didn't understand what I was doing, and not for another 25 years because they bought a TV set. [00:30:15] They put it on the wall. They unplugged—they plugged it in, and the TV went on, and there was my work all over the TV. It was a series of signs that were leading them of how to get things started, and they said, "Oh, my God, it's your work. This is Matt Mullican. Now, I know what he was doing" because people didn't know what I was doing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's so bizarre.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: They didn't understand. I, to a large extent, didn't understand that I was dealing with the Zeitgeist that was yet to appear. That I was dealing with an interface, and I was dealing with the iPhone. I mean I am—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well or I—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —always considered to be the fool on the hill. This is how I see myself within pictures. Being that I'm the—I'm not the academic, so therefore, I'm the fool, and I'm involved with the subjective. Is at—the core of my world is not media. There is a difference.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's the difference. Yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Is media is not the core of my work. What's at the core of my work is the subject.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But also, in a certain way, graphic images that are part of a collective sign system, you know what I mean? You're dealing with something that's a little bit between a photograph and a drawing all the time. It's that—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It's, well, the signs. I mean, I had—I had, uh, photos, cartoons, and signs.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But the way that it resembles like the international wayfarer sign system like they all had—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, it does.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's the brilliance is to take that and then like tweak it in some—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I don't even tweak it. I showed it directly. I appropriated it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right, but you added things like—[00:32:00]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, I didn't. I show—when I had my show, with the show at—the show at, um, in Genoa, the show I was in, all the signs in that show were taken directly from —

ANNETTE LEDDY: So it was—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —the world.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —just the reframing?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, I just repainted them.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But the other thing though when you get into things like—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Before birth—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —chaos and you have like—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. How do you—how do you define a subject, which is so personal? When you invent a sign, which is seemingly very—how do you—what do you do? How do you show that? And so that's—that, in a way, is how it goes, I mean that's—and then that's an—that's the inventive part.

But I want to go to the fool on the hill, which is something I still feel, and the fool on the hill has an advantage because they're kind of atemporal. They don't grow old so much because they have not been fully digested. So right now—

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's true.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —I am being discovered by a generation, which is in their early 20s, and I actually have a lot to do with them because of this post internet, iPhone architecture which I referred to 50 years ago, and so. Also, they're very much interested in cosmologies now more and more. They're interested in—the more—I mean, it's like my day will come. It's still going to take a little while—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I think it has already.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: [Laughs.] But I—maybe I keep things at bay. I, I—here I am, I gave my archive to you-all with the Smithsonian. I did that, and that's quite an honor for somebody to do this. That means I'm important enough to do that. I was in a—and I—but I still say, I am the most important person in the room, but I'm not at the same time as with Rauschenberg. I was—I had an opening. [00:34:02] It was in Barcelona, and she has wonderful openings, and it's the best food, it really is. When you go to Barcelona, you're going to eat like kings. It is fabulous. And she is so—and I may even show up. If I can, I'll come for the opening because this would be fun for everybody if I was there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: What's her name?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Silvia, Silvia Dauder.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's right.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But I'm sitting there at the desk in the office, and I'm—and I have this book, and I start saying, "You know I'm here, I've done this a lot. I've done a lot of shows in my life, what if I just count them up?" And so I sat there for an hour, counting up the number of shows I've done, one-person shows not shows in general but one-person shows, 230 one-person shows, okay? And so I said—I started [inaudible] 230 one-person shows I've done. That's a lot of shows. Sixty museum shows, I mean ,if you want to add them up all. Now, how many shows I've done in Europe? And this is one reason why I have this in-the-basement type of feeling. I've done—in Europe, I've done, as I've said, probably 30 museum shows if you count them all, maybe more. How many museum shows I've done in the United

States? I've done one museum show in this country, one as a proper museum show—no, two if you count the ICA as a museum, which it isn't, but I'll call it that. ICA Boston gave me a show, and the Santa Barbara Art Museum gave me a show, and that is it. And then when I had the show in Milan, you go in there, and it knocks you over. [00:36:06] It knocks you over with the amount of work I have done and the complexity and the blah, blah of the work. The work has its—it was a very enthusiastically received show. And I can't—it doesn't work for me in this country. Now—

ANNETTE LEDDY: But you see how that would really work in Italy? People would really, really like it there, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: They love it. But this show was a brilliant context for me. You couldn't have a better context. You see this wall of paintings. You saw that picture of the wall painting? I'm going to have this new book, and you'll see the wall of paintings. It's truly astounding the scale of what they did, what I did and what they did. It was a collaboration. It was amazing. But this is something that I've been dealing with since Mary Boone. Before Mary, I was one of the guys. After Mary, I was not. This is how I feel. I was passed over. There was not—I mean the thing, I just didn't sell. All my friends sold; I just did not sell. Not—people did not buy my stuff not until Michael and that was—that was convoluted and all. Barbara sold one piece while she worked with me—

ANNETTE LEDDY: But you're just talking about in New York. All this time you were selling in Europe, correct?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yes. My major gallery who I have to mention now is Victor Gisler from Mai 36. Mai 36 started with—it was a duo, and, um, they—and it was Mai 36 Galerie. It was in Lucerne, and they opened up. They went—Luigi and Victor—I want to say Gary but it's not. Luigi and he—they were choosing their—they had a backing, so they were choosing the people that were going to show in their gallery beforehand, and so everybody joined the gallery before they opened and then all of—[snaps fingers] they had a gallery. [00:38:12] I'm still working with them. He's my most important dealer. Now, everything I do goes through him because I trust him and he—so that means—and he sells my work. He can sell my work. I've made a good living in my life.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And Micheline.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: She sold my work, not a lot, not a lot. Most of the work she had, she didn't sell but Victor—and Victor managed to sell a complete series here and there. And it's, it's more than I'm saying. I've sold—look, here I am, I'm in my 60s, I've had 200 and something shows, I've managed. I have three houses that I—or four houses that I own.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You've got tons of catalogues.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I have lots of catalogues, lots of books so what am I—? I'm not—I'm—you know? But then they're just a few odd-like things that get under your skin, and I am being honest with you. Normally, I never mention this, but I figure this is for the record, so after I'm dead, people know that in 2019, I'm complaining. [They laugh.]

ANNETTE LEDDY: Let's stop there. [They laugh.]

[END OF TRACK mullic19_2of3_sd_track03_m.]

[TRACK mullic19_2of3_sd_track04_m is a side conversation.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I'd like to go to really what happened between 1979 and 1982, 19['83], and in '79, we were all working downtown. Everybody that I knew, we all had studio spaces. My studio space is at 135 Grand Street, and I shared it with Jim Welling. We had—we shared a place, and then I moved to another building. In terms of where I've lived, I lived at—let's go backtrack because I haven't mentioned this. I moved initially to—I was at that apartment that I mentioned uptown, then I moved to Westbeth where I subletted from Helene —

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, that's right.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And then I moved to—I moved to back to Mia Agee's house on 17 King Street and then I was going to move to Nassau Street. I found a place on Nassau, which

was one of the most traumatic experiences of my entire life. I rented a beautiful corner-space studio with beautiful windows, full of light, seventh floor on Nassau, a view of downtown. You could see the Brooklyn Bridge and everything else, fantastic place. I got there, and it was all windows, all windows. There was one wall, so it was a place, a showplace really. Bathroom in the hallway, no kitchen really, but not allowed to live there, but everyone lived there. And I moved in, and within three weeks, I was panicking because I hated the place so much. The light was too heavy. I felt like I was in a glass case, I was on display, and I could hear all the air conditioners of downtown. There was such a hum up there that it just drove me nuts. And I said, "I've really—" Because it was the first legal document I've ever signed, and I just panicked. [00:02:01] I said, "Look, I've signed a five-year lease on a place—"

ANNETTE LEDDY: Five years?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Five years.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, my God.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Because it was a great deal. It's 200 a month, $200 a month.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, that's—couldn't you just have put shades or soundproofing?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, I could've, I could've, and this—I could've dealt with it, but I just was going nuts, crazy, crazy, crazy, crazy, so I went back. I remember going to Mia's and talking her out like she was my shrink, and I really should've gone to a shrink at this stage. I really should've gone, but I didn't go, and I went crazy. I went crazy. Helene said, "You're going crazy." Everyone told me. Everyone got a little bit scared for me, a little bit scared because I really went over the deep end on this one.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But it wasn't just the apartment but—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It was just the apartment. It was growing up. This was me growing up. This was me giving myself a really hard time— [. . . –AL] So there I was, and I went nuts. And I said—and I remember being in the hallway of Mia's house, the stairway, hallway, and I was smashing my body against the wall—I mean really truly smashing my body against the wall, trying to get out of my body, trying to get out of this situation. And it was really a traumatic point. It—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Was it related in any way to the hypnoses?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Nothing, nothing to do with it. It was after. It was after I did my show at Artists Space. I hadn't done my hypnosis at that point. That was later. But I had put myself in a bad situation. I felt very—I just felt terrible. I remember this was a funny story, but I was trying to smash myself, and I said, "I want to go home. I want to go home to Santa Monica." Not only do I want to go home to Santa Monica, I want to be with my mother. Not only do I want to go to be with my mother, but I want to go inside my mother. [00:04:04] I want to go back. I'm not ready for this world. I wanted to go back into the womb. That's where I wanted. That's what I needed. I need to be held, I need to be confined, I needed to be in the dark space. Where I was, was wide-open, huge light, huge windows, outside, inside, blah, blah, blah.

So then, I was walking up West Broadway or down West Broadway, and there was—there was, um, the guy who did Pictures. What's his name?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Crimp?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Crimp, Douglas Crimp was walking down the street going the other way. We were talking, and I said to Douglas, "I have this apartment, and I'm desperate to get out of it. It's a five-year lease, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah,'" and his jaw dropped because he was looking for a place, and it was the kind of place—this is the kind of place he really would love. So he went and looked at it, and he says, "I'll take it."

ANNETTE LEDDY: No kitchen?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No kitchen, no bathroom, no nothing, but this is—this is—what were you thinking? This is New York 1970s. No one had kitchens, no one. I had to put a

bathroom in my later place. I had to put a—we had to put a bathroom in, and we had to put a kitchen in.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And you—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Everybody did.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —but he would have been allowed to put a kitchen and bathroom in that place at that time.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, eventually. I mean, yeah. No, at that time, you had to be very stealthy about it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: You peed in the sink. That's how you do it. And so we went to visit with the landlord. The landlord accepted it, and everything was fine.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, fantastic .

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And I got out of it. But I was so shaken up by this experience that people were still nervous about me. I really should have seen a shrink about this. I was nervous. I stayed with Mia for a year—about no, four—three months, I stayed with her. She was the most generous person, and I was down in the basement, and other people stayed down there. Maria Nordman once stayed down there for—because she knew Mia through me because Maria and my mother were friends. [00:06:03] And I remember once in Mia's, Maria came home with Blinky Palermo because they were buddies. And so I met Blinky Palermo in that kitchen where I met those other people.

Mia's—by the way, Mia's daughter married Bill Bollinger who was a Post Minimalist artist and so I met Bill. He had his work in the backyard. It was a—she was a wonderful person, I mean really intimidating. Mia was so intimidating, Viennese, very heavy, but genuinely heart of gold, heart of gold. Didn't like any art definitely, [laughs] but she was very loyal to seeing all my shows and everything, and she died of cancer like 10 years later, it was terrible. And she was very close with Walker Evans because James Agee, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, et cetera.

So I go home and then if in an apartment on University Place, and it was an apartment, a corner place, University and 12th Street, and I loved this place. I loved it. I had no bathroom, I had no kitchen, I had nothing. I shared a bathroom in the hall, and in that bathroom was my only sink. That was my sink, it was in the bathroom down the hall. And so whenever I did dishes, I would put them in a pan if I had—and no one came over for dinner—I had nothing to do with. But there was a refrigerator in the room. It was big, a wonderful place, lots of windows but cozy windows. It was my favorite place in a way where I ever lived. I lived alone. I had my studio there. This is where I did all my posters.

ANNETTE LEDDY: It was like a one-bedroom apartment?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, it was a loft. It was a tiny loft. It was a one bed—it had a loft bed in there, and it had a desk underneath the bed where I worked. [00:08:01] It was a very—it was a nice situation. I really enjoyed it except for the person upstairs who played the music way too loud because I was up high.

But at that point, I got a job at Barnes & Noble, my only job I've had in my life except for teaching. I was a mover, I did moving but that was freelance. I moved artwork with people. I had jobs like Allan McCollum turned me on to various people because he was a mover, and so. I got this job through Charlie Clough's wife. Charlie Clough was one of the Hallwalls people, and they worked at a Barnes & Noble and so I worked at Barnes & Noble—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Where was it?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —the bookstore. It was on 19th Street and Broadway, and it was a floor in the building. And it was—all the people were artists, and they made posters for the Barnes & Noble shop. So if there was a new book, there was a poster over where the book was, and it was an illustration of what the book was. It could have just been text, but a lot of times, there were pictures. So if it was a murder mystery, you'd see the book cover blown up

or whatever. So I did that for a year and a half.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You did the drawings?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I did the drawings. We all made mono posters, and that really influenced—I learned how to do monoprints that looked like screened prints. And that's what I did for all of my signs, were done that way. They were not—from now on, they were printed with a roll. They were not painted with gouache. The new posters and signs were all with a monoprint process, and I learned that at Barnes & Noble.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Fantastic.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But we would get stoned on the balcony. We'd have—every Friday night, we'd go out and have martinis. It was a real group thing, and it was really camaraderie. Everyone was there together. It was so much fun.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That sounds great.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I loved it. It was really a highlight, and I used to—and it was not a long walk from 12th Street to 19th Street.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Perfect.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It was just very close by. [00:10:00] And it was a fun, fun. It was actually 19th and Fifth was the name, was the place. And it was—and the boss was right there with us and Paul Geketi [ph], Gemeti [ph] or something? Can you imagine you remember these names like this? And it was—it was great. I loved it.

So then about a year before that ended, collectors started touring around downtown around, amongst my friends from Long Island. Women would go to studios, and we would report to each other, "Oh, they've been to your studio?" and they'd offer cash. They would give you like hundreds or thousands of dollars for something out of your studio because they knew what was up. They knew that this was going to happen. Things were—they, oh, we didn't know, but they knew.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's so interesting.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And so these women, and they didn't buy from me, but you know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: But Cindy—I've heard that these women were really Cindy Sherman's first customers, kind of—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, well—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —first collectors.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —they did Cindy, they did Robert, they did David, they did Jim, they did me, they did Troy, they did Julian, they did Ross, they did Eric. They went downtown. They did everybody because no one had galleries in 1979, [19]'78, [19]'79, no one. The—we all—you know? And then in about three months, I had three offers for galleries. Metro Pictures wanted to represent me and, uh, Mary Boone wanted to represent me, and then Annina Nosei wanted to represent me. They all wanted to represent me, so I had nobody interested, and I had three galleries, and I had to choose between Metro—Annina, I wasn't going to go with but—and she eventually became famous for Jean-Michel Basquiat. That was her basement that he was in. And she was married to John Weber, so Annina Weber for a long time. She was a connected person. [00:12:00] She—um, well in any case.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So you went with Metro?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, I didn't go with Metro. I went with Mary.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I thought that everybody was going to Metro. All my friends, every last person went with Metro, and I thought, God. Helene had given me such a hard time when I went crazy. When I went crazy, Helene didn't appreciate me going nuts when I went nuts, and I truly went nuts. My best friends were scared for me, and I really should have

seen a doctor. I saw Helene last year because I'm working on some projects with her—would I'd like to, she apologized. She apologized for giving me such a hard time.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, what would she say, pull yourself together, guy?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Suck it up, basically suck it up. She was really pissed when I didn't go with her. Oh, she was so pissed. And, um, I went with Mary. I went with Mary just because it was different, and why not? I was ambitious but I was also—Julian had tried so hard and David was in the gallery and people I knew were in the gallery as well, but everybody I knew was at Metro and I—

ANNETTE LEDDY: In retrospect, do you feel that was the right move or—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You should've gone with Metro?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, probably [should've] gone with Metro, but I don't know.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, you never know.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: As the Beach Boys say, "God Only Knows."

ANNETTE LEDDY: Hindsight, yes.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: That's it. That's the way it goes, God only knows. So if I had gone with Metro, maybe things would've been different, they could've been the same. I don't think it would've been a big difference, and I don't think they would have been able to sell my work because no one could, and that would have been tough for Helene. Although Helene had such a high regard for what I did. I went to Helene's house recently, and she has my work up in her apartment. You know it's very sweet. [00:14:00]

ANNETTE LEDDY: Here in New York?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Here in New York, she has a beautiful apartment and she has—there is my work up on the wall. She has several pieces of mine—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Which ones?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: She has a *Dead Man and Doll*, and then she has very early buttons and flags, and she has a chart I think just framed and beautiful and—you know? But the thing is that I went with Mary, and it was not easy. Mary is famous for her temper and a go-getter. When she opened the door of—from—to install the show, and she opened the door, she was not wearing shoes. She was wearing jeans, and she had glasses on and no makeup. She was beautiful. Oh, I think women are much more beautiful without makeup than with makeup. I think the mask thing is totally overdone. I don't like it. So she looked to me much better than she did with her Chanel suit and her 10-inch heels. We put the show up together, the two of us. We put up the show together. So she did it all. She at Bykert was—that's what she her job was, putting up shows. She was the gal Friday, and she also loved tile. Tile is very big on her. That's why she put the tiles on the floor of her—the next gallery.

And then at the opening, there she was dressed opposite. It was September 1980, which—my opening, and it was probably the most transformative month in the—one of the most transformative months in the history of New York City in terms of the art world. This was such a big month. The *Transavanguardia* show opened at—I think opened Sperone Westwater, which was a huge deal. [00:16:00] Mary had started her new program, and I was the first artist to show this program. Metro Pictures opened up. Everybody was opening. Just the '80s started whereas there were no galleries, and now everybody was in a gallery. When I went—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That's so interesting—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —it all happened in 1980. So I was privileged to be the opening show. It was originally supposed to be a two-person show with Jeff Koons. Jeff and I were supposed to do a two-person show, and then she decided to put me at the beginning of the season and Jeff at the end of the season. That's what she had decided to do, so I was happy to have my moment. And it was—I had posters, I had flags, I had charts, I had illustrations. I

had sculptures, I had signs, and people thought it was a group show. They didn't think it was a—I mean it really had that quality of being a group show, but it represented my ship, as I said, my body of work. I wanted to have different things in contrast with each other. And the flags were all done, as I said, Cindy and then there were some other people that sewed banners for me, and I had posters on the wall representing the basic themes of my work, life, death, world, things like this.

Mary was known just as a painting gallery. She never showed anything else, so I was the first artist, the first non-painter to show at Mary Boone. And she had an opening where she had all the champagne glasses in a pyramid, I'm not kidding, where she—the pouring of the thing. I mean so high end. Silver bowls filled with fresh strawberries. It was nutty, nutty. I mean, for me, it was so over the top, but it wasn't just me that was opening, it was her, it was her new season. So within the end of that season, you had David Salle and then you had Julian Schnabel and you had this whole thing, and it was really a big deal. [00:18:04] And so that was—and I did three shows with her as I said, but I remember going to *The Pictures Generation* show with my class. I was teaching at Columbia Graduate School.

ANNETTE LEDDY: The one at Artists Space?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no, no. No, *The Pictures Generation* show at the Metropolitan—

ANNETTE LEDDY: At the Met, oh yeah a few years ago, yeah, I saw that.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, and I was going there with my class, and I said, "Look at this. You see, you see there's an invisible line right across this room, and that's 1980." Before 1980, the work was kind of interesting. There were different things, installations. David had an—a film installation, Jack, various people doing photography, very alternative media, posters, whatever. After 1980, all painting, it's all—mostly works on canvas, and I said, "Look what's going on now." I mean I had Cindy, of course, who did photography.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And Louise.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Louise and—but mostly painting, a lot of painters entered the fray in 1980. You really could see this change. It really was like that because money entered the art world in a big way. Jack just started making paintings at this point. And it was—we still hung out. I mean, there were so many parties downtown in the late '70s and also the relationship to music was very important. In the early '80s, late '70s, there was—where you'd go to listen to bands like *No New York* where you had DNA and, oh gosh, James Black and the Whites, [ph] and all these bands that were playing downtown, Arno Lindsay, the Theoretical Girls, Glenn Branca. It was just—there were a lot of bands, so there was a real connection with music in the late '70s, and also the filmmakers from the East Village. [00:20:06] So you had this kind of burgeoning scene, not necessarily on West Broadway, that was occurring at the same time. Paul McMahon and Nancy Chunn got together. They were the—she was David Salle's girlfriend early on, and she was the CalArts secretary for the dean who ran the school more than the dean did really. And she—they had a thing called the Party Club where people would come and play music, and I remember going to that. If ever there was a party at their house, at the very end, there would be a thing called the Battle of the Bands. So everybody at the party would break up into different bands at the end of the night, and we'd all play music, and I always played the drums because that's all I could play. I couldn't play anything else. But there's some photographs of David Salle playing a vacuum cleaner and Eric Fischl playing a bass and then you would have Barbara Kruger doing the tambourine, and all artists, all famous artists, Michael Smith, and so forth. So it was a real community kind of thing. And that all started to change with the galleries that are in the scene, I mean, slowly. Money, real money was being made, starting to be made by some people, and the gallery scene was a very different thing. So in 1980 after I joined the gallery, by 1981—in 1980, I moved to Europe, and I had that whole thing happen there, and I started working in Europe.

But I wanted to talk about Mary opening the door and not being recognizable and being very beautiful with her glasses on and the whole thing. Such a—that was such a wonderful moment for me.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did she sell anything from that show?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No. Oh, I think she did, she did. She sold some posters, maybe she sold one drawing—I think that's about it. [00:22:06] No flags. Flags, I rarely sell banners. I—

all my big banners, the big ones, I've never sold one, and they're fantastic objects, but they're too big. Most people—no one has a place for them. Like seven by seven meters is just too big. That's 25 by 25 feet, but that's part of what they are. In any case, but—and then I met Michael, Michael Klein, which I talked about, and he offered to—he said I could make 250,000, and I moved from my—and then after my place in University, I moved downtown to Grand Street, Grand, 135 Grand. I was at 135 Grand—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Wait a minute. Is that where Jim Welling is now, 135 Street?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It's across the street, directly across the street.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's so interesting.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah. And so we were directly across the street. Jim and I got a place. Paul and Nancy were downstairs right below us. They found the building, and we got the next floor, the second floor up.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Paul?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Paul McMahon.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh yeah, and then—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: He was the guy—he was a student of Helene's at Pomona, and we got to know him. And he was like—he ran that space where I had my first show, which was Art Project—Project Inc. where I did the first projection into the drawing space. He and Nancy were there and so I moved into the place above, and eventually, there was a building down the road that we moved to that was for sale, so I bought a place with my parents. My parents, I said, "Look, there's a place downtown that you—this might be a good place to buy," and so we bought it and then I was there until I moved Greene Street where I am now, 140—[00:24:06]

ANNETTE LEDDY: So then, you met Valerie.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, yeah. Meeting Valerie was something that happened when I was at 182 Grand. This was in 1981. Jeff Koons introduced us. My wife Valerie Smith and I met through Jeff, and Jeff worked with her at MoMA, and they had known each other, and I knew Jeff. I went to Jeff's studio in the '70s, amazing, and so Jeff was at our wedding later on. Jeff liked Valerie as well at the time, but—and Valerie's beautiful, exceptionally beautiful woman, I mean really beautiful. I was kind of—had a crush on her, but she was a curator. She worked at Artists Space. She was the curator for Artists Space, and Artists Space was now on Hudson Street, and the director was Linda Shearer. After Helene, Linda Shearer came in, and Linda hired Val. There was an opening at Metro Pictures. Mike Kelley had an opening at Metro Pictures on my birthday September 18, and it was his first show at Metro. It was *Monkey Island*, a super important show.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, it's so great. I love *Monkey Island.*

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, you know, *Monkey Island* and so that was his show and I, um—we all went out, and we ended up at my house. Mike and everybody else ended up in my loft and then last people to leave was Val. and then I went back to her place, and I spent the night and then almost the next day, it seemed—and I did not sleep with others very often. [00:26:02] This was unusual for me to do this, but I was so taken by her, and that was it. The next day, I was part of the family. I mean I really felt like—I saw her sister within a week, her parents within a month, and we were married five years later, four years, six years later? I don't know. Is that four years later we were married?

ANNETTE LEDDY: 19—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I basically—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —85.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —moved. Her apartment was on Canal and Broadway or Canal and Ludlow, Canal and Ludlow, and I went down there a lot. I was down there. It was a beautiful, little apartment she had. She made it from scratch. She was really a pioneer woman—she still has this in her—and a brilliant curator, I mean a genius, great, brilliant. And she did

amazing shows Artists Space, amazing shows. I went with her when she did *Sonsbeek.* After we were married, she did the *Sonsbeek* show, which was a super important show. In the history of European curated shows, it's up there as one of the most important exhibitions. A brilliant time for me that was. So I was—she was—she being French, her mother's French, and we would go to France every summer. So we were living in—we were in Normandy. Her mother bought a house in Normandy so we'd go there every summer, and then I would stick around and be—do shows in the fall because I was now showing around in various galleries in Europe.

At this point, my work was developing. I was making posters. I was making flags. I was doing—what happened after I was with Mary, I—and at the time, I felt very constrained like a lot of people did by the—by the sign, by the hard-edged sign, by the conceptual manner, so I was—did these drawings with paint stick of the different parts of the cosmology. [00:28:07] In fact [ph], of the cosmology, I made these were you rubbed the paint stick back and forth, and you can go darker and lighter. And then I made them on different, on canvases, all the same size but each canvas painted a different color. There was a green one, a red one, a blue one, a white one, a black one, an orange one—not an orange one but these primary colors. I did these drawings, and in retrospect, they look just like rubbings because my rubbings were made with these. I didn't know that I was representing the work that I have yet to do because these all looked like they're printed. And what about this I mean. And so I was making these. I was making them on paper, and I was—and also Death without Heaven. I made posters with a brush, the same thing, which is just the skeleton below without heaven. And then also with heaven, the demon and the angel above the skeleton and with Mullican on top, or an explosion, a man turning into energy, which is really a like a man with his arms outstretched similar to William Blake with the energy coming out.

And then I was—I had—I was up in—up to Boston where I saw the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, there was a display of a rubbing. It was a relief on stone and then the rubbing from it next to it, so you saw the two. I had already started to etch in glass and so I had a relief at home. [00:30:01]I said, "God, I have a relief. I can do this." So I went home, I put a sheet of paper over the glass plates altogether, which was the cosmology in total and then all the different chapters underneath. It was etched in glass, and it worked. It was the first rubbing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: What did you use on top of it?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, it was just—it's all paint stick.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Paint stick.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: All my rubbings are paint stick, which is oil, solid oil paint material. So you put the sheet of paper over the relief, and you rub it, and it comes out. And the—I, at the time, when Mary—because I was interested in, as I said, posters, the different books, like the posters, flags, packaging designs, and all that in the '70s, and then it moved to the, the applied arts where it was stained glass, etched glass, blown glass—not blown glass at that point but—and ceramics, and so forth. So I had already started to make these stained glass windows. One of the reasons I started to make the stained glass windows is that Mary had made a—her gallery across the street from 420—it was 421 or something like this or 430 or I don't know the address. But it had very high ceilings, and she made a terra-cotta floor. She didn't want to have a wooden floor because she's a tile person and so I said, "It looks like a church." She wants—obviously; she wants the art to look old school so that's why she put a terra-cotta floor. So I accommodated her by making a big glass window at the end of it and so that's how I got to the etched glass. But when I got—when I went to—and I had it. So then, rather than having to be dependent on an etched surface, I experimented. [00:32:00] If I got a piece of Masonite and I glued paper to it, I did the drawing on the paper and I cut it away, just like the depth of a single sheet of paper was enough to make it black, so all my rubbings came up. 1984, that's when I started to do my rubbings. I was still working with Mary. I left Mary in 1986.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Now, can I ask you question? How does the effect of the rubbings relate to your concept of entering the picture?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, I think the rubbings really relate not so much to the subject in entering the picture but to the form like the glass, the poster, the flag. It represents a print, a printed process, and it's an object. It's the object. If you can say the subject and the object

are like this, they are combined, the two, they are like yin and yang, and this was more about the form.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But to me, can I just say that when I look at the rubbings, the feeling I get, it's almost like a trembling reality that is somehow being perceived through some special permission, like a vision, you know?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: They have.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: You know they're shadows. It's a shadow of what was once under the canvas, and being a shadow, it relates to the retinal shadow. That's—when I talk about the rubbings, I say that's like a retinal image. It's a shadow on the back of the eye.

ANNETTE LEDDY: An afterimage kind of thing.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It's like an afterimage so that's one of the things it is. Another thing is that it is a print, a painting, and a drawing. It's all three, and it's none of them. It's all and none. I could make—when I made these very, very large rubbings, like the *Dallas Project,* it's a print. I could've made a hundred of them, no problem, but as a print, it must have been up there in terms of like, at that time, one of the largest prints every produced. [00:34:05] I mean really it's a print. But at the same time, everyone is different because you're determinant on your arm, so then it's not a—it's a print and a drawing and being on canvass, a painting. But it's also the first form of reproducible media, goes back several thousand years to China, so it precedes the printing press by a good 2000 years.

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's also you know the surrealists—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, they—yeah, but that's—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I know it's later. But what I'm saying is that it does connect to those—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, or it could—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —in terms of their work.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —connects to [inaudible] frottage and, um—but I think it's much more—for me, that is—I mean, of course, it does connect to that. But it's—I think, it's a primary—historically speaking, a primal medium going back several thousand years.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, and the effects of your rubbings is very different than the effect of his.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, he's a different scale.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right, and I love how—the ones that you have that are of a whole city or a whole gigantic map that's also kind of a city at the same time. Those ones where you really —you have the feeling of—it feels like a vision of an alternate universe.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It is a shadow. That's why it feels like a vision. And it's—they—it kind of grabbed me when I invented this from—I found this. So then I started to make these rubbings as part of my—as part my oeuvre, as part of my body of work, and I could do anything in them. Anything could be transferred. And I did the *Dallas Project*—this was in the mid-'80s—where I had a—they—and I've done many projects in museums, but I don't count them as museum shows because I count them as museum projects because they're not exhibitions. [00:36:06] Yes, it's one work in a public space, in a hallway or in a lobby. I've done lots of those, but that's—when I say museum shows, I mean a proper museum show where you actually have different bodies, different works, and I put it together. This I have not had.

I have a show now at the de Young Museum in San Francisco, and that is a project show. It was supposed to be a museum show but then they said, "No, we can't do a museum show." So it's a project show.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So what do you have there right now?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It's like 40 rubbings on one giant wall. It's huge. It's huge. And then the *Computer Project* plus four bulletin boards. It's a very nice show. It's very—and a big banner. They produced a banner for the show.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And will it travel?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No. It's up for a year though. It opened in February, it closes in January, so it's up until January. And then—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right now, do you have other shows up?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, I had a show at Bogota. I think it's just closing. And I have a show at the Thomas Schütte, The Sculpture Hall, and I think that's just closing. But I had three shows all open within a month, museum-type shows, and that was a lot, and it was all—mostly new work. But this is jumping ahead.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Anyway, I just wanted to know for now. Yeah, okay.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But the thing is that, um, so the rubbings were just like a gift, and I just—I had moved to 182 Grand, so I had a space to work, and I did the *Paris Opera House*. That would have been one rubbing early on. I had—I broke the world into four—three parts where you had the elements, you had the world and world framed, you had the world framed and the sign, and the sign and the subjective, so they were all together.

Also, at this time, I—in 1981 or 1982, December [19]'82, I think or November [19]'82, December, [19]'82, maybe the fall but [19]'81—I'm not sure. [00:38:14] The fall of '81, January '82, I went with my parents to India, and I was in India at the Sarabhais, an old friend of my mom's. They studied with Frank Lloyd Wright. They were architects. You had Calder, Rauschenberg because this is the family. Lynda Benglis married into this family a non-Sarabhai. It's a compound . They're one of the wealthiest families in India. They're hugely healthy, and they are arty. They have artists come and—like Calder went there and produced a lot of work, and the reason that they got Calder there is so he could dry out because alcohol was forbidden in India. You couldn't drink there, and he needed to dry out. He's an alcoholic and so this was just—made it easier for him to dry out.

But when I was there, we stayed there, and we toured. My father set it all up, and we went all over India. This was a major—we went to living temples, to dead temples, to Varanasi, which is Benares, which is the holiest city in the world where people all over India go there to die where they have the bodies being burned on the Ganges every day. There's smoke coming from bodies. I mean, it is an extraordinary place.

So this was the right time. So during that trip or because of that trip or at the same time as that trip—I couldn't tell you exactly—the new cosmology was invented. That was the one with fate is no longer with a conveyor—with a—the people before birth were no longer on a conveyor belt. [00:40:02] There was just a crowd scene. Fate was no longer with a TV set. Fate was on a ball, and he had three heads, and he had a half circle, and the intersection of the half circle—where the half circle represented time, and the circle below represented space, and the intersection of the two was the present time. He had a face of life and a face of death, so incorporated into him. And after death, there was a—and then death meets me at the end at the right, and life is on the left, death's on the right. And then you have the demon and the angels stretching the dead man's soul going up to god above or down to hell below. This was the new cosmology.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So when that's dated, usually it's 1983?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Correct?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: About, about. It comes—but it depends on the—when it was made. I mean, I don't date concepts so much. I date objects. We date objects more than we date concepts, but I would say it's '81–'82, and then there are some canvasses, which are '83 that have it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But in all these books, they always say 1983.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: That—the what, that the—?

ANNETTE LEDDY: The new cosmology.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: The god [ph], yeah. But is that related to an object or is that just in concept?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Concept.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Okay. Well, it's more like '82, '83, I would say, because I got that after—it was really after my time in India. And not that I studied Indian cosmology. It was just going to Benares, I mean, my God. And then at the same time, I came up with the colors, the five colors. I—when I was in—when I was in India in Ahmedabad, I had a tailor, and we produced a series of Indian banners, which are the most beautifully made banners I ever made. They're beautiful. [00:42:00] I have a few left, but they're the only ones that sold. They're cotton; they're fantastic. They're like eight by eight feet, and so they're big, but they're not outrageously big. I had to come up with colors for the different signs and so this was the beginning of having to come up with a color for language, a color for subject, a color for world framed, a color for world unframed, and a color for elements. This was something that was happening at that time as well.

At the end of that year, I would say '82, '83, the new—I had the new cosmology, and I also had the new color system for that, for the chart where you had—and, in fact, yes, there was a piece where I had a half circle above of red then I had black then I had a yellow square, half, a blue, and a half circle of green. This was done in India. This was done—this flag was done in India. I had come up with that concept there. Now, mind you, in the notebook, you would have the exact moment when I came up with this because those pages are in the notebooks that are here.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I think I've seen that, you know.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And so there—and there—there I am. Now, my idea for the five colors just had to do with these five worlds, and this notion of—and it really comes out of—people think of soccer fields, tennis courts. It looks very game-like, like a board game almost, the way that the different colors match up. I really like that association of a game space, but it really comes from heaven and hell. I did the drawings in the '70s of heaven above, the sky, the ground, and then hell below, and then a figure in the middle. [00:44:04] And there are etchings going back to the 14th century of the man and death with heaven above and hell below.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You know that reminds me of the way—and maybe you covered this last time, and I didn't quite get it, but there seems to have been some moment where you moved from the stick figure to this figure from the international wayfaring sign?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANNETTE LEDDY: When did that actual transition happen?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, they coexisted. The first sign that I got is a sign of a—a very sign—was a cookie-cutter sign of a man that David Salle gave me for my birthday. I traced it, and that was my sign for men. And then I got this book called—

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's so interesting.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —I got this book called *Symbol Sourcebook* in the early '70s, which was a great book, Henry Dreyfuss was the designer, and he made kind of an indexing of all these pictorial languages.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay. Give me that book again.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: *Symbol Sourcebook*. And the most interesting thing about the book was that there are two table of contents. At the beginning, there's a table of contents—and we're back in time. Now, we're back into the mid-'70s because we're going back.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I know.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But the *Symbol Sourcebook* at the beginning has the context of the

language. So you have culture, sports, travel, medicine um, the—all these different contexts for the signs themselves. So travel would be all—the signs that we all know are from airports generally speaking, and they were invented in the '60s, late '60s, the ones that we all know that they still use in terms of transportation. And then, halfway through the book, there's another index where it's circle, square, triangle, ellipse. [00:46:04] So you have all the same signs but in a different—not—indexing through the form. So one is indexing through the information, and the other is indexing through the form.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Which is how you think.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, but this is—this is so basic. It's such a basic thing. So I—of course, that influenced me, of course I learned from that, I learned from it. And so that's how—and really the stick figure still exists. Glen, I still make drawings of Glen, and the sign still exists. They coexist. The—they have—there's a difference between the Glen in a frame in the studio and Glen unframed. Glen unframed is very much like a sign. It's not far from it, but that's what I was playing with. I was still doing charts at this point. I did charts of the different signs going across, but then I had this hierarchical chart where I had in the red—in the red subjective part on the top of it was my cosmology and then I had the history of the world and then below that, I would have language, so it was signs like the Henry Dreyfuss signs. And then below that would be a red square, and that would be where the opera house would be or the cultural or the world frame, theater, dance, music, the arts. And then, too, below that would be the city and then below would be the elements, the skeleton, the material, earth, fire, water, skeleton, weather, nature, grass—things like that would be at the bottom. [00:48:00]

Now, whenever I've given a lecture—and I'll do it for this recording to explain it—is—and I'll—and do you have some keys, keys on your person? Do you have them in a purse? Could you just get them, and that would be great. I'm going to explain the five worlds. [Sighs.]

ANNETTE LEDDY: I have some pictures of the five worlds in here.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, but this is the better way to do it, you know, the five worlds. So these keys, so we're going to start off at the bottom and work our way up. So we're going to start off with the elements, the elemental. So this is the green, and it's the elements, agree, everything is green. And ever since I did this, in all my work whenever you see a color green, it represents the elements. Whenever you see a color red, it represents the world, the subject, so the five worlds. And so, um—and to go back, at CalArts, you had the A group—the A building, the B building, the C building, and the D building, and I don't remember for sure, but they could have had colors. There's a color—architecture with colors. Like for instance if you go to a hospital, there'd be a yellow line and that yellow line went to emergency.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Like at NYU Langone, yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Or the green one would go to maternity or the—you know, these colors, it's color architecture, and I was very much interested in architecture and in charts, so it makes sense that I did this. So green is the elements. So pretend that I have an atomic frying pan the size of this room. It is the hottest place on the planet. The walls are like five-feet thick. You can't see inside, and they go up 30 feet, and the heat is at the bottom. [00:50:01] There's a—and if I was to—and it's super-hot outside, but inside, you would burn to a crisp. So I throw these keys over the wall, and as they are falling, the plastic on the key melts. The keys all work, they bend from the heat, so they're no longer functioning keys. They're defining, they're different now, and as they hit the ground, they—immediately, the plastic bursts into flames and is gone, the softer metal starts to melt, and the harder metal starts to bend more. Eventually, you have a puddle, and after that, you have nothing, it evaporates. It becomes just part of the atmosphere. It just disappears. Now, that's material without meaning, and this is the degradation of meaning from—at the beginning they were keys with a purpose, they had, uh—they actually opened something, and before they even hit the ground, they're no longer keys. They represent keys, but they're no longer keys. Similar to the cadavers when you say that there's not a living soul on the cadaver.

So the next is the world unframed, and that is these keys 10 minutes ago where they were. That was—that's the real world. So the keys are out, they're in your purse. Ten minutes ago, they were in your purse. I don't know what we were talking about, but we're talking about something else. That's the real world where those keys were.

Then you take them into the world framed, and now they're in front of us, so they're being framed. They're being acknowledged, they're being looked at. They could be on display. For instance, this is a very—this looks like it's for—it's called Entrust, and it's—I don't know what it is, but it could be a—it's a designed object, and maybe this object is super important, and it's going to be at the Museum of Modern Art in their collection. [00:52:03] And you go to see it there because I used to love to watch the—I still love going to look at objects at the Modern. Or I can say that these were Elvis Presley's keys. When he was in—when he lived in Graceland, he had a set of keys, and he was crazy, and that every night, he locked all the doors to the house. He made sure that every door—this was his little routine. He was obsessive-compulsive, and he made sure the doors were locked. That was the only thing—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, you have to lock the doors—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —he did. Well, you have to—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —when you're Elvis Presley.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —lock, but yeah. But you have so many doors too, and it's a job to go from one door to the next.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And these keys were lost for years and years and years and years. They have been uncovered, and so that is the—and they are about to be auctioned off. Now, mind you, every key—every lock has been changed, so the keys are not functioning anymore. They do not open anything, nothing, but they are valuable because they were Elvis Presley's keys. Now, we've mentioned the world framed in a true sense. They're being auctioned off. They go for $200,000. The people that buy up are—is Graceland. They bought them themselves, and they are doing an exhibition on the keys about the keys, and this would be the signs. So the keys themselves have now become so iconic that they are no longer physical objects. They are Elvis Presley's keys, which is something else. So they're mapping his path in Graceland, how he did it, what the keys, different keys opened up with an explanation.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Is this really happening or—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —you're inviting this?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —this is all an invention. This is all an invention. [00:54:00] And, and so there are posters all over town. Everybody knows and now you've entered the sign, we've jumped from the real world to sign world.

And then the last is the subject. The reason I asked you for your key is because I hate keys. I don't ever carry keys if I can help it. I've had such a bad time. I disagree with the whole concept of keys. The worst part about the iPhone is the locked thing. It drives me crazy when I go on the iPhone, and it's locked because I have to reaffirm my identity. I hate doing this. Robert Longo had an—had a car when he moved to New York in the mid-'70s, and it was always being—from Buffalo. It was always being broken into and so then what he did is that when he parked his car, he opened all the windows. He just opened the windows, so no one would break a window because there's nothing in there to steal and then he was fine with the—

ANNETTE LEDDY: They didn't hot-wire it?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, they didn't do it. It was an old, crappy car. No one was going to hot-wire it, but what they were doing, they were breaking in to try and get the radio. That's what they were trying to do. The radio couldn't be stolen, and he just felt like, you know, let's not bother with this whole thing. I was mugged at 41 Greene Street with my daughter. She was six years old. This was terrible. I was thrown down these stairs. It was really monstrous. I was mugged trying to get my keys, really trying to get my keys. I hate keys. Now, that's the subject without the object. That is the subject without the object is the feeling of keys. The object without the subject is the material of keys without meaning.

So meaning without material, material without meaning, these are the bookends of my

chart, my five-world chart. The difference—it's a different chart from like going from photography to the this, to photography, cartoon, stick figures, sign, head and body. [00:56:06] It's—they're related. One is a vertical chart, and one is a horizontal chart, and I still am interested in both. But this is the—these are the five colors that are in all my work. And it really tends to help when people see the flags, then they know what's being represented. The four dots represent the elements, which is like I could have a field of dots as well that would be a thousand dots or a million dots or a billion dots, it's an—it's a structure. It's like an atomic structure of sorts. The world unframed is simply the sign of the world. The world framed is the sign framed in yellow. The sign for language is a sign, which is a dot on a square but with a handle in a circle, so a circle inside a circle. And the sign for subject is the head with a circle cut out of its head. So the circle is going into different contexts. The circle itself is the sign and then context of that circle is what I've done with it.

When I did the sign for the subjective, in the '70s and in the early '80s, I remember *Grace Glueck,* the art critic, she said, "Mr. Mullican has a sign of a head with a funny peanut shape cut out of it." She did not—she didn't see it as a brain. She just said a funny peanut shape. That's how she described it. I said, she didn't see it as a brain. I thought everyone would see it as a brain, but she didn't. And so I made it into a circle. I thought a circle is much better than a brain anyway because it is the place of the brain, and that's the important thing.

I'm still working with these concepts. I really am. It's still part of—it's like the cosmology. [00:58:00] It's like the cosmology. It is not the cosmology in itself. There's a difference between. The cosmology proper is really about where am I before I'm born and where do I go after I die. This is different. This is a way of cataloguing the world that I see.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Wait a minute, isn't—doesn't cosmology mean just a vision of the universe?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But the way that you distinguished these two—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It's funny. I distinguish the cosmology as the—in my universe, it's not simply about what I see, but where I am in a way, a mapping of sorts, and the mapping of how things are built up, which is the chart with the red on to the subject above and the elements below.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So you refer to that as the chart where I always thought—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, I don't—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —that was the—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —well, the—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —cosmology is too.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —I mean what happens—it could be—it's a different—it's a vertical chart, the big, I call it the big chart. I call the big chart, the vertical big chart.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And the big chart contains the cosmology, but it's not identical with it?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, the cosmology is on the top of the chart, the proper cosmology.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I know.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It's in the—and the thing about the subjective because, at one point, what the subjective is going into my feelings, how—and then how I see things and how people see things. Like when you look at a tree and when you're walking down the street, how you relate to where you are is based in your subjective history. And that subjective history does to a large extent and to a point refer to your religion. We are how we feel about where we are be it if there isn't any, but if you're a Catholic, you're seeing the system of the world. [01:00:00] It becomes a way of seeing things—not that it is the truth but it is part of who you are. I mean there are lots of other things. You have your religion, you have your sexuality, you have your gender, you have your age, and you have your race, and then you also have your economic strata within the world. These are all elements that help to define

who you are. And in a way, not only do they define who you are, but they define what you see. They define your point of view. This is one of the things I'm interested in with the subjective, and that's where that—all that stuff goes. Within the subjective, I have the hypnosis. That—the hypnosis is really a strong element of my work.

But going back to the early '80s—[sneezes] excuse me—I, I did a performance. The last performance I did was at The Kitchen and it was—the last performance I actually gave was at the ICA in Boston, and that was the last performance. Now that performance, I apologized to the audience. For most of the performance, I was apologizing. And the last performance at The Kitchen center, I introduced myself as That Person, but I didn't call him That Person. I just said, "I'm not old, I'm not young, I'm not male, I'm not female. I am, I am none of these things, and I'm talking to you now." And at one point, someone says—I said, "Does anyone want me to do something up here?" and that someone says, "Do a self-portrait." [01:02:03] That was Charlie. Charlie Clough I think said that.

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MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And so I did this weirdo self-portrait—two brains, one on either side, two eyes, one above the other. And at that point before that, I had threatened to drink the paint, and it was black acrylic paint, and I started to drink it, and the audience says, "No, no, no, no, don't drink it, don't drink it." And so what I did is I marked my lower jaw with the paint like this. That represented that I had drunk it not that I did drink it but that I had drunk it. And then I did my heart, which was, um, an upside-down cross, and it had a shield around it and then I had sparks that transcended the cross, that went around it, that transcended the cross. And, uh, [iPhone rings] [sighs], oh sorry. Some FaceTime thing. And then that went down to my intestines, and that went to my sex, which was a ball creating a ball creating a ball creating a ball creating a ball in a circle. So it was male and female, very much the both. It was really—it was really something. It really was. It was very, very, very strong, very strong. And then my hands were like this, and I put the paint between my fingers and put it out. The next one was the glass that had the—the black paint in it. I painted the glass with a line coming down, and the last one was a regeneration of the line. Those were the four paintings, and I still have them, and they're wonderful pictures.

But at the end of the performance, people came up to me. [00:02:05] I had a drawing on the floor, and they literally—these kids painted on my picture, and they painted, "Why did you make me pay for this? Go home and never come back." They were so pissed off these kids about this piece. They didn't know I was under hypnosis. They had no idea what was going on, and they took it upon themselves to basically—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —insult you.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —insult me basically. I was so embarrassed because the hypnotist had not gotten me out in a proper way because he was so done by the whole thing that I—and he should have gotten me out, but I was not taken out of the trance in the proper way. I was embarrassed for months after this, months. And that was the last basic—the performance I did after that was an apology. It was basically an apology. I was an old man, and I was apologizing for not having anything to say, and that was at the ICA in Boston. That was the last performance I did. And then, um, the next performance comes later, later, later. So here I am—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So you stopped for a while until like the '90s?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Mid-'90s, and I'll tell you what happened, and why I stopped, and why I started. Well, I stopped for obvious reasons. It's too much. I can't do it. And then I—my chart with the red on top blah, blah, I was applying to an anatomy, a figure, an anatomy figure, really coming after this hypnosis drawing where the head is off to the right and whatever. It's an anatomy of the five worlds as represented by the person. And then I did the city where the city represented the five worlds that you could go into. And I had—and I was—and also, at the same time, I was doing the opera house. [00:04:03] I did these charts, the *Dallas Project,* which was huge. It must have been 2[00]—no, I meant [ph] 100 feet long, 16 feet high, giant, and it covered all the different worlds in detail, so I had all the arts represented, I had the house. So, in this chart, you would have the cosmology, all the signs, the history of the world. You had the, um, the Paris Opera House, all of the arts. I had theater, dance, music, film, photography, writing, you know- that. And then underneath that, you had the city, you had all my city where you had the cosmology part of the city, you had

the world framed, the unframed, the five worlds in the city. And then underneath that you had the elements, which was the—it was a weather cycle, all the dots and the steam engine and the—it was just a huge project. It's all—it's in the books, but it's a huge project, and all in color, all with the color-coding—red ones, blue ones, green ones, yellow ones, black-and-white ones.

And then I came up—I had a show at Richard Kuhlenschmidt Gallery in LA.

ANNETTE LEDDY: In LA, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —in the mid-'80s, and I had a rubbing of the city there. And Ed Janz [ph] bought it, this rubbing. He bought two actually. He gave one—he kept one, and he gave one to MOCA. And, and he was a collector—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I know who Janz is.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —an early—yeah. And then the other collector was a super important collector in the '70s in LA, and he bought my work is—Robert Rowan bought my work. [00:06:01] So Robert Rowan and Ed Janz both bought my work. They both had tremendous collections. They both bought—I mean Robert Rowan also bought Mike Kelley. He was buying me and Mike at the time. And Ed Janz was connected through—his daughter was married to one of the Whitney brothers, the Whitney sons. And so I get a phone call from Ed or from somebody, and he says, "How would you like to walk inside your own city? How would you like to do that?" Now, I said, "What do you mean?" "Well, we can make it so you can walk in your city," and I said, "Oh, my God, I can walk in the picture. I can enter the picture," and I said, "Absolutely, I would love this, I would love it." I had entered the picture already, I was proving that stick figures were living lives, and now, I was offered and given the opportunity to actually enter the picture. So it was called Digital Productions. John Whitney Jr. had started this company, and they were the premier graphics—computer graphics company in the country. They did all the floating logos for CBS, et cetera,. They're very, very, very powerful, wonderful. They did the first digital effect movie called *The Last Starfighter*, and this was the first one where you had digital effects, where you didn't have models.

And so I started to work with them, John Whitney Jr. and Mark Whitney, and the first one we did was just they encoded my five worlds with monuments, and we did as a 35-mm film and then we did it with a 4x5 film. [00:08:04] And the 4x5 film was done with a Cray supercomputer. In fact, that's all they worked with was the supercomputer, Cray supercomputer. And this Cray supercomputer was the size of a large couch. It's—and it was designed to be a couch, to look like a—there were cushions, you can sit on it. It was maybe eight by eight feet and about eight feet high, and it was painted these bright colors, and it had its own room, and this is the Cray.

And then what happens is the fastest computer in the world at the time, this brand, and it goes through—the information goes through it so fast, and it goes through one portal in this that in order to keep it cold, there was another room, which was maybe a thousand square feet that you didn't enter, and this was the cool room. Later generations of the Cray were submerged in liquid hydrogen because it got so hot with the information going so fast through that portal. So my first computer work was done on that machine. What it did was that there were no scan lines. There was no—there were no horizontal scan lines, and it's like I had never seen this because it was absolutely flawless. This was in '86.

And so then I got an exhibition . Linda Shearer who used to be at Artists Space is now a curator at MoMA, and she invited me to do a project show at MoMA in '89. This must have been '87 or '88. At that time, I was already involved with this project with Digital Productions, and I said, "I would love to do a project show, and I would love for it to be with the computer, computer work" and so she said, "Great." [00:10:08] We started to build in earnest a very large database. They had a new computer now. It was a Connection Machine parallel processor. It's—the name of the company is Thinking Machines, and it was a Connection Machine 1 or 2. So rather than—and it didn't need to be cooled down because it had like 100,000 portals in it. It had blinking—it was a black box with blinking red lights. It looked just like out of 2001. It was a box about this—about—a big box, maybe five by five feet and so that was their new computer.

And so we started to build my five worlds in the computer, the five worlds. I built the

subjective, the world frame, the world of the signs, and I built them all. Now, the basic, the real one was the city, the part that I was really most interested in. The city itself had five parts and then it was—within a larger scale of that - had five parts. We worked on it for a couple of years and—but the intent work—the intense work was really the building of it, and that was—I forgot when it was—probably the fall, the spring or the fall of '88, '87, '87—fall of '87, spring of '88. We were working with a guy—what was his name—who actually created the software as we went along. There was no software. [00:12:00] This machine comes blank, no software. Karl Sims was his name who was quite famous in the computer graphics world. He was building the software as we were building the city. So one day, we couldn't do shadows, the next day we could; one day we couldn't do this, the next day we could, and so he was actually—we were building the software as we were building the city itself, the place. I have all the windows in the different neighborhoods following the parts of the chart that they come out. There's an interior house that you go into where it's all designed. Everything reflects my charts.

ANNETTE LEDDY: When you say you go into, you're watching a film?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: With a screen. It's all live. It's—basically, it's as if we have a computer screen, and I say, "Let's go in there, and we have move in there. Let's look up, let's look down, let's look left—"

ANNETTE LEDDY: How big was the screen?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, it was a like a regular TV, I mean not big.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So it wasn't like a Holodeck like you're walking—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: This is before—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —into a room—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: The thing about this is that this is in the mid-'80s where you didn't have flat screens.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: This is—barely did we have computers, barely, barely. This is in the '80s. This is before the internet and so this is early. This is super early, and I'm not doing this with run-of-the-mill machinery. This is super high-end stuff, and it cost a lot of money, huge amounts of money. There are a million and a half polygons in my database, a million and a half polygons. A polygon is a single—a surface, so it was big. It was a big, big place. And so it was finally made. I made 12 lightboxes. I made an animated sequence of going through the city. [00:14:00] I could've made it so you could choose where you went, but I did not want to have the people choose where they went. I wanted it to be like an animated film like Jack would have done. I also had a plotter drawing, a giant plotter drawing, so the whole thing was—and the plotter drawing was maybe 10 by 20 feet, a huge plotter. I lost it. In the meantime, I don't have one. And then an inkjet print, 19-feet long, six-feet—eight-feet high, and I have that. I have everything but one panel of that. But it is pretty amazing to have made this stuff at MoMA.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And then was it shown in—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It was shown at MoMA, and I got horrible reviews, the worst reviews I've ever had in my life. Nam June Paik lived above me when I was at 182 Grand, and he came up to me in the hallway, and he put his hand on my back, "Congratulations, you've—you know, this happens to everybody." [Laughs.] " You get a review like this, and it's like a rite of passage. It means you're doing the right thing," he said. He was—he said, "You're doing the right work." And I—um, the thing was about it, but what the reviewer neglected to say was that in the review, he didn't mention—his problem with my work was that it represented architecture, and I'm not an architect, so he took the language literally. He never mentioned that it was a computer-generated object, never mentioned it, and never mentioned the fact that these are light—they have different forms, never mentioned that I'm an artist. All that—the most important thing is that he says that I took from Corbusier's model of Paris. [00:16:02] And, of course, it has to do with planning, and it refers—and I referred to Corbusier. I'm not competing with—I put him in there for a reason. I put him in there for Paris because you think—Paris is a planned city. It's like Washington, DC, and I'm

really interested in that. But he took it literally like I was trying to be Corbusier, and it was just stupid. It was a stupid review, stupid, stupid review. I had just finished this project for Swiss Bank—and it's still there in Madison Avenue—and they were embarrassed because my review was so bad for my opening at that Swiss bank project because they pay attention to these things. They were embarrassed.

Now, before the opening—God, who was the reviewer? He was awful. He was just—it was the most stupid, just idiotic relationship to what I—I mean, he just didn't understand. His—well, backtracking a few months before the opening, I called up MoMA and said, "We must—the most important thing is that we give NYNEX their due because they paid—they backed the project." NYNEX put the money in, and this thing must have cost half a million dollars. It was a lot of money back then to do this. In today's world, you can do this on your iPad. You could build this whole thing on your iPad, not a problem. But back then, we needed a supercomputer blah, blah, blah and so NYNEX—and so I'm calling MoMA up to do this, and they say, "Yes, no problem. NYNEX will get all of the promos. We're going to put them on everything. They're going to be—they'll be there, but we don't have very important information." They said, "We understand that this is all digital, and we understand that it's computer generated but who took the photo?" [00:18:08] And I said, "There was no photographer." They said, "There's always a photographer. You make the project and then it's photographed. Who took the picture?" and I said, "No, there's no—no photographer." And they didn't believe me. They said, "We've always had a photographer, and we want to know who the photographer is."

Finally, I convinced them that these pictures were taken in the studio in LA when I was there, and I took the pictures. I took the pictures in the data. I took the pictures, but there was no photographer. First time in the history of MoMA where there wasn't a photographer, first time. Do I—? I mean that's pretty—that's something, right?

ANNETTE LEDDY: But you were the photographer.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, I was the photographer, but no, they wanted to know who took the picture of the picture. That's what they wanted to know. You don't ask that of a photographer. I mean if they—but they just—you don't—you don't ask Walker Evans, "Who's the photographer?" and you don't ask Helmut [ph]—you don't ask, you know, uh, any great filmmaker, Alfred Hitchcock, "Who's the photographer?" Alfred Hitchcock is the photographer. But this is something else. This is—I'm a fine artist. These are not photographs. These are produced. This is digital. This is a cartoon. Who took the picture? So it was the first time in that context that they actually did not have a credited photographer in the MoMA, in the history of that institution.

And then I had some very big museum shows. By this time in Europe, I was producing big shows. [00:20:00] Finally, the complexity of what I was doing with the—

ANNETTE LEDDY: This is around 1990, right?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: We're talking—no, we're—yeah, around 1990. We're talking '89–'90. My first big exhibition in Europe was in 1984 at the center of contemporary art in Geneva. Adelina von Fürstenberg, who I had already mentioned, she gave me my first big show. She had seen my work in "documenta," and had really—was really curious about it, and had seen my work in some other places and wanted to give me a show. She had already given a show with Jack Goldstein and so Jack told her about me, and she wanted to do this thing with me. So I did a show. That was my first museum show. It was quite early. I'm 22 years old, 23—no, no, I'm 32, I'm 32, 33, [laughs] not 22 or 30, 33, but I'm still young. I'm a kid for doing that.

And then I did shows—my next show that I did was in a museum space, I think might have been the Kroeller-Mueller [ph] in Holland. It might not have been, but I did several museum shows around Europe over the late '80s. My work is perfect for museums because it's complex, it's got different forms that represents the subject, which is this overall thing. I have a body of work and so I was busy doing museum shows, at the same time, I was also doing commissioned works. I was working in etched stone because in the meantime, I had started my work with—I remember one of—my last show at Mary's, I had an etched granite stone, and on the etched granite stone, it had my cosmology.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Can I ask you one question? [00:22:00] You mentioned the Barnes &

Noble job, but I'm just wondering, how did you live all through the '80s when you're doing this if you're not selling that much?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I wasn't selling, but I was doing commissioned work.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, that's what did it?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, commissioned work helped a lot and then I told you that in 1983, Michael Klein said, "I can make you 250, 000—"

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, that's right, Michael Klein—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —a year," and he did. He was selling my work. He sold the *Dallas Project*. He sold the *Computer Project*. He managed to do that stuff for me, so not Mary. Mary never did. She can—she sold a tiny amount, tiny amount, but she was loyal. She showed me every two years regardless if she sold it or not, which was more than others as I said earlier.

So I'm in Europe, and I'm doing commissioned pieces because—like my last show at Mary's, what it was I did a stained glass. I had a granite plaque, and on the plaque, I had my cosmology. And people were laughing about this because they saw that I was doing, I was creating a fake cosmology. And when I had done it—the cosmology on paper, it didn't nearly mean as much as when I put it in stone. When you put it in stone, it gained so much weight literally, and through the literal weight, it gains conceptual weight.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, amazing.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And this is how form works. This is how objects work. And so then that grew, and I went to—I was doing commission. I was sked to do some commissioned pieces here and there. I couldn't tell you—the first one I did was at—the granite piece was at 48th [ph] and Eighth, Worldwide Plaza, and it was—it's still there. It's a subway sculpture, and it's in granite. Before, the subway sculptures were in mosaic, they were in different materials, and I have one of the few, which is in stone. [00:24:03]

ANNETTE LEDDY: Where?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Forty-Eighth Street and Eighth Avenue. So I was doing these and then in Europe as well, I was doing projects because I was already showing in several galleries, and they were trying to get me jobs, and people got to know about me, and I was doing some museum shows, so it all, kind of, was blossoming. I was traveling back and forth to Europe once a month,. Once a month, I was back and forth, *bam, bam, bam, bam, bam, bam.* And then I—in doing that, it was—it was fantastic. I mean, it was a great time.

And then the museums started to show mem and when I had had my show—I had a show at the Magasin. I think it was in '91, '90, '91 in Grenoble, a huge space. I designed these banners, the biggest banners I ever produced, seven by 14 meters, that went into that space. And I started to work with this company called Werkstatt Kollerschlag. I met through—I met them through Kuhlenschmidt because his director was from Vienna and he—and she knew them. Barbara Stephan [ph] I think was her name and she—and so I started to work with them, and we produced a big stone piece representing my city, my overall chart city in cast concrete. So I start to work—I started working in cast concrete, and cast concrete has a whole different association than, say, granite. It just has a much more architectural building type—that's what it represents. [00:26:00] And so this concrete sculpture weighed 150 tons—that's how much it weighed—and it took four trucks to move it around Europe, and it was shown at the Kroeller-Mueller Museum and at the Magasin at the same time. So I had this show of all these giant banners, giant, one after the other, plus I had, in the same room, my concrete piece. So the scale of what I was doing was growing. It was huge at this point. Some of these pieces were just giant. And I also showed the *Computer Project*.

What happened was that, in the meantime, I did a second bunch—I had 12 lightboxes. I made six more, so there were 18 lightboxes, and I had started to go to conferences on computer-generated pictures. IMAGINA was a conference that was in Monte Carlo, and when I did these pieces, the lightboxes, I was invited to talk about it in this conference.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Can you explain how those work—? Will you look through something into the box?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, it's a lightbox, a big one.

ANNETTE LEDDY: A big one?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah. It was like three by four feet, so there's no—I mean just—and they're—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I don't think I've ever seen those. So it's a big lightbox and—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: There's another one. There's a group of 12—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And there's inside just the—is it—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It's a computer—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —animated? Does it move?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no, no, computer graphic.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: That—I mean the animated piece is just on a computer screen and then or on a video screen because if it's done as a—it was a laser disc, so it could be shown on a video screen, or it could be shown—projected. I've done them all. And, uh, this is a long story but, um, yeah. [00:28:07] So then it goes—and then I was in this conference, and I thought they were talking about all the new mediums that were coming up, and I had this idea. They said that there's this thing called lasography. They didn't have it, but they talked about it.

And so when I went back to LA, I said to John, "Could we make a lasographic image?" In the meantime, I had made four rocks, four big rocks. It's a lightbox of just four rocks, and I said, "Can we make those into a three-dimensional object?" and he said, "Yes, we can do it" and so we made four rocks that you could touch. I said it was like reaching into the picture and pulling out the rock and holding it in my hand. This is why I loved it. Like going into the virtual space, pulling out, and having it in my hand. So we built these rocks, and it's probably the first 3-D printed object made by an artist.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Really?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah. An international artist for sure, a known artist. You would have artists that were technicians, brothers and sisters that were not really into the body of work like I am. This is probably amongst the very first objects produced. And when I had my show at—and then that became part of this body of work, the object. So I had the video, the plotter drawing, the object, the poster, and the—and they were all connected in an exhibition.

And so the French Ministry of Culture comes to my opening at Grenoble, France, and says, "We would love to do a project with you." [00:30:06] There's lots of money, they'd like to do a project with me, "What would you like to do?" Well, when I was at IMAGINA, they also talked about virtual reality, and because they had—Jaron Lanier was there as well as Scott Fisher, two of the pioneers of virtual reality, and I said, "I'd like to make virtual environment that you can go into with the 3-D glasses and really go into this world, go into this city," and they said, "Great." And so we produced *Five into One,* which is probably the largest virtual environment to date at that moment. It was huge, and again, way before anybody else in terms of a virtual environment done by any artist, any artist, I don't care. We made it with VPL equipment, and we're talking '91. Virtual reality was invented in [19]'90, so [19]'91—1991 we're talking about the first year of its existence. Jaron Lanier called it, he gave it the name virtual reality. That was his doing. He said it needed a mojo, so he named it for—as a mojo. He made it—he made virtual reality that.

And so then I produced this virtual city that you could go in, and eventually—I mean, I have so many stories about this. One of the things was that when they were making the virtual environment, they were—the guy was building my bathroom inside the house. There's one house you could walk into, and he was building the bathroom when you—and with the house, he could build the bathtub, but he couldn't build the sink. The sink would—he would build it and then it [claps] would flatten out. He would build it and it would [claps] flatten out, and he

said, "What's going on? Why is it flattening out? What's going on?" [00:32:00] He realized then that he had become so small. Because he had started with the city, he got into the house and then he got into the bathroom and then he got into the object in the bathroom, he had become so small that the computer couldn't make a differentiation between the top of the sink and the bottom.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But still when you're talking about entering it, are you talking—again, are we talking about something that is 3-D that you walk into, or you're talking about a screen still?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Um, this will be something you—he's building it, so he's not building it with glasses. All virtual reality is not built with glasses. It's built with a screen. Okay? This was—he's building it, so it will be with the glasses when it's built. I'm talking about the production.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Okay? So he was building the glasses—I mean building the sink, realized he got so—he had to rebuild the house. The whole house had to be rebuilt much bigger, and this was a surprise for him because with the virtual world, scale only exists in relationship to the space between your eyes. That means that in 3-D, so the space between your eyes is the only thing because it—everything has to go to your eyes. He had become so small—you don't realize how small you're getting. You have no conception, realization, so he had no idea. So I thought this was cool that you could be as big as ever or as tiny as ever, and that there's no—you don't really feel the difference, which is an interesting problem that it gives this within this digital virtual world.

Another one was that we pay for space with time. That means that if you're in one section of my city, which has very few polygons, it is totally smooth. [00:34:06] It moves without jumping. It moves without jumping. But if you go into that world, and it has a lot of material in that world like maybe 20,000 polygons that it has to build every tenth of a second, what happens is that it starts to jump because it takes time to build everything in relationship to where you are. So if you are in a part of the place where there's very few polygons, it's very smooth, but if you're in a place which is jam-packed with material, you start having this jumping quality. It's just not smooth back then. Now, everything is equal, but back then, the machines were simply not powerful enough to have that happen. So this was—these were two parts that I thought that you take—you pay for time with space or you pay for space with time, and the fact that scale doesn't exist. It's a fantastic kind of philosophical issues that come up with this medium.

Another thing was that my city was based on my chart. So there are five parts in my chart. There's the subject, sign, world framed, world unframed, and elements. Now, when you're in the element section, the whole city looks green, the whole city, for instance, and there's a ball of polygons that are floating above it. and you can grab them because you have a glove that you wear. You have headphones and a glove, so you could interact with the material that you're within with your glove. You can grab something; you can hold it in your hand. Of course, it has no physical mass at this time. [00:36:01] It still doesn't. And the next world is the world unframed and you enter—so that you pass the border. If you pass the border between elements and world unframed, the entire world changes, and everything is multicolored, and you see all my buildings, and everything is in there right underneath you. You're floating around in this world, and you can go into different—you can go into the house and start moving around in it, and so forth, and so on. If you go on into the next world, the world framed, you're suddenly inside a room where you're looking out. You're in the middle looking out and you have shelves with all my different city parts are all in there, and they can all be moved. You go into the next section, and the entire thing is all like a chart. It's all based on these kind of hierarchical charts with signs everywhere. And you go into the last, and it's simply a red ball. You're inside a red ball, and that's all it is. It's an empty red ball. So there are five worlds.

The point is, is that every world defines the whole as a different place. So five worlds create five wholes. This and the interface between these worlds are the borders. So you do not have a remote control that takes you from one city—from one world to the next. You literally go through that environment, and it changes depending on where you are. I thought this was such a fantastic kind of philosophical point was that there's not one whole but five within this structure. Another thing is that I had to build around this city, a large platform that was done

in gray in order—so because if I took off into the sky, I'd get farther that the whole city gets smaller and smaller and smaller, and it would disappear. [00:38:01] And how would I find my way back? I would be lost. I would like to find my way back to back going down into this place.

This was in a show, my thing was in a show in Tourcoing. The only time it was shown with a virtual environment was in Tourcoing where people put on the headphones, and I was in there for 12 hours.

ANNETTE LEDDY: T-O-U-R—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: T-O-U-R-Q-U something, something. Tourcoing. It's a city on the French-Belgian border. You'd be able to find it. And, uh, it was a fantastic—I mean there's an art center now, and I think Bernard Tschumi did design the new building. That's a very fancy place. And this is the first time virtual reality had ever been in an art exhibition. I remember going in there, and it was fantastic. It was truly fantastic.

So then, I was on more conferences with computer people, and then at the same time, I was in conferences with architects, so I'm invited to a conference, several conferences at that point in my life where I'm the only artist, and I'm not just with any architects. I'm with Foster, Herzog & de Meuron, Libeskind, Sciller Dofidio [ph] who I became very close friends with. It's like I'm with all these hotshots. I mean Frank Gehry, all these famous, famous people, and I'm talking about my little old city, which is not even architecture. I'm something else, and I'm out of my mind. I'm talking about my five worlds, entering the picture, stick figures, cosmology, going to heaven, going to hell, blah, blah, blah, so they thought I was out of my mind. [00:40:04] They were curious, and I got to be friends with Libeskind. He was curious enough. And so I was on two sets of lectures—one was architecture, and one was computer.

ANNETTE LEDDY: This is all throughout the '90s?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, late '90s, mid, late '90s, the early—no mid-'90s, mid-'90s, mid-'90s. So I say that you become what you represent, and since I'm representing architecture, I became an architect as that terrible review gave me. I became an architect. And then also, I was in a—just to backtrack a tiny bit, I was in this exhibition, the opposite in the '80s, in 1986 called *The Spiritual: Abstract Painting in the 20th Century* [sic *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985*], this fantastic show that Maurice Tuchman did at LACMA.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, at LACMA?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I love that, yeah. I was in that show. I just—I know the catalogue. I didn't see the show, but I love that catalogue.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And I'm in it. There I was with Hilma af Klint. I'm there. My father was in the show, and I was in the show. And since I'm becoming quite well known in Europe, that show moved to the Hague, and they invited me to talk at the Hague about my work. I talked about my work and then there was a question from the audience that says, "Why are you in this exhibition? You're not spiritual at all. You're a conceptual artist, why are you here?" And I said, "Because I use certain words, that's why I'm here. I use the word god, I use the world soul, I use the word death, and I use them in my work." And it's not to say that I'm—there is distance on what I'm doing, but I am very different from my father. My father is much more spiritual in that sense than I am." He is—my father is a modernist. [00:42:00] He is trying to get to the source of things. I'm a postmodernist. I am trying to get to the source, but I cannot get past the distance of Postmodernism, I just cannot. Everything I make, it's always referring to a form and a history. We just can't help it. I'm past Modernism. I'm past Reductivism. Lawrence [Weiner] is a modernist, I am not. Baldessari is a modernist, but he's really on the cusp, but I am not. My generation is the next—is that next thing, so. But I was in that show. Of my contemporaries, I think I'm the only artist in that show, in this exhibition. So give me credit for being the first virtual artist, virtual reality and for being in the spiritualism show, right?

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Come on. Also the first one to do the—how many times have I said

I'm the only one doing this stuff? And I feel—you know? And then I apologize for the last session when I start feeling weird, and I'm almost complaining, but it's a state of being as an —I feel like I'm an outsider.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Even now?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Even now, I feel like an outsider. Even now, I feel—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Even with all—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —I feel—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —the success you've had?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And I'm very, very much—I'm busy. I have five museum shows coming up in the next two years. I do.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, where? Where will they be?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, two of them are going to be—one is in Belgium and two of them are going to be in London and Germany, and two of them are going to be—one is going to be in Croatia and the other one is going to be in Romania, and then I have one in San Francisco. But these are just shows that are coming up, but this is—I am lucky that my work finally perhaps as since Milan, Victor says things are changing, my dealer. People are now beginning to take me more seriously. [00:44:03] I'm still alive. Just the fact that I'm still alive, I'm still working, I have not disappeared, I—I am in purgatory according to the auction houses, but that doesn't—what does that mean? I'm not selling work for half a million dollars. But that's a—that's a rare thing anyway, although I know all these artists that are doing it. I'm not—never even come close to approaching that. But there are a lot of artists—when is—and I was saying, I was complaining about not having a museum show in the US. Acconci never had a museum show. I don't think Acconci had—he had a show at MoMA. I don't think he ever had while was alive.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, the PS1 show.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, he had one at PS1?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Just right before he died, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, there you go he got one. I'm glad he got one, and he might have had more, and he deserved a lot more. He really did. Um, Joseph Kosuth, let's see a Joseph Kosuth show. I would love to see a big Joseph Kosuth show, a big one, a regular museum show. How many shows have Lawrence Weiner had? He's had lots. Baldessari has had lots, I think to a problem, but I think it has to do with Marian Goodman. I think Joseph is suffering because he's not at Leo Castelli. I think he's a very important artist, but I think this all comes down to money with these museums. And there so many artists, Robert Barry, there are so many artists that I think should have big shows and have never had it much older than I am, so I can't complain. It's just the way it's done in the US, and also, the conceptual art is not so highly regarded here as it is in Europe.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, yes, that's a really good—that's a really good—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: You know that—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —point.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yes it is—

ANNETTE LEDDY: How do you—? Talk about that, how you understand that problem.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Why?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, I said that what we are—America is obsessed with form, much more than Europe. [00:46:01] More —Europe is much more maybe interested in content and subject. You don't have to worry, but here, we're—a good artist is someone

who's very creative, in quotes, who uses a lot of material, who uses a lot of color, who in creates an environment that people can understand in the first second they enter the room. You need all of that. It's form. It's all about form. It's like building a canyon. It's like building a nature. In Europe, they're much more interested in the universe, they're more interested—

ANNETTE LEDDY: The ideas.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —in the ideas. Like for instance, I'm now showing more and more in South America. In South America, they are—when you look at it, they're into magical Surrealism—

ANNETTE LEDDY: But—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —so they're into me.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —always such an interesting avant-garde there—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: They're philosophical.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —too. Yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And also but it's the philosophy so they bring up all these poets and writers that we all know in relationship to me. They also come to my show when—I've had several shows now—and they all start—they start talking about Lacan, and they start talking about this philosopher and the Deleuze and this philosopher, and what about this, and what about Borges, and what about this, and they're—we're discussing all this great stuff. When I do a show in LA, none of that is asked, nothing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: What about that? Where—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: These kids are saying, how much money did you make last year? What's your gallery? Talk about real things. Even going down to Mexico City, I was amazed how smart everyone was.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, it's amazing, isn't it? It's so—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: They are—they know what they're up to—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —exciting and—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —and they're fun. It's fun to be thinking about these things. It's interesting. What else are you going to do? We might as well be masturbating up here. We're not building anything. We're just jerking off, this whole economy based on money, blah, blah. Capitalism at the end, at its worst is one big fuck, but it's masturbating. [00:48:01] There's no—you're not building anything. You're just like reaping the rewards from pleasure. I mean, this is me getting very pissed off right now, but—[laughs] But I'm lucky. I'm lucky that I have Europe. Thank God, I went there, and I went to Europe because John said go to Europe. John and he went through—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Baldessari?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Baldessari, John Baldessari said go to Europe, and he didn't tell me to go to Europe, he went to Europe himself. That's why—that's how he told me. He didn't say, "Go to Europe, young man," he's the guy that went there, and he is the guy that went to New York, and that's why I went to Europe, and that's why I exist in Europe.

There are so many exhibitions that I have been in in Europe, and I'm the lone American. I am the lone American and other Americans are in the show, but they're not there. They don't go to the openings because they don't care. You know they don't have the money, they don't have the time. I run into artists that I really love and who—and they—and I meet them in Berlin because I 've been living in Berlin for 12 years, and I see them, and I go to them, and they all show with the same gallery, and I go the opening, and they're so happy to see me because they're a fish out of water. They don't know what to do. They—they're not in New York, and I am somebody who really went to Europe. I went to Europe. In 1987, I was in a show called—I was in "documenta" in '82 and then I was at the *Sculpture Project* in '87, I was in the S*culpture Project*.

ANNETTE LEDDY: At Münster.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Münster *Sculpture Project,* I was in that. I did this big stone floor, and I was at the hotel with Fischli/Weiss. We hung out together. I met—and I met Thomas Schütte, and I met Harald Klingelhöller, and I met Ludger Gerdes. I can't pronounce his first name. and I met, and they were sweet. These men were really nice, but there were people there that were not nice, but these were the ones that really accepted me, and I was part of scene, so I would start to see them here and there. [00:50:11] My—but the person who put me in my show at MIT was Michael Tarantino, and I did—and the project I did at MIT was the —was the *Five into One*, which is the first object that I made after the *Computer Project,* which was these low walls, the series of low walls and the different colors that you would walk through, and as you walk through these spaces, I had works displayed. So I could do—and I displayed—like in the elemental thing, I'd have stuffed birds from local museums and in the world unframed thing, I would have chairs and tables and in the world framed things, I'd have different arts. In the sign thing, I'd have all my prints and then the red thing was always empty.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So the more you talk about this, the more I get the sense that, in a sense, your whole career is building on this basic cosmology and forms that you developed really from the time you were at CalArts especially but after—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I'm telling you.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And each thing is you find a new form for it or a new medium, and it alters it. The form itself alters it, it seems like. The computer alters it or the glass alters it or whatever, but then you go on, and you're also adding content to the subject—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: You learn from the form.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You learn from the form.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Like the—

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's exactly what it's—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —computer changed my relationship to the sign. It did fundamentally because the sign became a real place. After the computer, I made these banners that were seven meters—it's 14 meters high, and you would walk. And you've seen these pictures with these giant banners and you're—they become architecture. [00:52:00] So the banners themselves are becoming a city. They're becoming something you walk into.

My entire show at the—in Milan last year was all having *The M.I.T. Project*, this giant project with these low walls, but it was 200 meters long. It's massive. Two hundred meters is big, and it was a huge installation, and it covered 6000—it had 6000 objects in that show. And that's—that was just last year, so it's growing in scale as well. But the thing is that *The M.I.T. Project* that I did was the—where the signs themselves became spaces, and you can walk into that, and you could walk into them. Then I was in the "'92 documenta" and in "'92 documenta," I had these high walls that you walk into this space, and I had bulletin boards because the bulletin boards were in *The M.I.T. Project*, And the bulletin boards is something I haven't really talked about at all during this tape.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I need to take a break.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Okay, a break.

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ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: So in Europe, I was really—I'm meeting a lot of new people, and Michael Tarantino was living in Belgium now, Brussels and we would go to openings together. And I was—I even wanted to buy a place in Brussels, so we were looking at spaces there.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And was this when you were working with Micheline too?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, way before Micheline.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, I see.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah. No, I—

ANNETTE LEDDY: When did you start working with Micheline Szwajcer?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I don't—oh, like five years later, five later.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Like in 2005?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, 2000.

ANNETTE LEDDY: 2000?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Around 2000, 2005. It was don through Victor and so I—you know it was a kind of a—and she came to my opening. I had a show in Tourcoing—

ANNETTE LEDDY: The one that you were talking about?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No. Another show—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Another one? Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —that Denys Zacharopoulos, had done. Denys was a very important—in terms of like a critical base for me in Europe, the most important people were Denys Zacharopoulos and Michael Tarantino and Ulrich Wilmes who I met in Münster because he was working with Kasper on the Münster Sculpture Project. And also Friedrich Meschede. These were the—these were all the people—and then Marianne Brouwer who was the curator at the Kroeller-Mueller. And then also there's—always so many people but Saskia Bos who was at—who I met in '82 because she did the catalogue for "documenta" in 82.

One of the things that happened in the early '90s was that I moved to Europe because Valerie had *Sonsbeek* and so we moved to Arnhem, and I lived in Arnhem as well, so I could travel through Europe much easier. [00:02:02] After that, I started teaching. My first real teaching position was at the Rijksakademie—no, yeah, yeah, Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, a wonderful institution and then also at the Columbia University as a kind of a mentor, as like just going in occasionally not as a real professor there, but that's what I was doing. I knew a lot of people. More and more Europeans I knew, and I was involved with—this was in the early '90s, and then Valerie and I were living in Arnhem. I was producing lots of different commissioned works, plus I was—I was doing rubbings, plus I was doing—making drawings and collages. I was doing collages, and continuing to work with the virtual environment.

ANNETTE LEDDY: How long—how many years were you in Arnhem?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Two years.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Two years and—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Two, two and a half.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —did you have kids at that point?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no, kids were not in the picture then but after. And then Arnhem was a show that was—this is indicative of what was happening in Arnhem. Alighiero Boetti was coming to town, and I was in the office with Mike Kelley and Val, and she had Mike and I take Alighiero to the pot bar. It was called—it was—I forgot what the name of it was, but it was like a soda shop. It was all white, and I remember getting stoned with Alighiero and Mike. Now, talk about great artists, I mean really. And—but Mike did his *Uncanny* show as part of the show, which is a super important body of work, you know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And he did that. [00:04:00] Val had gone to his studio. He was already becoming such an important artist that everybody was like—you know Mike, had a big chip on his shoulder, you remember?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And he always did. It was almost a—he always felt like he was considered a second-class citizen because he didn't live in New York, but it wasn't the truth.

ANNETTE LEDDY: No, I mean—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But you—so it puts a little—and maybe I can reflect on that with my chip in my shoulder, which is not nearly as big as his. [Laughs.]

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.] That's true, I know that. Even from my brief meeting of him, he had like a list of complaints.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yes, always, always, always and, you know. So he was not so interested in doing a show with Val. We have no—because he was at my birthday party on his first show, so he's known Val since his first show, and he knew me since the '70s because we were both in Ericka Beckman—I mean an Ericka Beckman film and then he saw my performance at Foundation for Arts Resources in in '79, which was a very important performance with hypnosis that I did. So she sees a list on the wall—on the wall, and it was actually on a pillar, and it was just a list of artists' names, and she's—he's says, "I'm not interested in doing any big installations or any big international shows. I just have done it," and she says, "But what's this list? What's this list of—?" "Oh, that's something that'll never happen." She says, "What is it?" and he says, "It's a show I want to do. It's a show I want to do called *The Uncanny*, and it's about all these artists together who I think would be fantastic," and then she says to him, "Why don't you have that be your piece in my show? You can do that, and that'll be your work, and we'll give you the museum. You have your show in the museum in *Sonsbeek,* and that will be your exhibition. That will be your artwork," and he says, "You can do that?" [00:06:01] He says, "You can do that?" and she says, "Absolutely, I can do that," and that was his piece.

And Alighiero's piece was the last major work of his life, which was the self-portrait as a statue with a hose, water on his head, and it's teeming off of his head. It's a fantastic work, and that was in the middle of a forest. So you had—and everybody in that show made shows. It was a show of shows. A lot of the artists in that, and it was so panned. Everybody hated this exhibition. Everybody—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Why?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —they hated it. The Dutch hated it because of Münster. People thought it was just a—it was just a reproduction of what Münster did, but there's such a big difference between what Val did and what Münster was. Because in Münster, it was all sculpture, and in Val's show, it was all exhibitions.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But if you like Münster, why would you even care if it was like Münster?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Because this is the way the art world is. Everyone's competing with everybody. Everyone wants to have the most important thing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I get it.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And she's an American woman in Holland? Oh, this was killer. She was just skewered, skewered, totally fucking skewered. Even someone like—even someone like a Hans-Ulrich [Obrist] was skewering her, Kasper was skewering her. And then—but what happened in the meantime is that you see her approach was the birth of the *Manifestas*, that what she did with that show is basically what *Manifesta* is based on. The whole show as an experiment, as a piece in itself, and like the catalogue for the *Sonsbeek* is a description of the making of the show. It has the published—all her invitations, all the responses by all the artists, artists that were in the show and not in the show, and why she couldn't do them and what—you know it was like a—it was a catalogue about cataloguing a show, and this was just a brilliant, a brilliant exhibition. [00:08:01] And she had so many important artists that people had—she's so good at what she does that Hans-Ulrich came up to me. You know Mark Munder [ph], his first exhibition ever was in that show in the base because he lived in Arnhem, and so Hans-Ulrich comes up to me some five years later, and he says, "I was very dismissive of *Sonsbeek,* but whenever I discover an artist, and I'm really excited about, they were in that show." He says this to me. He says, "I'm thinking that's probably one of the most important show of the '90s" and then Kasper started saying the same thing. And so now it has this legendary—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, I've always heard of *Sonsbeek*.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —thing, I mean a super incredible show. Oh, my God, she was—you couldn't believe how she was destroyed. I mean it was knives. it was like she would go onstage, and people would just shoot her to bits. She was just up there, please kill me, please kill me, and they did it. They did it. They killed her. They killed her, they killed her because she want—she was interested in the whole thing. She had distance on it. She says, "Why do you want to kill me? You know this is interesting. Why I'm so—because I'm an American woman living in Holland, and you're—" and then the Dutch are so tough. They really can be super tough.

So then, after that, we had heard that, where to go for a vacation? We had to have a vacation. So we went to Indonesia. I had—I was in an exhibition in Japan, a computer, computer-generated show that I was in, a group show where it was me and these other computer artists. And the budget was so great that they could—Valerie and I had around-the-world flight plus $5000 extra, maybe more, maybe [$]8000 to play around in Indonesia. [00:10:01] And 8000 would last you months there, months, and so we toured, we lived, and she heard about this little island of Sumba.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But wasn't she working at the Queens Museum?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, this is before Queens.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see. Okay.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And so we are—we are there, and we're there in Sumba. So we went to Japan, we went to China, we went to Singapore, we went to Bali, and we ended up in Sumba for a month or maybe three weeks. It was a glorious place. I think there must have been 25 tourists on this island. It was a big island. You never saw a tourist ever. There were no hotels. I mean it was really out there, out there. The only people—we went to Chief Metabulu's Village [ph]. That was our first night and the only—and there was a guest room—guest book, and the only people that were signing the guestbook were anthropologists and surfers. They were the only people that were there. And the surf was apparently great, and it's a bit scary, but the cleanest you can—you couldn't t imagine how clean it was. It was spotless. There was no trash anywhere. It was a brilliant, great time.

Well, lo and behold, the last week in, we—because we went—from there, I think we went to London, and then we realized we were pregnant coming back from that, from that trip, and, uh, we had twins, amazing. We had twins. They were born in '94, and then she starts looking for a job. She got the Queens Museum job where she did all kinds of great things and first person to show—and then Al was in *Sonsbeek*.

ANNETTE LEDDY: That's right.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —had a great installation. [00:12:00] It was a whole show. His thing was—you know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Was it *Siste Viator*?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: *Siste Viator*, with the trailer and the books inside, both fantastic, fantastic. I mean giving tours of that show was the most fun, amazing exhibition, amazing. Juan Muñoz did a radio play, the Hohenbüchlers worked with the prisoners inside the prison. It was really exceptional.

So we had our kids and then we moved into our house, and meantime, I bought a new property on Greene Street. That's a whole long story, but we're lucky to have it, and that's where we live now. And it's all—it's—that's—so we moved back and then the kids take over. From 1992 to now, my—I stopped thinking about what was I doing. It'd be more difficult for me to say about things now than before because the kids kind of take over. Although, I made a—because I was still teaching at the Rijksakademie, and we got a—when the kids were born, I got a residency in Berlin. So that was—what was it? What's it called? What was that residency called?

ANNETTE LEDDY: The Goethe—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, it's not Goethe. And I really should know this because—this is

stupid, this is my old age, but, um, it doesn't matter. They gave me a studio, they gave me a house. The—Val and I arrived with three-month-old twins, and I had—and I was making work there. I was teaching, I was invited by the local college HFBK was—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Was it—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —Udk, Udk. [00:14:00]

ANNETTE LEDDY: Was it DAAD?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: DAAD, the DAAD, DAAD coalition. And I—Udk invited me to—I was—because the students could all invite one artist, and they invited. I was invited by both the architecture class and the art class for a semester. And then I taught in Braunschweig and then I taught at the Rijksakademie. I continued to teach at the Rijksakademie, but when I got back—I had been gone more than four weeks—and Lucy burst into tears, my daughter burst into tears when I arrived home to New York, and I vowed never to be gone for more than a week. So all my trips got much shorter because I couldn't be away from the kids because it was just too traumatic for them to deal with me leaving and coming back. So that was a rule that I made and then Val got her job. I got my studio, and I continued to make work with computers.

ANNETTE LEDDY: The studio in Chinatown?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: The—that was a studio I had. It was in the basement of where I lived underneath David Zwirner. David Zwirner was on the ground floor of my building in SoHo 41 Greene Street; I was on the top floor, and a fancy building. John McEnroe was in the building, Eric Fischl, April Gornik. Michael Werner was right below us. So it had some fancy people in it, and only one person has sold their space in our building so far. And it's a fantastically, lucky thing that we got this building, we got this space, amazing.

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's a beautiful place.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, no, it's fantastic, great, what a genius thing. Now, what had happened in my work is the most important thing is like in the mid-'90s, I was invited to do something about virtual reality, an exhibition on virtual reality. This was I think in a Dutch museum—I couldn't tell you which one—and it was a group show. [00:16:04] I decided rather because when you are doing this, um, when you are doing the virtual reality, there's tape on the floor that the machine can read. So when I make a left—when I look to the left, I see what's to my left inside the virtual. If I looked up, I can see what's above me. If I look down, I don't see my feet unless I have an avatar. If I look to the right, I see what's to the right. And if I want to travel, I have to point with my glove. I can point in different directions to travel in this environment. But there's tape on the floor, which means that the machine can read where you are on that tape—that you're in—that you're in an environment. And then I thought, Well, what if I put the tape on the floor and then have a—get hypnotized? So I believe that within that taped marking, I am five years old or I am a chicken or I am a dog or I am a woman or that I am 85 years old or that—you know any number of qualities, or that it's super-hot inside there, and it's cold outside, so I would shift. So I was curious about how I would feel inside that taped line.

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's like a container, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It's a container like the virtual, and I was invited to be in a show, so I made this container, and I filmed myself in a trance state going into that, and this was in an exhibition on virtual reality.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Cool.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And so I'm connecting the hypnosis with the virtual. [00:18:03] Rather than show just me inside my city, I'm actually dealing with the feeling of being inside and how that gets done. So the hypnosis was gaining importance. Barbara Vanderlinden who I had done some shows with in the mid-'90s, she did a show during *Sonsbeek* time, and she wanted me. She had seen this exhibition and says, "Would you like to do more hypnosis stuff?" She invited me to Brussels to spend a week there doing all these performances, and I did things outside, inside, reading the list in a trance state, seeing how I felt. I mean really examining being a hypnotist, representing a hypnotist, the whole—it was quite a large body of work then it became a portfolio. It became a boxed set of Matt Mullican under hypnosis,

and this is '95–'96, and so this is the beginning of that person coming back. That was really what was happening now.

And so I—then, I was living in Berlin. I'm no longer in Berlin, but then again, I did this show in LACE, and they wanted me to do the hypnosis thing as well. And then that's what you mentioned earlier about rebuilding my house where I lived and going into that house. I had two houses. One was The *M.I.T. Project,* and the other was my home that I grew up in, and I was inside the home in a trance state.

ANNETTE LEDDY: What did you learn about your childhood or your home? [00:20:04]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Music was very important. My—in this piece, my mother was in the kitchen. I was listening to my father's records, and the records that my father was listening to were all show tunes, so they were records that were musicals, so *Sound of Music, Grease*—not *Grease*. It was—what was it called? It was another—there was another—it was another—*Bye Bye Birdie*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, any number. And I was really aware in the performance of being on the floor listening to music, and that was—and I was on the floor underneath the dining room table, and I would move across the dining—the floor in the living room.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did you have any kind of insights into your parents and your feelings about them?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Uh, you know it was like—not really. I think the insights had to be with my relationship to the family, how separate I was from the family at the same time as being really a part of the family.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You mean when you were young, you had—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: When I was young—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —you had felt separate and together?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well you know, just to survive. I needed to be separate because my family was tough. My parents did not get along. They got along, but they didn't get along. They were—they had great love for each other, huge love for each other, but think about this, Latin bombshell and this conservative Oklahoman and they have different mentality. They have very different views of things.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did they—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And my mom—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —argue a lot?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah. Well, it didn't even get that far. When they did argue, it was terrifying. It was probably the most terrifying, uh, point of my life was when they argued. [00:22:04] It upset me more than anything else, and I avoided it at all costs. I couldn't—I couldn't take it. it was really, really horrible. My mother was a drinker. She was an alcoholic, and I used to keep—getting home from middle school, from Paul Revere, I would race up car—I would race cars up the road—or even from elementary school, race cars up the road, and if I beat the car, my mom was not drinking. And if I didn't, she'd already started drinking, and this was three in the afternoon, four in the afternoon.

My father had such prohibition in everything. He had such a negative relationship to alcohol. I mean, he loved to drink himself, but when she got drunk, he had no tolerance for it, so he ignored her, but if she became abusive, and she could do that, it became tough, then it was trouble. And so I lived in this kind of place, and the place was hard. It was a hard place. And, uh, I left. I left as quickly as I could leave. It's CalArts. I didn't hang out at home at all. I—I went to New York. I had adopted this other world, this other life and my father was—he was there. My younger brother had to deal with it. He went to Al-Anon later on in life, which is about the people around alcoholics. This is—this was—and, now, she has not had a drink in years, she stopped, she's fine. She cannot drink alcohol now because she's allergic—she can have beer, but she can't have liquor or she cannot have wine. It was heartbreaking and extremely difficult. So I think my performance really had to do with nothing. [00:24:08] I think I had—I think I was—my mom was over there, my father was over here, and I was here

listening to music.

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's about the world you created in order to weather that.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Weather that, yes, and it was—I would call up my friends desperate to get out of the house, "Can I come over? Can I spend the night at your place? Please, can I spend the night over at your place?" and they would accept. Sometimes they would be able to do it; sometimes they wouldn't. And then if it got to arguing, they were downstairs in their bedroom, and the screaming that would go on was beyond, and if the door slammed, it was beyond heartbreak and beyond fear for me. It was—if I built up a thick skin, that was my underbelly. That was the toughest thing I've ever dealt with in my life. That was the toughest, and the toughest situation that I had gone through was this apartment with Douglas Crimp.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So it was actually from the time you got back from Rome—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —yeah, until—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —until you left—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —I left to go to CalArts, for CalArts.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —for CalArts? That's a long time.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, a long time, 10 years.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Ten years, and then how long after that did she continue?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I don't remember.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I don't think it was ever as bad as that. That was at the worst. She also came out as an artist. She—this is—she was part of a woman's consciousness raising group in 1970, [19]'71. So it actually got better in '71 when after I left home, '70, '71 because she started being an artist. Because she had all this pent-up energy, and she was not expressing herself, so I think that she just—it was hard for her. She is someone that must communicate with other people. She is someone who must—they have—she has to do this. [00:26:00] She has to do this. And so she would get—when she was drinking, she was not drinking alone, she was calling friends up. She was on the telephone when she was drinking, so she was not just drinking, she was talking. She was communicating, and she had a need to become part of things. My father—and my father would just repel her if she was drinking. He couldn't handle it. He didn't want to be around her.

So then she became part of this consciousness raising group with Suzy Titelman and Maria Nordman and Barbara Haskell and Vija Celmins and Ann McCoy and Barbara Munger and Avilda Moses and a woman, a filmmaker Dometrix Dohimicus [ph], something like this and then also Alex, Alexis Smith. They all would meet once a month—every five—every two months they would be at our house in the living room because they would rotate where they met. They met once a week, and they would discuss the future of being a woman in the world. I mean this is really coming up at the same time. She did a show at the Woman's—the *Womanhouse* downtown, which was coming out of Judy Chicago and Mimi Schapiro. She had Mimi over to her studio, and it was like a—she was—but she could actually start painting. She got a studio. She never had a studio until then.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, that's great, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: She had a studio. She had a studio in the Canyon, two studios in the Canyon and then there was a studio—she had studios from then on in. Now, she doesn't have one, but she works at home, and that was—so she's—but that—

ANNETTE LEDDY: You mean in Taos or also in Santa Monica?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, see, in Taos, no one had a studio. Everyone worked on the dining room table. Even my father didn't have a studio in Taos, but he would work in the backroom, in the bedroom, he would work, paint sometimes. [00:28:00] My mother grew up in an era when the women were nothing, so any surrealist that was a woman was not

considered a surrealist. They were not considered painters. They were not seriously considered at all. And so she grew up being an artist like a stealthy, invisible artist and then she was the artist's wife and that was—she was very good at that. I mean, they had their problems, but if she was in—she was in—she is and has always been a kind of a royal individual. She's an extraordinary person, amazing person and full of empathy and full of life and vigor, but she's a—she's like a leopard, she's like a tiger, she's like a Latina nth degree. She was best buddies with Frida Kahlo. I mean this is a person who grew up with—you name the famous artist, she was there. She was—she knew them all. She knew it—name the artist, she knew them.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You know the reason I asked about Marisol is I was wondering if she had known her in Caracas when they were kids.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. My mother's much older than Marisol, much older. I think—

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Cross talk.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, well so. My mom's 99. [They laugh.] Maybe—they were maybe the same age. They could have been the same age. I associate Marisol with the '60s, so to me she's younger. I associate my mother with the '40 so that she's older. But it could very well be that Marisol as my mother—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I think she was born—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —would say Marisol—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I think she was born in 1930, Marisol, so—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Okay, my mother—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —when was your mother born?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —'20.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay, It's 10 years.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, 10 years, so. But name—as I mentioned de Kooning and Pollock, and I mentioned about Pollock and, oh, such an awful man. Pollock was a bad drunk, awful man. You didn't want to be—if he'd start drinking, you just left the room. You didn't want to be around him. And then she mentioned John Cage, and Merce Cunningham, oh, they were so wonderful. [00:30:03] This is in the '40s, mid-'40s. They were so wonderful. Whenever there was a performance that they were doing, they would always leave a ticket for their cat. Their cat had a particular name, and if you were early, you could get it. You can always get the cat's ticket, and everybody who knew them knew about the cat's ticket. And so if you wanted to go, and you were early enough, you could get in for free because you could get in with the cat's ticket. I didn't know that she knew John Cage, I didn't know that she knew Merce Cunningham, but she did. But she knew everybody. Name the artist, name them, name them, it goes on and on and on—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right now, she's—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —it's just unbelievable. Now, she's becoming one of them. She's becoming like this amazing person. I mean she is—I tell you, it's extraordinary turn of events. I just say she's got great karma, amazingly great karma, amazingly great karma. It's just stupendous, stupendous what she's—what she's managed to pull off or some people, so whoever did this is amazing.

In any case, I was there on the floor at LACE doing this project with hypnosis to get back to this other world.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yes, right. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Because we have things to talk about—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Because it's—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: We have—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —this is around 2000 and something?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Around 2000-something, yes. Maybe '99, maybe '99, '98, I don't know. But the hypnotist that I got there in LA, I used in Europe. And so then I started to do exhibitions to do these performances in Europe, and I did one in my gallery in Berlin, which was the Martin Klosterfelde gallery who used to be—I've known Martin because he used to work at Barbara Gladstone. And Barbara was, um—had a gallery and he has a gallery, and he was working there. [00:32:05] He ran the shop and so he opened his gallery and invited me to become a part of that. And, um, and then I knew him when I was at Barbara, but then I left Barbara and I was—this is kind of a cruel thing. I will just tell it because—to get it out of the way—is that when I was in, in Berlin with—and I got to—very—became very close friends with Gabriel Orozco who was also with the DAAD and then the other one was—uh, gosh what's his name? Fantastic artist, Stan Douglas. So Stan and I—Stan and Nina [ph] and Gabriel and his wife all became close friends. Friedrich Meschede was the one that I got in on because I knew him from Münster and—but there was a panel discussion, and they decided they would invite me.

And Gabriel tried to get me into Marian Goodman's gallery, so Gabriel and Lawrence Weiner tried to get me into Marian's gallery because I, I had left—I wanted to leave Barbara's. I was still with Barbara, but I was interested in leaving her, and they tried. At one point, Marian said, yes, she would represent me. I was so excited. What a dream this is. Uh, I think the most important gallery if not in New York, the world, and the most important artists are there, and it's the place, and I am set for life now—now I am done. [00:34:01] And then what happened was that she changed her mind. I was in the gallery for six months and then she comes to my studio. First studio visit, she comes, and she says, "Oh, my plate is full." You know how she talks, "My plate is full." But Marian, you invited—I'm in the gallery, I thought. "No, I can't do it. I'm sorry, I can't. My plate is full." And so I was out of the gallery, and they tried, and they couldn't do it. Someone in the gallery, somebody she listened to said no or something happened or whatever.

And then, I also was flirting with David Zwirner downstairs because I was on the 41 Greene building and then he said, um—he says okay because Victor had been talking to him because—about maybe he would work with me in the US. And he was—and I had talked to him about it, but he says, "I can't. I will never ever take an artist away from another gallery. I will never do that, and you're working with Barbara. If you leave Barbara, maybe we can talk." And then what happened was that he says—he was talking to Victor and then he came up to my home, which is on the top floor. He will never go into an artist's studio. He says, "I don't go to artists' studios." And then he said, "No, I'm not interested. I don't want to work with you," and I was like, "Okay," I don't have a gallery.

ANNETTE LEDDY: He didn't give a reason?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no. They don't have to give a reason. Marian didn't give a reason too, but she said, "My plate is full," and his was the same. My theory about this is that when you're dealing with a younger artist or an artist that is breaking like when I was breaking in the early '80s, that you've got momentum, a serious momentum, and they can capitalize on that momentum. But once you've been around for 10 years, you enter this magic land of midcareer or 15, 20 years—and for me it was 20 years, so I had a good, long stretch, but I was in midcareer—which makes things a lot harder for them, they think. [00:36:13] Uh, I might be—God, no one's working with Matt Mullican. He should be—he should be—he needs representation in New York. We can capitalize on this. They were not thinking like this. I had been in and out of Barbara Gladstone and Mary Boone and Michael Klein, I was like I'm done, I'm toasted.

I'm still busy. I'm still busy. I'm still in Europe seven times—

ANNETTE LEDDY: But you still have—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —a year.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —you have Victor.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —I have my career. I have Victor, I have a career, I have a career. I'm not hurting. I'm managing to sell work. So I had a show in Janice Guy's. I had a little

space on King Street. She was my assistant. She—I got—I started working with Janice because she was working for Barbara. So I had a show at Janice because she worked for Barbara. I had a show with—what's wrong?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Nothing. I'm sorry. Please [cross talk]—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: You should—you shouldn't do this.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It really breaks my—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I'm sorry. [They laugh.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I had a show with Anton Kern because he—and he worked with Barbara as well, so three people that work with Barbara gave me shows. And I showed at—and the show at Janice, I had all my Rapidograph drawings, and this is after my—all my exhibitions. They were in the hundreds of dollars these—$200, $300, $400, and she sold three that whole time. The person who bought that three was Thomas Schütte because he and Janice were both in the Richter class back in the day, and so they've known each other forever. Whenever he was in New York, he would stay with her, and he bought these three drawings. [00:38:01] He thought the show was wonderful, and he bought three drawings because I know him from Münster, and he knows, so he's following my work. It was like, God, I sold three drawings, but I didn't have a gallery. I didn't have a gallery forever.

I didn't have a gallery until I—and I worked with this guy. He had a photography gallery, and I can't think of his name. He ended up in San Francisco, and Peter something I think. And then I had a—and then I joined the gallery of—of Tracy Williams who was Michael Klein's assistant back in the '80s. I worked with her for seven years, and now, I've—I left her because it just wasn't working. She couldn't ever sell my work. Nothing was selling. I had—everyone in Europe could sell everything I make, and she can't sell anything, so what's going on? This is a problem.

So then from there, I went to—and I had the possibility of going with—I thought that I had the possibility of going with Petzel, but that wasn't going to happen because he didn't ask me. I never talked to him about it. I never—I would never. After Zwirner did this and Marian did this, I'm not ever going to ask a gallery if I can work with them. This will not happen because I—that hurt, that hurt, that hurt. The reason I didn't get into those was the midcareer, but it's a lot—and then I am a big artist—not that I'm an important artist but I make a lot of stuff, and I'm busy, and I'm a lot to deal with. Just the archiving of what I do is just a huge job, and I think they felt that they couldn't afford to take on an artist like me. They just couldn't. They didn't have the brain for it.

Meanwhile, Marian has taken on 20 or 30 more people—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yeah, you know, they take—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —so fuck her. [00:40:00]

ANNETTE LEDDY: —on, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: She is a woman I have great admiration for,. I have—and what she did do was she gave me a show in Paris in her tiny, little gallery. I had a show with her in Paris.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Marian Goodman has that—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: She—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —that villa in Paris.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No but she had a gallery not bigger than this room, which was a much nicer space. It was a glorious little gallery. It was a fantastic little space, and I did a fantastic little show, and everything in that show—oh, you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And what year—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —she sold—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —do you know about what year that was?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: You can look it up.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay, yeah, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But it was, um, in the '90s, I would say, and that became an installation. That's a complete piece that I did. Meantime, I start—I worked in Paris. I worked with Chantal Crousel, then I went it Ghislaine Hussenot and then I worked with Philip Nelson and then I worked with Peter Freeman, and so I worked with all those—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —people in Paris.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But I thought Peter Freeman was here.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: He was, but he was in—I got—I worked—started working with him when he was partners with Nelson.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I see.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And then—he had always wanted me to work with him and then I decided to work with him, and now, he's my dealer in, in—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —in New York.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —New York. The good thing about Peter is that he's—when I was with Barbara and with Mary, you never talked to the gallerist. You only talked to your handler, your director, and now with Peter, he'll call me up in a whim if he's somewhere, and I can talk to Peter whenever I want. He only has 25 people in the gallery or 20—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It's a good space too.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It's a good space, and it's a good program. It's—and I'm not the youngest person, and I'm not the oldest person—I'm in the middle. A lot of people who—in that gallery have gone through midcareer, they—they're older, but he has a lot of kids as well. It's a very good space.

ANNETTE LEDDY: He did that Bellamy show that was beautiful.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, he's done—oh, he's more than just that show. He has a show now Alex Katz curated, which is a beautiful show, *Downtown Painting*. [00:42:04] It's a really beautiful show.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, I should go see that.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: You should see that. But the thing is, is that I had a—and I thought, Maybe I could go with Petzel, but Petzel would've been another director, another kind of thing and that maybe—you know? People have said, "God, you've got to work with Petzel. He's such an important dealer," and I don't—I'm not going to ask, and he never asked, and that's just the way it goes.

So here I am, I do my show at the Klosterfelde's going back again. So I did my whole gallery thing now, but now, I'm back at Klosterfelde's in Berlin in the early '90s, and I do a performance there with hypnosis. And the performance, I hear a person in the background shuffling, and I start to—and I start to repeat him. He does it, I do it, and he gets—because he's getting nervous, whoever this is, this person, man or woman, I don't know, and it turns out to be Kasper. Kasper is extremely nervous watching my performance, and he's nervous because he worked in a mental institution in the—in the '60s instead of going into military service. So he worked with autistic people, and he worked with schizophrenics or whoever—well, people that were outsiders for sure. Mentally unbalanced outsiders, he worked with them, and he could see me, he could see my posture. He saw it [snaps fingers] in a second. He saw my posture, I'm an—I am one of them, and it made him so nervous that he saw me act this way. He couldn't—he couldn't believe it. He saw the whole performance and when it

was over—and I built a low—I made an architecture like I did in LA based on a living space in—at Martin's, and I forget what it was. It was based on some architecture. I don't know what it was. [00:44:01]

And I—he comes up to me at the end of the performance, and he looks me in the face. He puts his hands on my shoulders and looks me in the eye and says, "Leave the room, now. Go outside, go for a walk," and then I said, "Yes, of course, I'm going to leave the room, I'm going to go outside, I'm going to go for a walk." And then continuously, we're opening [ph]. There's—I'm chatting, different people are chatting, and he comes back to me, and he puts his hand on my shoulders. He looks at me, he says, "Leave the room now," and he starts moving me outside, and he gets my hypnotist. He brings us outside, and he says, "Walk around the block. I want you to walk around the block." We walked around the block, and I kept on repeating, "Demons and angels, Jesus fucking Christ, demons and angels, Jesus fucking Christ, demons and angels, Jesus fucking Christ, demons and angels, Jesus fucking Christ," and we had this conversation. It was a powerful walk around the block. I realized how high I was. We walked around the block twice. How high I was, I was super high, and I was talking with the hypnotist, I came back to Earth, and then Kasper was fine. This is the same hypnotist that I used in LA, and I used him again later on, but I, um—I started working with different hypnotists.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Wait a minute, Kasper saw you as—behaving like an autistic person?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah. Oh, and I do. I am out there. I'm drill—I'm gunning for my—I mean, when you see the performances—you can go online—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I've seen films of that, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, right, and it—and I've shown these films to doctors—they were in an audience—and they got so pissed off. They said, "You are acting exactly like a patient, exactly. [00:46:10] Why, how, what, why are you doing this? Why are you doing this?" and I said to them, "I'm not acting. This is innate. This is innate behavior. This is in me. This is behavior that's—I'm not copying anything or anybody. This is innate. I am going to a part of my psyche where this is normal. This is part of what this is about," and then they get it. They get it. They understand.

Like this one guy was so pissed off, he comes up to me after this, and he puts his hands on my lapel and pulls me up, and he says, "Where did you go to school? Why did you study? Why are you doing this? Why are you making fun of these people?" And I said, "I'm not making fun of anybody," and then I told him the story that I understand that Temple Grandin is—who is autistic understands—and she's a vet, she's a veterinarian right—and understands that she thinks—she says that she thinks in pictures, that she does not think in words.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Is that the one that Oliver Sacks did the profile of?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: He might have. She could have been that person. She's famous; she's written several books.

ANNETTE LEDDY: She developed the system for—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —killing animals.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —killing animals —

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —yeah, yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —with the—? Oh, my God, that's—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: She says, "am only—I am—I only think in pictures. I do not think in words," Okay. Now, I was saying to myself, I know that I don't think in pictures. I'm certain—of words. I know I don't think in words. This I'm 100 percent sure of, and I'm pretty sure I don't think in pictures as well. I don't think in it. So if I don't think in pictures and I don't think in words, what do I think in? [00:48:03] What is the medium of my thoughts if it's not words and pictures?

And so then, I proposed this question to the guy who had me pulled up by my lapels, and I said to him, "I'm trying to figure this out—how I think, how I process information, and how I

feel. And this is all done in the trance state. I don't know what I'm going to do before I'm onstage. I have no sets. There's no—there is nothing. I am in—when I'm a trance state, I'm put into a trance before I get onstage with the hypnotist. He puts me into a trance in the beginning of the day in the morning, and I'm high for the rest of the day, and then he puts me down super deep at the end of the day before I go onstage. And when I go onstage, I'm entering a void. It's a hot, white, humid void because it's a room full of light and it's full of people, and I don't know what I'm going to do. I have no plan, none, zero plan." What I always do—what I've done in the past a hundred times—well, not a hundred times but as many times as I've done performances, is I hug the walls. I'm crawling along the walls and crawling along the floor and crawling—and I am marking my space like an animal. Once I go a full rotation then it starts to—it start—and then I respond. I start laughing, I start crying, I start doing this, I start doing that. It's insane.

Now, this person, that person emerges over these different performances, he or she because it could be a man or a woman. There are several personalities that will come in and go out, and he is a child mostly, but he is also an adult. [00:50:07] All of these—different genders, different ages will—but mostly white male and different races, but it's me, mostly me. But they do exist, and they exist as—as ghosts I would say. They're relating to ghosts like my parents, like influential ghosts in my life.

I've done performances where people have come up after me and say, "You know what, you think you're under a trance state, but you're channeling. You're channeling. You're channeling spirits. They're coming through you, and you're exhibiting their psyches to us. They are occupying your soul, your psyche in front of an audience," and I never agree with this. I say, "Look, the human mind is greater than you have any conception of. We are incredible. The mind, the brain is an extraordinary organism. It's an extraordinary thing. What—we can think a hundred times, a hundred different ways all at once." For instance—and I—and when I—in my lectures, I demonstrate this—I say, "I'm picking up my kids at school. I'm driving, okay, and I park the car, the kids get into the back. I have a minivan. In the '90s, I had a minivan. The kids hop into the car, and I'm driving home. I get a phone call from my wife who wants me to go by the supermarket to pick up. Meanwhile, my kids are watching TV in the back, and they're telling me about a cartoon that they're both watching, and they're telling me about their day, so I'm listening to them do that. [00:52:00] Then, I'm listening to my wife talking to me about what we need for dinner, and I have to go by the shop to buy it with the kids before I get home, and I'm driving the car while I'm doing all of this stuff. And then my wife talks about her mother who called her up and says, "You know, my mom's coming to dinner. She had an awful day because so-and-so, and so-and-so, and so-and-so did this," and I'm fine.

I'm—where am I? I'm driving the car number one, most important thing, my kids are in the back seat. Number two, I'm listening to my kids, listening to the cartoon, I'm involved with the carton. Number three, I'm at the supermarket trying to remember where the different groceries are. Number four, I'm talking—I'm thinking about my grandmother and all her life and what she's doing and that she's coming over for dinner, and I'm getting ready to go home to have dinner with my wife and my kids, and all happening at once. And my brain is separating it all out, it's all coexisting, and I'm bumping from one to the other.

There's this wonderful person who did a series of interviews on the breakfast, breakfast. They call it the *Breakfast Interviews* [ph], and I was at—I was invited. And this is the nice thing about being me, I was invited, and Robert Wilson, uh, did a—did a workshop on the brain and Marina was involved, Abramović, and I've known Marina since I was working with her with Michael Klein, so I've known Marina. Since the '80s, I've known Marina Abramović. And so here I am—so she invited me out there and I'm—and one of the people on this conference was this guy who did the *Breakfast Interviews*. The *Breakfast Interview* was where he would interview people about their breakfast. And this woman—and at one point in the interview, it becomes really fascinating because the woman was pouring a friend of hers a cup of tea during breakfast, and the phone rang, and as the phone rang, she had a choice. [00:54:07] She could put the teapot down and answer the phone, or she could keep pouring the tea. And in her head because she was concentrating to that level, she realized that she went through every possible person that could be calling her at that time of day on the telephone. And every possible sequence of events that could come out of that—is my—could it be my child, could it be my wife, could it—or my friend, could it be my boss, could it be—? You know all the different possibly, hundreds it seems—and going through them all. And then what the consequence would be if she stopped—so the consequence of getting the phone and the consequence of—the consequence of not getting the phone, that means

these people are going to be held on the line and who could it be. And then the consequence of not getting the phone, and what would this person think if I put the pot down and went to get the phone. My relationship to her would be in jeopardy. This is not cool. I was brought up in a way that if I put this teapot and I go to the phone, it's uncool. And then you start thinking about your parents and what they taught you. And all of this she realized went through her brain, all of it, the whole thing. Everything, every name, every—her parents telling her, it all happened in an instant in her brain. She felt it, and she decided to continue pouring the tea. She did not answer the phone. So this was an interesting thing, but this just illustrates how powerful the brain is—this one and the story that I saw about driving the car. Because I say that we are in trance states most of our lives. [00:56:00] The only way that I could drive that car, listen to my kids in the back seat, be in the supermarket is that I'm in a trance state. I'm in all the places at once, and I'm not.

So, I am talking with—Kasper invites me. He sees a lot of my museum shows that I've had in Europe, and he invites me to do a show at the—at the Ludwig Museum in the DC [ph] space. His old assistant, Ulrich Wilmes who I met in Münster back in '87 is now working with him at the Ludwig Museum. He invites me to do a show, and he says to me, "I don't want you to do a big—another survey show. I want a project. I want it to be a new work" and then he has a suggestion for me. "We have this giant, giant, uh, Penck painting, a big Penck painting, a huge one. We never get to show it, and this wall, this space has a big Penck. Would you like to do an exhibition underneath the Penck painting?" I said, "Absolutely not."

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: He does stick figures, what am I supposed to say, "This is my father?" That's what I'm doing. I said, "No way," and then I had this idea I said to Kasper. I said, "What if the person that you—what if that person was the artist? What if that person made the work?" "What do you—?" He says, "What do you mean that person?" I said, "What if the person that you saw in that performance in Berlin was the person who was the artist and makes—and he'll make the show?" and he said, "The psychotic?" [They laugh.] "The Psychotic?" "Yes, the psychotic, he can make—he can be the artist." "Fantastic, fantastic." And so that's the birth of That Person as an artist.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And That Person's show was at that show or was that someplace else?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: That was the first person, that was that person. [00:58:00]

ANNETTE LEDDY: But there's this—there's a show—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: That's it, yeah—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —with the title—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —that's there. It's there; you have it.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right, that's it.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: That's—that's the show. That's the space. And so what that person came up with—and that person, of course, that's a wonderful notebook in the series because you see the emergence of that person in the notebooks—is that I realized that he is—it's like I give myself permission to become that person in a waking state.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And—in your view, first of all, I'd like to know, do you like That Person?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, he's okay. I mean he's trouble because he's psychotic. [Laughs.] He is psychotic. He—and I was always told that when I become That Person, that it's like plumbing the depths because another hypnotist I went through is, is Jungian scholar. He's the librarian—he was the librarian of the Jung Institute. He's also a doctor, and he was willing to put me into a trance state because I had a bad experience with the guy who I've been doing these performances with, a bad experience. I did a piece with him at Anton Kern's, and I hated him. In the trance state, I hated him. I hated him, and I will never speak to him again as long as I live.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Why?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Because he was abusive and he was a showman and he was

ambitious, and he was using me to get—he was—That Person figured it all out. I had no idea, but that person saw it all and got so pissed off.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So That Person is more perceptive than you are?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: With that he—at that moment, he was. [They laugh.] He was certainly more perceptive. He was willing, he was willing, I mean, and then what—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Is That Person a better artist than you are?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, gosh, he's—he—in some ways, he was a great relief to have that person be the artist because he could work. [01:00:04] I would not judge one against the other, and again, I really wouldn't judge an—any two artists against each other. I wouldn't say that Richard Serra is a better artist than Donald Judd, or Jasper Johns and Rauschenberg. I just wouldn't do that. But he is a different artist from me, I'll give you that.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And what are his—how—what are his attributes as an artist?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, let me get back.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN I'm going to—see, you know, I have to—I have to really—I have a—I talk about this in a particular order, and it just makes it easier for me to touch all the bases. So I have That Person, and he comes up with this idea of bedsheets and putting—and then easel sheets. Like sheets that you would have in an office on an easel board and bedsheets that we'd have, which was the largest material that would be in a house, in a given house and so that would be a thing. That would be a fantastic—that's what he came up with. He came up with this bedsheet idea and the easel sheet, and they come together. And I—so I have nine easel sheets on a bedsheet, a queen-sized flat sheet, and this becomes the exhibition. I would do five—I would do seven rooms of 12 sheets, and the first sheets I did were numbers, just numbers and different ways of going through the numbers, and I think I still own those. There were—there were seven sets. There's one set that's not been sold, and I have that. That's my set. I'm going to keep that set for myself. And the thing about it is that that person is a child and a grown-up. [01:02:03] That person has no life—

[END OF TRACK mullic19_2of3_sd_track07_m.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: That person when he goes to work, he doesn't go to work because he never leaves his home. That person loves coffee, coffee and breakfast, buying food. Everything about him, he loves iconic activity. His favorite night of the year is Christmas Eve, absolutely his favorite. His favorite day is New Year's Day. He loves the Oscars, he loves the Super Bowl, he loves every holiday, Halloween. He loves events. He loves events. He's attracted to events—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So he's kind of—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —anniversaries—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —every man in a way.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, the way he loves it is not quite every—well, he loves it the way a child would love it, you know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Not really knowing the context. And I would—I gave a lecture the opening. Of course, Kasper said, "You're on," and I had to talk about that person in front of an audience. He just sprung it on me and so I talked about it, and I said he's the iconic brain. It's—that person has an iconic brain. Everything is iconic, everything is symbolic, and he's totally—that's how he is.

I remember being at Chelsea Piers. My son was doing ice hockey, and I was in Chelsea Piers in the—and I was working out. That person in my notebook watching my son play hockey and writing, and the script that would come up, the way he writes is totally different from me. He writes in a swoopy way, and it's this—and it's so innate. It's so fucking innate, it's in me. That person is a part of me, it's in me. So his mantra that he repeats is, "I love to work

for truth and beauty." Uh, I've never used the word truth in my work, I've never used the word love in my work ever, I've never used the word beauty in my work ever as me, Matt Mullican, but that person, that's the core of what they do. [00:02:13] So he is on the other side. He is talking about things that I, me don't talk about, and he's also not talking about the, uh—he doesn't talk about signs. It's all feeling. Everything is feeling—his gesture, the way he writes. When he writes, he writes—it's all—it's not so much about the meaning, but it's about the way it's painted because the gesture is in the feeling. So he illustrates the feeling of things. He illustrates—it's all about—what's it called when you write? Penmanship, it's—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Cursive.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Cursive but what is the other, other words?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Calligraphy?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Calligraphy, calligraphic. So it's this calligraphic view of things, which is the way, that we—it's like inflection. It's like a language of inflection. So like when I'm talking to you, how I inflect my words has meaning, how I write my sentences has meaning, and that his territory.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Where yours is the poster or the graphic sign?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So it's the other side—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It's the other side, and it's—but it's the subjective. It's the feeling of things. It's the feeling of, of the sign, not the sign itself necessarily but it's the relationship to the sign. So that's why that person is pushed into the subjective part.

Now, when—what I was saying earlier was that the cosmology is in the subjective part but in—as well is that person because that person represents madness. [00:04:00] That person represents when my feelings get in the way of where I am. In fact, if I can't get past my own neurosis, that's that person. I can't get past it, I'm sorry, I don't see the world at all. I'm stuck in my feelings and they're very tough. It's tough to be this way. So whenever I've talked to my shrink, my shrink—it's not my shrink. It's the doctor, the official doctor in Zurich. He's from Zurich, but he's actually from Brazil. You know Vicente [ph], he's from Brazil, and, uh, and he lives in Switzerland, and he's a Jungian analyst. And he says, "You have the ability because you've been doing it for so long to go so far down, to go so far deep that you can come back unscathed, unscathed. You don't have anything happening, so you are lucky. You can go down to this netherworld of craziness and come back and be okay." So I was happy about this idea that I could do this, but it's not true. That Person comes back with me. That Person is more and more a part of my life. I'm more and more aware of That Person as they exist in parallel with me at all times.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And is that hard?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: That's hard especially for my family. When I was—and they started to see me as this—that they—and they would—like for instance, we were in Vietnam on vacation, and I had—because I—we were living in Berlin with my kids, you know?

ANNETTE LEDDY: So it was like a—like 2010 or [20]'11—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: '12.

ANNETTE LEDDY: 2012? Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I am there with my family and I—we—we're at the coffee shop, and I am pulling my wallet, and we have new money. I have no idea what this money is, and he gave me the bill, so I'm going through my wallet trying to find the money and looking up at the waiter as I'm doing this. [00:06:08] And my daughter is just looking at me across the table, and I'm looking at it, looking, and my face is all contorted as I'm doing this. I look like Scrooge. I look like someone who doesn't want to pay at all and then I'm going through craziness and going, and my hands and everything was going all nutty. And then—and I paid the bill, and we were leaving, and we're taking the bus back to Ho Chi—to—not Ho Chi Minh,

where were we, Hanoi, the bus back to Hanoi. My daughter says to me, "Dad, Dad—" My kids are my shrinks now, my—both my kids are—they know me so well. She says, "Dad, I want to show you something. I was taping you pay that bill on the phone. I want you to see this," and I looked at myself, and I was so outrageous and so weird. It was That Person. It was that person, and she calls me and she says, "You know what we call you? We call you Rat Face." I have this face that goes—I scrounge up my nose, and I have my—and so if I'm walking down the street with Cosmo, Lucy, or my wife, and I'm in a funny mood or I'm That Person, they'll say, "Rat Face." [Laughs.]

ANNETTE LEDDY: And then can you pull back?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh yeah, of course, I could pull back.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But you're just—you're saying that so that you just edge into it without—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I edge in—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —knowing.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —I—but I panic. I have travelitis, I panic when we travel, and I get us in real trouble, and That Person is really related to That Person, they really are similar. And That Person, I've done many, many, many performances with That Person, and he is or she is remarkable. [00:08:07] I do not do a—I don't do more than one performance in a year, generally every two to three years. I did a performance, one of the last ones I've done. I've only done three in the last five years, six years so—seven years maybe because it's too much for me. I can't watch it, and it's tough. I'm getting old, older and so when you see me and I'm in my 30s, young 30s, late 20s, and I'm doing this, it means something. But when I'm in my 60s, it means something else because I've become vulnerable. I have now become vulnerable; I'm an old man. And so when people see me in this state as an old man, it's much harder to deal with than if you're young. If you're young, you're somehow into it, but me, doing this, it's like pathetic. There's just something.

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: And the audience gets very embarrassed, they get embarrassed I did this performance at the Haus der Kunst in Munich, a fabulous show. Ulrich Wilmes did it for me with—Chris Dercon was the director and Ulrich Wilmes did this show for me, so this shows you that once you hook into certain curators, you work with them for your life. He just retired. I did so much with him over the years, you know? I worked with him in Lenbachhaus, I worked with him—every, every institution, I did a show with him, fantastic because we had a relationship, and I don't feel that—quite that way about curators now, but I don't know. It's probably still going on. That's the way things are.

So I did this performance at the Haus der Kunst, and I wanted to be surrounded by people, and I wanted to be doing something when they came in, so I was laying tape down as they came in. [00:10:01] And this performance is tough. I weighed about, God, 30 pounds more than I do now, 30, 40 maybe. I was on—I was on blood pressure medicine, which means I was on beta-blockers, and beta-blockers lower your metabolism and so you get fat, stupidly. And when I got off—like I'm now on other meds, and now, I've decided to lose the weight once and for all. I am losing it. I was weighing 150—I mean 250. Now, I'm at—maybe it's like 45 pounds I've lost since then. So you see me on—you see me in the video, and I'm big, and my pants are falling off, and I'm acting like a crazy person. At one point, there's a bed, and I'm fucking the bed. I thought—I thought that I was doing exercises, but Val said embarrassingly, "You were fucking the bed." [They laugh.] what are you doing?" But it was a powerful piece. People came up to me afterwards. Chris Williams was in the audience. He wouldn't talk to me after this performance. This happened to me at the Tate Modern as well; people wouldn't talk me after that one.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I've seen the Tate one—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, well, that's just a little—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —online.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —because most of it is lost because they fucked up so badly. They had all this equipment, and they fucked up. They—the—only the beginning is there. You

don't have the end. It's really too bad, but it's a good—good excerpts, good excerpts. But the thing is that people wouldn't talk to me after the performance. They literally wouldn't. I sat down, and there was no one saying a word to me. I thought I was like—and slowly, they came up to me, and slowly, it comes up, and at the Haus der Kunst, it was the same. It was later and then Victor comes up to me because he was there. He puts his hand on my shoulder, and he says, "Maybe you shouldn't be doing these anymore. [00:12:02] Maybe this is a good idea—maybe this is not a good idea, uh, to do them." Chris wouldn't look me in the face. Eventually, he warmed up, and we were fine, but the audience was freaked out.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So when you say—when they say you should do it anymore, are you following that advice?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no, no. I'm—I did the—I did a performance at the HangarBicocca in Milan, and you should see this one. This is a good one.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Is it online?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It's online. Yeah, it's online. The HangarBicocca performance, I introduced myself as Matt Mulllican, and I tell you, I cried when I did it. I—first time I've ever introduced myself as Matt Mullican, and I—and when I said it, it was powerful. It was powerful. I was crying and screaming the whole time. It was a bizarre piece.

So that person has a life. He's done many more pieces since then. He did this book. He did the book that person's workbook, which excerpts from the notebook are there that you have actually in the collection plus others. And the thing about that person is that he takes the pressure off the rest of my work. He—you know, the rest of my work has an entire universe attached to it. I have a cosmology, as you say, in many different ways. I have before birth, after death, I have the elements, the world unframed, the world framed, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Now, at the same time, now I am fine. Now, be it that when I do this, I—at the end of my lectures, after showing them—and I should talk about my lectures too.

ANNETTE LEDDY: You should but, you know what, we're at three and a half hours now.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh boy, okay.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Let's just see what we—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: We're going to start with—[00:14:00]

ANNETTE LEDDY: —here.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, yeah, we're starting with my lectures then.

ANNETTE LEDDY: One for—so should we start?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, we'll start. Because I have—

[END OF TRACK mullic19_2of3_sd_track08_m.]

ANNETTE LEDDY: I'm going to start, and I'm going to begin as I have to begin. This is Annette Leddy interviewing Matt Mullican for the Archives of American Art [AAA] in the New York office on July—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —ninth.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —ninth, 2019. Okay. Now, where we left off, we said there were three more things we wanted to cover, but you may have other ideas. Just to remind you, there were books, there were lectures, there was teaching, and there was parenting.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Right. Where did we end the last time? Do we have any ideas the last little conversation, last—?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Yes. You talked about the—about Rat Face, you talked about—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, That Person.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —no more than one performance a year. You talked about the HangarBicocca performance, and you said that what we hadn't covered—well, just tell me today, what do you feel like you—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I don't remember anything—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —we haven't covered?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —about anything. So I think in the list, I said teaching—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Let's talk about teaching. I think that's good. Yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Okay. Well, I've been—my father was a teacher, so I had that model, my favorite. John was obviously a teacher, Baldessari. He was my teacher, and I never tried—I never got an MFA. I graduated from CalArts, and I moved to New York, and I became a working artist immediately. Even before I graduated, I did that. I never went to graduate school, so I could never teach. At one point, my fellow students, David Salle, Jack Goldstein, who—Jim Welling maybe, all got—they all had their MFAs so—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did they get them from CalArts?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Some. David got his from CalArts. Jack I think got his from Chouinard or from CalArts. I don't know because—[00:02:01]

ANNETTE LEDDY: But Jim Welling, was he—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: He was there, and he got his MFA as well. So they all got MFAs—I did not, and I left, I left. I was in school for three years, that's all I was in school for, and I—because I pushed myself ahead, and I didn't want to go back. I wasn't ready to spend another two years there waiting to get my MFA, so I couldn't teach. They all were in Hartford at one point in the '70s, late '70s. I think even Sherrie Levine taught at Hartford. I don't quite remember. I could be wrong. But we—that was how—I mean, that's how they made some money, David for sure. But I never could do that.

So I didn't really start teaching, and it was really—probably, the first place I taught was at—well, day trips like at NSCAD, Nova Scotia School of Art and Design. I gave a lecture there, so I met with students when I did that. So when I visited schools, I would give a lecture and then I would visit students' studios and have a one-on-one with each one, so this was leading into teaching. And then when I was—the first—and then I think I was teaching at Columbia University as a—seeing students here and there in their studios. So I didn't have a class, a formal class, but I was meeting with students and seeing their work, and so forth. Then, I had a thing called the—well, and then I moved to Berlin and I—Hdk and I was a teacher, a professor. I was—I mentioned this last time in the last tape where I was a teacher at the Hdk. It's the university—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Can you spell that?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Hd—it's just H-D-K. It's the Hochschule der Künste and maybe—well, I don't know what. [00:04:01] But that is—and then now it's called UdK. They've changed their name. That's where Ai Weiwei is teaching now. A lot of fancies were teaching there, and I was invited by the students on the art school and from the architectural school. They could choose one professor, and they chose me. And so I was very—when I arrived for the first session, they had put all the chairs in the classroom in my sign, my basic sign, so they were playing with me a little bit. They were—they knew my stuff, and I met with them for a semester, and I got to know them, and they were really wonderful. Then, I got a job at the Braunschweig University—

ANNETTE LEDDY: How do you spell that?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Braunschweig, B-R-A-U-N-C-H—Schweig—C-H—

ANNETTE LEDDY: W-E-I-G?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: W—yeah, something like this. It's in—Braunschweig is on—go online, and you'll see it in a second. I was a professor, a visiting professor there for a semester. I took over the Thomas Uber [ph] class, and I still meet students from that class. I mean they—because I had—my kids were like three months old, five months old, a year old,

a year and a half old. And then while I was doing this, I also taught at—in—at the Rijksakademie. I was invited to be a visitor at the Rijksakademi, and I was doing that, oh, like maybe five days, five, 10 days a year. I would arrive in Amsterdam from New York, and I would see students in their studios. This is postgraduate, they were wonderful, I mean a lot of fancy people that have since become quite famous. I can't—Morales, the Carlos Morales, he's a—I think he's a Mexican artist, he was a student there. Rosa Barba was a student there. [00:06:01] Even—I mean, just a lot of people that I've met over the years were students at the Rijks. It's a very good program.

I would arrive in Amsterdam, stay at the hotel, and teach for four days, and then leave. The other professors that were there were Joan Jonas and Dan Graham for instance, and Jean-Marc Bustamante, and a bunch, a bunch, a bunch. So this was an interesting time. I loved it. I loved it. And then they paid me when I left. As I left, they paid me. And then I would travel in Europe and then I would go home and then the next time I came to Europe, I'd land in Amsterdam, I'd do the same thing all over again. Or by this time, I was back and forth between Berlin and Amsterdam because I was already teaching in Braunschweig, so I was doing the two.

And I loved teaching. I do it freehand. I don't prepare for my classes. Most of it is going into a studio and having to read the work and read the intentions of the artist and ask the artist, the young artist, the student, what they're—what are they trying to do, what are they trying to get to, how does it—you know? And then if I'm interested, I'm interested in—I really gave it 100 percent when I do it, and it's exhausting. It really is exhausting. Then, when I moved to Berlin, the last trip—and then I was a mentor in Columbia University, and a mentor is where I have the students for one week in the spring and one week in the fall, and I could do whatever I want with them. They would sign up for me, there'd be between 10 and 15 kids, and we went everywhere. I would go to their studio. I would have one day of going to their studios, but the rest of the time was just visiting artists' studios. [00:08:00] We went to court, went to the city—city hall court. We went—I did one that was apparently quite exhausting for everybody, which is to go through all of the public art that I knew of downtown. It was a walking tour, and it was an intense walk because I knew a lot and bizarre. You couldn't do it now because a lot of that work has been—is gone, and you would never see it. You wouldn't even recognize it. But I went to, say, the Freemasons Lodge on 23rd Street. If you've ever been there, it's insane. It's an amazing place. Mark Dion was very similar to me in where he took the kids, where he took the students. We went to Jeff Koons' studio, we went to various fancy studios that I would—that I know, but I really had to fill up every day of every—of that week, and it was from 10 to 6 that I had them. That was pretty crazy. And I did that for like some years, three or four years, five years, six years maybe and then I moved to Berlin with Val. I followed her.

ANNETTE LEDDY: What year was that?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: 2008, I moved to Berlin. She got a job at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, and our kids were 12 years old, and we left town. We packed up our stuff—

ANNETTE LEDDY: I remember that. I remember we were—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —moved, yeah.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —visiting right before you—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh. my God, what a deal.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —moved.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: What bad timing for our kids, bad timing. They had just put—Cosmo and Lucy both became very close friends with the Schnabel twins Cy and Olmo and were hanging out and other friends and lots of the art world friend and really had put down roots into their life in New York, and then we tore them away because they—this was not a good idea, not a good thing. We should have just kept them there. But I wanted our kids to be Continentals. [00:10:02] I wanted them to have a relationship to Europe, and they do, they have that. So our daughter is literally just moving back. Like last week, she moved back to New York for the first time. She left in 2012—2008 and now has just moved back. So she's been in Europe since then—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Will she—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: She went to—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —stay here?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —school. No, she—yeah, she's going to stay here and see how she likes it. And I—and I—I was in Berlin for less than a month, and I get a phone call from somebody who would like me to—asked if I would be interested in teaching a class at HFBK in Hamburg as a professorship, and this was a real professorship. This was not like me coming once a month or once a week or whatever. This was a professorship professorship. It was—but it was a—it was a temporary job. It was for two years. That was fine with me. I didn't want to do it for longer than that. I've never depended on the money for teaching. It's never really been something I counted on. I always had been fortunate enough to make enough money to support the life I had. The teaching at Columbia that's—two courses a year is not going to pay you a ton of money and so I wasn't really counting on that income.

But I could not move to Germany without health insurance, and I was having trouble because I had a false positive on one of my tests with my doctor and so he had to put it into the record, and that made it almost impossible for me to get any health insurance in Germany. But—and it was a false positive. It was not even a real one. So what happens is that the only way I could get insurance was to become a full professor. [00:12:01] They wanted me to be a full professor, which meant I would be there for years and years and years and years, and I said, "No, I wasn't interested," but then I asked them if I could do it, and I got in. They said, "Great, we want you." They really enjoyed having me there. I was a very different voice from everybody else, and I had my class, the Mullican class and that was from—

ANNETTE LEDDY: What did you teach in the Mullican class?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, the Mullican Class, as it evolved, it was just my first—the first, it was New Media so that means alternative media. That's what it was called. I was doing that for three years and then I became part of the sculpture department, so I was teaching sculpture. And then at the very end, it was called—it was called Time-Based Media. And so all, two, three different departments. Time-Based Media was—I think kind of replaced New Media, Time-Based Media. And so I still taught the same thing. I taught basically what is it to be an artist, pretty much what John taught me, which is, Okay, so what are we doing here, what are we trying to do here, what does it mean to be here, what's a success, what's a failure, and all these other things.

Now, this is very different from the other professors who have a definite yes and a definite no, that's good, this is bad. I never said that's good, this is bad, uh, because I find especially with the older students because half—some of my students were almost in their 40s and then others were just barely into their 20s, so I had quite the range. You might even say that the older ones have come back to being artists after being philosophers or economists or doctors or whatever and then the others are much younger. [00:14:00] So the range was that the older students really helped teach the younger, and my class was open. This was my point of reference—I did not want to exclude anybody in my class. The system in Germany is that kids apply to the school and to the professor, and the professor has to accept you. If the professor accepts you, then you're in and you're okay, but then you're in that class. So someone would join my class and be in my class for the entire six years of their education. And like any artist that—because they're like—it's like an apprenticeship kind of thing.

And so my class—but my class was totally open. That means anyone can join my class. I never really paid attention, and I didn't want to say no to anybody, so I got a lot of the dregs. I got people that were kicked out of other classes, that had bad reputations in the school, which I didn't know because I did not speak German. My class was entirely taught in English as it was at the Udk and also at the in Braunschweig. I taught my class in English so that was the prerequisite. In this class, since my class was open, the great editor—because I would have 50, 60 people applying because a lot of them can't get into another class. No professor would accept them, but I would accept everybody so then they come to me. So I had kids who could not really speak English that well and that would drop out after a while.

And then—because I'm [inaudible]. As I am now talking to you, it's really conceptual, how to approach things. I have a certain distance on the kind of, okay, so what does it mean to be a painter, how do we do this, and so forth, and so on. People would come to my class from other schools and present their work to my class because it was open. [00:16:02] Once Pia

Stadtbäumer who was the director of the sculpture department—she was an artist who ran the sculpture. She's a wonderful woman, wonderful artist, and very supportive of me. The whole school was very supportive of me, wonderful, everybody. She came to me because we had submitted everyone's signature in the list, and it was a sheet of paper, and she says, "Look, I just want to let you know there's no—no problem with us. It's just maybe with you, but you should know this." And there was a sheet of paper with my class, all the signatures of all the students and then there were about eight or nine yellow stripes through different names in there. She said, "You see the yellow stripes? They're not registered at this school. They're not students in this school." [Laughs.] So my open class had people from Hamburg coming in to be part of my class. They didn't—they weren't even in the school, and she said—she was not saying I couldn't teach them. I could teach them fine. If I was teaching my class, this works, and it was an interesting thing.

Now, I myself would get into arguments with my fellow professors when we were grading papers. My class was the only open class, and so, and I really wasn't saying you do it my way or you leave, and I wasn't saying, you must be here every, every working day. And I would be—I would always teach on Wednesdays between 10 and 5. That was my time. I would take the train up from Berlin and back at the beginning of the day and back in the evening. I never spent the night in Hamburg unless I had to do tests. We were grading, and that meant that I had to be at the school for four days in a row. [00:18:05]

ANNETTE LEDDY: Tests in an art school?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, yeah—

ANNETTE LEDDY: What—like what kind of tests?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, basically, just look at their work, going from studio to studio. Test, I mean it's like—so I would—they would put up an exhibition in their studio, and we would grade them with their—with their—with our numbers one to five. No one could pass at two but generally—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And you would—so you had disagreements with the other faculty about—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —grading criteria?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —I mean Werner Büttner was the painter, a cohort of Kippenberger and a bunch of others. He was—and he was a studying to be a lawyer and became an artist. If he liked something, I generally didn't like it and if I liked something, he generally didn't like it—we were very opposite ends. This is why I disagree with the grading system because, uh, I mean, you're grading someone who's almost 40 years old, and who am I to say what's good, if it's good or bad. I can say I disagree or agree with it, but that doesn't mean it is what I say it is. And so I was saying that this is crazy. At CalArts, there was pass, fail, there were no grades, and this, is in a way, what I was hoping to try and help influence at the school, and I never did. They have to have grades. While I was there, and I was there between 2008 and 2018. I was there for 10 years, and my position became clearer and clearer in the school what I represented. I was very open and I accepted everybody, and I was the only one, the only one who accepted everybody.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did you feel that the students there were more receptive to your ideas than, say, the American students at Columbia? [00:20:00]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Less commercial. They would have things like—for instance, there was a student, and I can't remember his name but he—I came to—he was going to—he was graduating and so there was a big box in the corner of his room. He had an old couch with three TV sets facing it, so we can look at videos. He had all these paintings, and they were all on legs, stilts, up high, and they were beautiful little paintings, but they were all on legs on the one end. And then there was a box, a big box, maybe two meters by two meters, which is roughly six feet, about six feet high with a little ladder to get up there, and the ceiling was 12 feet, so there's plenty of room for whatever. And so I said, "So what's the box for?" and he said, "It's for my mother." What his—what he wanted was that he wanted to put his mother in a chair on the box in the room with his work because she knows all. She's the most important person, and she gets to be on the box. And I thought, Wow, what a great idea. This was really terrific. That was one. And then the mother could be there at the

beginning but not during the grading, not during the—so she had to leave the room. They would accept her as an object only up to a point and then she had to become a human being and then she had to go out.

Another one was that we would get into cars and go to different parts of the city. Once we got into a car—several buses, and we're traveling. This is someone's work, and we go, and it's in the snow. It must have been—it was must have been January or something, and there was snow everywhere. I—we passed a fire truck. I said, "Oh, my God, there's a fire truck, what's going on here?" We get out of the—and you hear a, *pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop, pop*. And we get out of the car, and there's a helicopter, and it's above, and it's just hovering over a field like maybe 100 feet over a field, barely, maybe even less. [00:22:11] And that's the sculpture, this helicopter, and it's blowing all the snow, and it just stays there. and it's wobbling the way a helicopter wobbles. It doesn't just stay perfectly still. I walked around the entire field—walking around this helicopter. What a fantastic—very memorable this object. I gave a very high mark for this. Then, we went back to their studio and saw other things that were not nearly as fantastic as this helicopter.

But how do you—? You don't sell any—what I'm saying is that the—it's not about selling, whereas at Columbia, they were much more into the commercial system. They wanted to get into galleries, they were making work that could be sold a lot of them, a lot of them did not, Sibony—what's his—Sibony, he's *Gedi Sibony,* he was a—he was a student of mine at Columbia, and he did things like this, so he was not necessarily just going into the commercial art world. He was doing things that were a bit invisible—he still is. He shows with—a fancy, fancy guy still. He has a good career, and there were a lot of people like that at Columbia. But the general view was more commercial and more kind of academic than it was, say, in Hamburg, they were—what they were doing, so. But you had—the consequences of being a success were much greater in New York than they were in Hamburg. You could be—because there were galleries, and they all had gallery shows, but the galleries were not going to make you famous like they would here, so the pressure was not as great in that direction. So that would be the difference a little bit. [00:24:03]

And then also, the major difference is that I got to meet with a student for six years, you know over a period of six years. So I got to see them progress and grow and be a part of that, whereas at Columbia, I never did it—I never did that. I never, I never did that. I was in, and I was out. The fellows—the fellow teachers at—in Hamburg were Thomas Demand, *Andreas* Slominski, as I said Werner Büttner, Jutta Köther, uh, just many—what's her face? I just mentioned her. It was a good group. It was a good group of professors, but I again was the outsider because I spoke—I didn't speak German, and I have an issue. As you know from my earlier tape, I really had a hard time in school, and I don't love school. I don't love the idea of school. So the fact that I could not speak German was just like fitting into that—like being an outsider and being at the bottom of the class and going downstairs. I couldn't speak German, so I had to have a translator. They got me a translator.

ANNETTE LEDDY: But did you feel that kind of trauma that you had endured as a child, with these teachers who were kind of abusive or dismissive?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Could be, could be.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did you feel that you could—in some way, that you had learned from that, that that affected the way that you taught?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: A little, yes, yes. I was on the side of the students for sure. I think it must have—I must have done that, but then again, CalArts was also very important in influencing me as a teacher. [00:26:01] John Baldessari was very important. He never—he never gave us assignments, and I never gave an assignment—I did once. I said, "Let's do a group show, and we all used the object of a chair. You have to use a chair in some capacity in the show," and it was the worse show that we ever did. So the more that I got kept out of the system, the better. I'm talking more about certain secret insecurities that I might have coming from that childhood of mine that would have perhaps entered who I am in relationship to my fellow professors because they are—they're into being professors.

In Germany, when you're a professor, it's important, and everyone puts them on—puts that term on to their calling card. When you go to the bank, you say, "I'm a professor," you say your Professor Matt Mullican. That is different from simply saying you're Matt Mullican. They treat you differently. You have a position, and you're in a good position. You're an—you're

considered a learned intellectual, so forth, and so on, which I denied. I never used it. I didn't want to use it, I still wouldn't want to use it. I'm not into that. I don't want—accept me for who I am right now in front of you. Let's not worry about any of this hoopla surrounding it.

My class over a period of 10 years distilled into a very particular routine. The last five years, four or five years, what it was I would meet every Wednesday with the students, and two or three students would put up an exhibition in my office, which is where we met. And my office, I never used my office as an office. [00:28:01] I never put my desk there. I never—it was our meeting space because then they could have—I was given three rooms, three or four rooms, two studio spaces for the kids and then I would have my office where they can meet with me individually normally speaking. So Büttner would have a huge table just for him as a meeting, and it's looking like you might as well be in—you might as well be Joseph Beuys or Gerhard Richter or whatever, but it was very authoritarian, very big, and strong, whereas I—mine was empty. I had no furniture in my room, and the kids would just put up an exhibition. We would talk about the show because, see, instead of meeting with them in their studio spaces, I had them put up with the work in an empty room with each other. So they were learning about how you play off of each other with what you have to say.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, that's good.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: So they did that every week. We had an exhibition every week, and we all talked about it for the day. Now, this would last—starting at 10, it maybe goes as far as—sometimes, it would go for the whole day that with like three hours a student—that's quite something—or two hours of student. And then sometimes, it would only go as far as, say, two o'clock, three o'clock and then I have the last two hours to give a talk, to just talk about issues that came up with the work. While I do this, I always mention people's names, "Oh, this—do you know the work of Joan Jonas? Do you know the work of Simone Forti? Do you know the work of Jack Goldstein? Do you know the work of whoever?" and bringing up to a student's work so they may or may not know of that artist, but then again, that's for the whole class because I—because we're all discussing it. I said, "This looks like—" and then I would get my iPhone, and I would show everybody images of what I'm referring to. [00:30:04]

And then once every two months, every month or two at the end, we would have—I would go through all the names that we would have mentioned and then we would have a formal kind of slide presentation of their work, so you get background on those people. So they learned about the context of where they're working, and I get to learn about how much they know, which I knew already. I know exactly how far along they are in terms of what they know of contemporary art, what they can talk about contemporary art. But they learned how to talk in such a brilliant way. I mean, they could argue. We would go to visit exhibitions in town, and they were sharp as nails. I mean talk—breaking down the work about what's going on, they learned.

They didn't have to write papers in my class. Someone like Jutta Köther was much more academically driven, and she would have them write papers and do—have reading lists and the whole thing. I stayed out of that. As far as I was concerned, these were all postgraduates. They were already doing their art, and this is the way I was taught at CalArts, and this is what I brought on. And so—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So that was very unusual for Germany your approach?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no, actually not. No—

ANNETTE LEDDY: No?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —no, I think a lot of the professors did it this way. There's the artists are considered artists or students and then you work with another artist so forever. As long as these young kids are artists, they on their resumes will say Mullican class.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, that's so nice, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Because it's part of their education.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Is there a connection between parenting and teaching?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Yeah, good question. Yeah, I mean they're like—I call them my

kids. I do this all the time, the kids, I do this with the kids, I do that with the kids. [00:32:02] Nothing is the same as being a parent. There's no equivalent. I think, no, that's a different world. But—

ANNETTE LEDDY: So—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —there is a relationship because I call them my kids.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Do you, um—so talk about being a parent. How have you been changed by being a parent?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, as I said, I would read my life in relationship to my work and my exhibitions. And when I became a parent, I read my life through my children's life. So I can tell you what happened in—I can tell you the first days my kids learned to talk, the first days my kids learned to walk, the first days of nursery school, the first case of first grade, blah, blah. All of their—all their milestones replaced mine in a way. I mean I—I'm much less—I can't and I—that doesn't mean I didn't work. There are artists that literally, truly stopped working while they have kids. I remember Katharina Sieverding telling me once that she stopped. She literally stopped working when she had her kids and then she started up when they became in their 20s, and she has a fine career. She managed to do this, and she's brilliant. I really like her.

But I never stopped, I kept on working, but I didn't read my life through the work anymore. I read it through my kids' life and then, of course, Valerie's, our family life. And then having children isn't—you don't need to be an artist to know this, so it's for everybody. It is a huge—it changes everything because it's scary. [00:34:02] It is scary when my kids are traveling. My daughter travels the world now. She just came back from—she was—her boyfriend lives in Budapest, and she was traveling through the coast there near—it was the—gosh, what was it? I don't know. But they're—they rented a car, they're on trains. She lived in—she lived in Australia, she lived in New Zealand, she's traveled, and I was worried about her the entire time, and I get a phone call, is that a hospital or a cop? Those are my two great fears. I've had phone calls from both, and it's terrifying. Our son almost died more than once through accidents and so forth, and it's a scary, scary thing. You never out—it doesn't get better. I wish it did.

I was with Petzel; we were talking. It was an opening because I worked with him in Berlin, and he was there at the opening. And there I am, we're sitting together, and I get a trauma call from my daughter about—because she lost a lot of her artwork and she was panicking about it, and she wanted to talk to me. So I had to leave the restaurant and talk to her about it and then I sat back down. I was talking to him some more and then I got a trauma call from my son—

ANNETTE LEDDY: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —about something. He's in New York, she's in Glasgow, and then—and I had to talk to him for a few minutes and then I sat down, and he says, "I thought it ended. I thought this thing with the kids stops when you're—when they—when they enter college." I said, "Oh no, the rest of your life, this is—it is the way it is." As you being a mother, you know.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, God, right.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: You know how much it is, so it changes things and then they both end up being artists, both my kids, both my kids. [00:36:02] And they are both—and they were both diagnosed with learning disabilities, my daughter with dyscalculia even, which is like dyslexia with numbers, but now, she can read out loud with—it's hard for her, but she can do it. It's slow, slow going, but she reads. Our son has ADD and processing—auditory processing issues and dyslexia as well. So we have these cocktail kids, and then through them, I learned about my own disabilities, and that actually, I have that in myself. Whenever I give a lecture, I give my lecture with my eyes closed, mostly closed, and I think it's because I cannot concentrate in a group of people. I am too distracted and so I need to concentrate, so I close my eyes. Uh, and I think it's a form of ADD. I think this is what I've got. My mind is too fast, and I get bored within three sentences of what I read, and I'm already thinking about other things. So I think this is something of what I've got. But having kids, it just changes your whole life, it really does.

ANNETTE LEDDY: How did being a parent affect your view of your parents' parenting?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: This isn't a curious thing. I mean they were so—it was so free and easy when I was younger, but everybody was. I mean, Valerie's growing up, she toured the United States with her boyfriend. She wasn't even 20 years old. She was 18 or even younger. And I remember hitchhiking around and hanging out and riding my bike to Hollywood and back from Santa Monica. I was a collector of comic books. That should be something else to talk about, which is my collection. I collect art, but that was really—that was something. [00:38:01] I mean, I would never let Lucy at the age of 11 years old ride a bike to Hollywood and come back.

My parents didn't think—it was a fine thing. I had much more freedom than—the helicopter parents—that's the general mode—are a little bit stifling. My kids grew up in Berlin, and we gave them rein, we gave them. they could—we—it was hard to get them home at night. They were not even 15, they were 14 and 15, and they would stay out until midnight with their pack of friends. And then when they were 16 or 15, 16, they would stay out until 8 in the morning going to bars, clubs, raves, every kind of drug you can imagine. They were out there, they were participating in the social life of Berlin. And I think Cosmo smoked way too much pot as a kid. He can't smoke pot—he doesn't smoke pot now, he can't, he won't.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Did they learn German?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: They did a little, better than me. I never learned German. In fact, I have a—I don't want to learn German. I would like to know another language. When I was a kid, I only knew Spanish, and it's been a very difficult thing for me to learn any language. I tried to learn French when I was younger when I first met Val because her—all her family is French, so I thought, Well, I have to talk with them, so I learn French, but that didn't work out. I never learned French. [Laughs.] And it's been—it's been a trip for that but they—I've let them be, and my parents were more open, very—not open but more lenient when it comes to this, but I've ended up being lenient. I'm from the West Coast, Valerie is from the East Coast, she's much more strict than I am, she really is.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I was so wondering about that, the Los Angeles question, you really don't identify with LA as your—as your—[00:40:05]

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I—you know—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —the way—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —it is who I am—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —any California artist does—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I am not a—I am a California artist. I'm an LA artist.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Oh, you do?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I am an LA artist—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Because I never heard you—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —and you can—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —say that.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —no, but I cannot—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —you always say—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, I'm a California artist. It's in my blood, I grew up with it, I am that. If people don't know what I am, I said, "Look at LA, and you'll see a lot more like me there." These people like Chris Burden or whoever where you have your own universe that you create, and I am like that. I grew up there, I just happen to leave before I settled, so I had never settled in LA. I lived in New York. But I think that's a very good way of reading what I do and how—reading my relationship to what I do I think because I'm an LA artist. I've never been—I've been in—I guess I was in a couple of shows, LA art shows at MOCA, but that was about it, not very many. Since I left for New York—

I went to a psychic once—well my mom. Through my mom, I met lots of psychics, but as a teenager, when I was in high school, we would go to psychics. We would even go to séances, my friends and I, and see ghosts and the whole thing. It was—oh boy, it was something. My mom is a medium, she is totally a witch, a medium, so I kind of grew up with that. So I went to a psychic, and she proceeded to tell me. She said—and I was living in New York, and I said, "You know, I have a very hard time in LA." She says, "Look, the further away you are from Los Angeles, the more successful you're going to be." [Laughs.] And when I moved to Berlin, it really jumped my success. It really helped. So if I was to move to Japan, maybe that would even be better. [00:42:01] I would go to Australia, boy, I'd become super famous but—and I moved to New York, and I really have a love-hate relationship to LA. I really don't like LA, although I am of Los Angeles.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, what do you not like about it?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It's the belly of the beast.

ANNETTE LEDDY: The media.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It's this media-centric, PR world that is really—was a celebrity-branding culture, which was born in LA through Hollywood. And it's really—I mean reading the book by its cover, that is LA, and I am the opposite. I do—I try not to read a book by its cover, I try not to, and whenever I'm in LA, I get frustrated. People don't—and this car culture drives me nuts. Now, in today's world, you are alone. You're in your own community, your own world, say West LA or in Santa Monica, you stay there. You rarely go to East LA because of the traffic. You're kind of in your own city—

ANNETTE LEDDY: You're trapped.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —your own town, you're trapped. But to get around, you have to get into your car, and you're insulated, insulated, isolated. And then you go—when you're going to the restaurant, you go to valet parking, and you get out of the restaurant, and while you're on the sidewalk going from the car into your table, you're on the phone, so you're not ever on the street with other people. You are alone and then with your group. Everybody else around you has been dropped down to another level, whereas in New York, I take the train here, and I'm looking at—I can tell you all the people that I was looking at. I'm looking at them in the face, and they're looking at me in the face, all cultures, all ages, all genders, everything altogether, and you confront them. [00:44:08] You're not one after the other. I'm not looking at the back of anyone's head; I'm looking at their faces. So this is a completely different world, and when I go on to the street, how many faces? And I was talking about this earlier that we cannot help but empathize with every face we look at. We cannot help it. LA, it's like you become crippled or something. You don't have that input that you have here, which I really—when I'm in LA for too long, I start getting nervous. And I—and I—and it drives me crazy.

Another thing is that in LA, I've never done any kind of—very, very few exhibitions in Los Angeles in my life. I've never had—I still don't have representation. I am now going to be doing a show with Marc Selwyn because he works with my father. I didn't want to do it, but he's been pushing and so I'll be shown and—but I know a lot of those artists that Bill and Al and so many people work with him who I've known Marc. Since the early '90s, I've known Marc and so it's a nice thing to have. But I was flirting with galleries for a long time here and there, different people but no one was never—none of the power pack were ever interested in me and what I was doing and also, that goes for curators. You meet a curator, and they go on and on about how great you are, but they'll never offer me a show anywhere. So I feel kind of like an outsider as I did earlier. I talked about this earlier. But this is just a grin-and-bear-it situation. I live with it and so that's why it's a bit of a complicated thing with LA.

Now, it's my mother. My mother is in LA and I got to LA to visit with her because she's almost 100 years old, and I just want to have that time with her before she dies because the writing is on the wall. [00:46:09] I mean, come on, she's almost 100 years old. She's got to—

ANNETTE LEDDY: She's 98?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: She's 98, she'll be 99 this year. In November, she's 99. Next year, she's 100. And then you see the hoopla about her is just the opposite of me. People hear about her and then they're offering her every possible honor that you can offer anybody.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So how do you understand that?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Well, it's about time. She was a wonderful, wonderful artist, and she's been a great influence on me, I think, both, she and my father both, but not through their art so much as through who they are and about the context of who they are and their art. And so I'm all for this, for her getting this, but you see what happens when Hauser & Wirth represents you. They have it—it's the Hauser effect. They call it this, and it changes everything. So she has artists that have ignored her for her entire being in LA that are now if they run into her in a party, "Oh, aren't you wonderful? Aren't you great? Oh boy, we're so happy. When can we have lunch?" This crap that they wouldn't give her the time of day, and LA seems to represent this more than anywhere else. This fakeness is just Los Angeles. It drives me nuts.

And I get it the other way, "Who are you? What did you—? You did something, I know you did something, but I'm not interested." And I've had that when people will tell me to my face, "I don't support what you do." I was sitting next to a collector and they said—and they—at the beginning of the dinner they say, "I don't support," and she left, they left. They left, they left the—they left the seat next to me because they don't—they didn't get my work or they didn't support what I did. [00:48:03] And without knowing what I do because no—very few people know exactly what I do. I have a place through my work, but it's abstract. People don't really know. I'm the guy that does blank, or I'm the guy that does blank. So this is something that I've had to deal with.

With my mom, she's the opposite. People are—literally, movie stars are on—I was at the opening of the Serpentine. There's a movie start that is really interested in my mom's life because she knew Frida Kahlo, she knew—name the artist, Georgia O'Keeffe. She's friends with—you know, name the artist, she knew them all—and knew them all well. Marcel Duchamp massaged her feet; and de Kooning hung out, as I said; and Pollock was a nasty man, and you didn't want to be with him at a bar; and Rothko was a beautiful, elegant and very overly sensitive person who had a hard time. So she has all these great stories and so this is compelling. This is like, wow, you lived this life, you are still alive because all her friends are dead. She's the last one. She's the last one and—and so that says something else. Now, being that she was friends with Frida Kahlo, you've got these young film actresses wanting to play her maybe or get a screenplay together or whatever. And I saw there were so many movie stars at her opening at the Serpentine, it was crazy. I mean to be in the *TIME* Magazine's 100 most influential people of this year, this is crazy, crazy. So it's just—this Hauser effect is just having—and then also the effect of, Obrist, Hans-Ulrich Obrist who was—he circles the world looking for older women. [00:50:01] Rosemarie Trockel talked to him at one point and said—he told me that she said to him, "Whenever you enter a town, I want to get"—and he had just started being a curator, and she says, "When you enter, ask just as a matter of course whenever you go to a town like wherever who was the Louise Bourgeois of this city," and he can—and he finds all of these people. That's how he found my mom, and he fell in love with her work and with her.

So it's interesting for me. I mean, this is my past. Being a father—and then I learned about my parents just being a father. I see how—what they had to struggle with. But I was a perfect kid. I never yelled, I never—I did everything my parents asked. I—in class, in school, I did everything they asked me. I had—I would get a U in work habits and an E in cooperation, E for excellent, unsatisfactory for work habits because I never did my homework. I was all facile. I was just—the presentation, perfect but nothing. It was very difficult, so I was—because I—and still to this day, I follow signs. If it says Don't Enter, I don't enter. I'm very good that way. Valerie is much more of a—you know, she goes out.

ANNETTE LEDDY: So, I don't know. I mean, it feels like we've kind of come to a—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, there's—no, there's more. There's more.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —end? Oh, there is? Okay.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, certainly, there's more, there's more. Both my parents collected art. When I was—the first thing I collected, I was, um—because there are now some exhibitions that are going to be coming up in books, coming up in my collection, so it's like Al. He—it's a big—it's kind of a part of what I do. I show my collection in my work as my work. I have a Piranesi book, antique Rome, which is fabulous this document. I mean it's 1751 when this was published this piece, fantastic object, and I own it and so I have to take

care of it. [00:52:06] It's a bit scary, but when I was, um—and I bought it in France. Twenty-five, 20 years ago, I bought it, but—and if ever I had money, I would buy, and I would buy.

When I was 11 years old, I was collecting comic books, and 11, 12, 13. I would ride my bike to Hollywood, as I told you, and there was a comic bookshop on Hollywood Boulevard, and you'd go up this little staircase, and there were only piles of comics all around you. I'm sure Al went there. I would go up to the top, and you go down this narrow corridor, all comics and all the things, and I would buy only the first editions. So I got the first edition of every Marvel superhero you can find. The only one I did not buy was *Fantastic Four*. That was the only one I didn't buy, but I have *Amazing Fantasy #15*. I have *Spiderman #1*, *Avengers #1, X-men #1, Hulk #* —the first because I was interested in origins. I was interested in how—when they became—when they were normal and then they became super, and I was interested in that chain, the what happened. That's the story of how they became who they have become—and *Ironman #1*, these comics. But they're not in great shape, and comics is all about condition, so they're not worth that much money. I think altogether they're work $100,000 now, but I bought them for like—the most expensive comic I bought was *Amazing Fantasy #15* which was $15. It cost me $15. This is a lot of money back in the day, and I bought it, and it was not in great shape. That comic in perfect condition is like $50,000 now. I mean, it's insane. But I was collecting, I was collecting, and I still have every comic. [00:54:05] It's—I have them all. And I have the first edition of *Artforum*. I got into the first edition of *Time* Magazine, the first edition of *Sports Illustrated*. I was collecting magazines as well.

And then the first thing I collected as an artist was tantric art, tantric and Jain. I was interested in abstract, abstract tantric.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Jain?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Jain, J-A-I-N, Jain, and tantric. So I have a tantric manuscript, 15th century, 18th—maybe even 16th century, 1500s, which I bought for not much money in a place called Temple Art. I bought lingams. I had—so I was interested in abstract stuff that was mapping art, it might say, because they're all about—they represent—they're totally abstract just color, and they look abstract, but they're not. They—there's a mapping element to them. And so I have a bunch of that work.

And then I would buy if I—and then I was invited—I bought from a dealer Alighiero Boetti, I love Alighiero's work. I got to know him in the early '80s, and we became friends, and I bought. I—I continued—I bought his work if I could possibly buy it. I recently traded with John Baldessari, so I have a piece of his, and I have a big Al Ruppersberg, wonderful, *The Singing Posters*, I have got that. I have wonderful pieces by a lot of my contemporaries. I have their work but also old stuff. The last things I really—I got into—I mean I have a skeleton and I have an embryo, which I got in the '70s. Embryo is a dangerous thing. [00:56:00] Six months old, the embryo. I can't say anything more than that. It might be illegal to own it, I don't know, but I've had it for so long—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Is it in—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —that's never—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —some kind of liquid or—?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Oh, yeah, it's in liquid, it's in formaldehyde. It was in formaldehyde. Now, it's in alcohol. And it's a—and I've never shown it as an artwork. The skeleton I've shown as art, but I have not shown—but I wanted to have the object—you know with my cosmology, before I'm born and after I die. This is—and this is in the house. This is in the studio. I wanted the energy in the studio. It's a remarkable thing.

And then I have Neolithic stones, I was collecting, going back 10,000 years, 15,000 years. And then also collecting choppers that go back a million years—the first tools of men, choppers. Tony Berlant deals with this stuff. So I actually bought some work from him, but mostly Daniel Blau had this, my dealer, my German dealer up until just—I left that gallery five years ago, four years ago. I always had a problem in that I always owed him money. He sold my work, he represented my work, but I always bought more from him than he sold of mine, and so I have all this stuff in my home. It's all in boxes, it's not out but I'm a bit of—I grew up with this, so I have it. Now, recently, I've had some exhibitions where I show it in my context. Like my *M.I.T. Project*, I can put my own stuff, and I borrow from museums for *The M.I.T. Project* where I—museums of natural history or museums of history or technology,

and I put them in there. But now, I can put it—I collected steam engines and generators, so I collected that as well. [00:58:00] Boilers, I was collecting, sandpaper drawings 19th—so this is—we have more sandpaper drawings—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Those are so beautiful, yeah.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: We have approximately about 170 of these sandpapers. They're like $600, $500, up to $1500. The most expensive one I bought was $6000. Now, they're all about half the value of what they were because back in the day, in the '80s, '90s, 19th century was really hot. Now, it's mid-century, no one is interested in 19th century. Shaker furniture is—you can buy it for a song, whereas, it used to be super expensive to buy. Now everyone's interested in Charles Eames, and so forth, and they're not interested in this other stuff. So art—mid-century art is much more valuable than 19th century. I think the 19th century is where it's at because this is—I mean, come on, you can't miss. This stuff is so fantastic. Outsider art, I'd collect as well. I've got a beautiful piece, a really remarkable work by, um—that was in the show that was just done. I was in the exhibition as an artist and then I actually have—and they have a piece of—a drawing. Lynne used a piece of mine in the show as well. The—

ANNETTE LEDDY: The *Outliers*?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: The *Outliers* show. And Perley—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Such a wonderful—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —Wentworth, Perley Wentworth, that's a very—I bought it for $5000 from Phyllis Kind. It was from her collection. She had a show on—when she was still alive and still in SoHo of her stuff, and I could afford it. If I could afford it, I'd buy it. I was with—and I collect watches. I was collecting watches for a while. I don't collect watches anymore because one was stolen, and it was too heartbreaking, and I just can't do it. So this is a part of my life this collecting of things.

Also, the bulletin boards themselves are a collection of pictures and I put them on—the first time—and this, I wanted to talk about the bulletin boards, and they relate to this idea of collecting. [01:00:09] The bulletin boards come up from my first show. The first time I really did this was at Hallwalls when I was in that show, and I put up my photographs that I had taken, and I put them up in a cluster. I put them up in a way that you would put poster—that you were—if you were posting them on a wall, on a refrigerator, on a bulletin board, I was posting these pictures. It was in the mass like galleries, just a bunch of pictures. I did this because of the gathering of material and representing that gathering of material. Some photographs I found off the street, some photographs are of my parents, some photographs are pictures I took, some photographs are pictures I took of art, so it's all mixed up. And then this turned into a—I had my first show at Mary Boone in 1980. I had a bulletin board. It had its own wall, and I can put it up. All my photographs and pictures were put up, all of those. It makes things that don't mean anything to you more valuable, and it makes more valuable things more incidental. So it really has a—it cuts across everything and it's—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Equalizes.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It equalizes everything, and it took forever for me to sell one. Like 25 years before I sold my first bulletin board. Now, I can sell them here and there. They're expensive if I sell them, but the point is that they represent change. The bulletin boards represent flux and change because generally when bulletin boards have pictures, they are changing from day to day because things are posted, things are taken off, things are put on. And people want to buy something that is in time like the granite. [01:02:02]The granite pieces I could sell because they're never going to change but the bulletin board—

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MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —them, and it's not that the bulletin boards are going to change at all because they're not. They are in—they might as well be made of granite because once you buy it, nothing is going to touch them. They are there forever. But they represent change like I represent architecture. So you become what you represent, so they become what they represent as well.

My last show, the big show, which that I had was in the HangarBicocca, and there must have

been about maybe 100 bulletin boards in there holding approximately 3000 pictures about. And maybe more, maybe 4000—no, 2000, 2000, 3,000 pictures, and it's really the hunter-gatherer thing like putting them together. If I have a bulletin board and I show drawings from the 1970s, it's obviously going to be more valuable than I have a bulletin board of found objects off this floor. But what happens is that there is a fee for the board itself. It's like—and then you have the objects on that, which would increase it, but it cuts into the whole idea of the rarified object. It changes things. It's like the rubbing. The rubbing kind of changes the idea of what a painting is, what a drawing is, what a print is, and these change the quality of the picture. They just fundamentally do that, and that was really an interesting thing.

Uh, so this, the bulletin boards lead to what I want to end up with, the last part of my work, which has to do with the presentation of what I call books. The books are *The Meaning of Things*. *The Meaning of Things* of things is a project that I did with—where I went online and I illustrated my ideas that I've had over the last 40 years with images online. [00:02:08] So entering the picture, for instance, online, you can type in entering the picture, and you see virtual reality, you see movie screens, you see things like this. Trompe l'oeil is something I'm very interested in, so I had trompe l'oeil. But the first one I had—the first image was avatar, video game stills of people being in Shoot 'em ups, so your first-person video-game shooter games, first person. So I was interested in that, so I was collecting this.

Sex, I was interested in, in—on the internet. It's all about your body, you the person who is on the internet and so how you feel. So when you're playing a video game, you're very excited. You're inside this other universe, which would be coming from my computer project. That was really, very, very, very early representation of that, but this is now—this is where everybody—my son plays video games. He plays *Grand Theft Auto,* and there are people in that game from—that live in Singapore, and he sees them and they—and he can say, "Oh, you're number da, da. da, da, da, and you're in Singapore, and you're like—" And then some of the times these kids are like eight years old that he's fighting over, and they're very, very good, but he is in this community inside this place, and it's wherever that place is, so. But there's—it's exciting. You're getting adrenaline.

Then, you have the other one which is sex, porn, all the porn sites, and they make so much money, Pornhub or XNXX or name the site, and I got into all these sites. I was interested in these things. And the perversity that exists on these sites is so extreme, this kind of anime pornography where men—gay sites where men are animals with each other. [00:04:13] So, you know, cartoons of men as wolves fucking, really, and then sex with aliens where the alien is like a huge octopus, and then so forth, and so on.

But what happens when you see—and as we talked about this earlier, when you see something that's hot for you, you get hot, so, and this is—I, uh—and it's a chemical, it's a chemical reaction in my brain. My brain has a chemical reaction, so when I see two people fucking, I get a hard on, I get an erection, or if I see two people fighting, I get excited. It's like I—and I wanted to show this in this *Meaning of Things* project. And so I went through porn, I went through violence, execution, photographs of executions, mostly—I mean because ISIS was going full-fledged, and they were the most horrendous, horrible things you can imagine because this is life on the internet. It's like this. It's terrifying. I was showing these pictures just straight away and then I was putting my curly q around it, that person enters this, and I numbered them, and so this was like 600 pictures, it is *The Meaning of Things*.

ANNETTE LEDDY: And there's a book about this?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I am producing a book on it, a representation of this project, it's a single book. Now, the book, I call it a book because it is a series of images. My books go back to the stick figures back in '74 where I had a pile of stick figures, maybe 500. That was like a big book, and if I was to put them all up, it would look like a Hanne Darboven. [00:06:00] Now, all of these projects look like Hanne Darboven when you pin them up, but I don't pin them up necessarily. I might put them on tables—

ANNETTE LEDDY: And speaking about it, I was wondering about this. Now, was she an influence on your, or how do you see your work in relation to hers?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Hanne Darboven, I got to meet her. I got to—I gave a lecture on her for Dia Foundation, and doing that, I'm—I went—she was still alive, and we met. I've

known about her work since the '70s, the mid-'70s, late '70s. She was a process person and I think—I mean, like I'd put her in the same camp with Sol LeWitt for instance, a very similar camp to Sol LeWitt. She's a crazier artist, although they're both nutty —I mean, he's crazy too. I think the craziness, that I share that with her in my own work, the systems kind of element, I share with her. I don't think I followed her as an artist. I don't think she influenced me per se. She was part of a group of artists that obviously did interest me. Seeing shows of hers with this body of work that I'm talking about now, she's definitely—

ANNETTE LEDDY: The one that was at Dia a couple of years ago, that one?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, no, this was—I did—I wasn't part of an exhibition. I was just—you—they—they invite artists to talk about people in the collection, and I was just doing that. For this, I got to meet her, and I was privileged, and it was a privilege to meet her in her studio in her house. This was amazing, amazing, amazing, incredible, incredible, incredible experience for me. Say, for instance, Alighiero Boetti is more influential for me or —but he is—or John Baldessari even or Lawrence Weiner. They're influences, but they're not —they—you can see it. [00:08:03]And with her, it's this idea that somehow it looks like there's an end, like somehow if you really read the whole thing, you're going to learn something from the whole thing, but within her work, it's the passage that's every—that's where the content is. And when people feel that they want to see an end in my work, so what am I going to—? I see an exhibition of yours and then I learn something, but you don't. In time, I don't know if someone who really knows my work, really, really well knows the work that much better than someone who doesn't know my work really, really well, maybe you participate a little bit but then the—it's still enigmatic. It's still difficult.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I'm not clear on this. You're saying—I thought you were talking about how Hanne Darboven's work and then you seem to be talking about yours—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: But, yes I'm talking about—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —but when you're saying—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —our relationship

ANNETTE LEDDY: —when you learn something, you're saying—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: What does that mean—and I mean to learn something from someone's work like when someone—her work look like it's working out some kind of very complex theorem like a geometry or algebra or something, and then somehow if you really truly understand what she's doing at the end, you will learn from that theorem. At the end of that theorem, like in mathematics, you get a number, and that number is like the payoff. With her, there is no end. It doesn't exist, I don't believe, because it is the state of being that is being represented. It's the state of consciousness that's being represented rather than having that number at the end. And I think in the end, that is—that's what I share with her. It's not the last bit that you get. It's the journey, of course, that where you get the stuff.

Now, when I put up these books—and what I've done with these books recently is where I would get two copies of a particular book. [00:10:00] The first one was *Art and Society*. This was done six years ago, which is a book from the early '70s, and it was a very influential book to me, and I cut out each picture and I put it on—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Is it Eric Fromm? Who—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No.

ANNETTE LEDDY: —wrote that?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: No, I don't remember. But it's—there's a picture on every single typewriter page and then I numbered them and I just put it up in a space. So they're like collages, but it's every picture. I did *Man and His Symbols*, which was shown here in New York at Peter Freeman Gallery, approximately 500 sheets, and I had—and I wrote—That Person was involved with that as well. So my—these books, as I do them now, refer to That Person, this kind of obsessiveness that he is really into, which is just the fact that you have every page of this book. Like the one I want to do now is *The Random House Encyclopedia*, which has 11,000 pictures. Can you imagine doing an 11,000-picture book like that? And I want to do this. This would be me submerging myself into the end of this.

And so this is—this is what I'm doing now. This is what—these are projects I want to do these books. They really refer to—they look like—if they're on the wall, they look just like Hanne Darboven because she's making books. Almost all her books end up being these books, and if you put them up on the wall, they have this pattern thing going. They don't have to be online, but you can look at her stuff as a book and then it doesn't have that association. You're just reading the pages in the book, but if you put it all on the wall, then it becomes like a wallpaper kind of thing and then people look like—people look like this. So this is something that I've done.

But me gathering the material from, say, *Man and His Symbols*, it's not unlike me picking stuff up to put on the bulletin board. It's very much related to that. [00:12:00] So it all has to do with information. Tony Berlant was—when I was talking, he showed me aesthetic rocks. They would have a site where they would get Neolithic stones in North Africa, and it was via [ph] campsite that they can uncover still, and the Neolithic stones are the choppers—not—no, not Neolithic before Neolithic, choppers, going back, maybe 20[000] 30 [000] 40 [000] 100 [000] years ago. And there would be an object, a stone that would be there that would have no sense, none. It would be like gem, like an opal or a beautiful colored stone, and there are these theories that those stones are aesthetic. They're there because they look cool not because they can open—they can cut up an animal, they're there because they look good. So he considers these to be the first artworks, these stones. They go way before the—way before the caves, the cave drawings and all that, way earlier.

I'm interested in that gathering of material. I'm very much interested in that, I-n doing that. So that's an old, old, old, old thing I do, that I represent in my work, and yet, it's something that everybody does. So when I talk about the bulletin boards, I say, "This is the art of collecting that we all do." We collect clothes, we collect furniture, we collect objects, we collect—some people collect houses, some people collect cars, we're collecting. It's a different thing that if you just have one car, it's different than if you have 20, but the 20 part is more like art because you are—you're curating, you're collecting, and this is something I'm very interested in. I called it—I call it the first art this art of collecting is the first art, and something that everyone should identify with.

At one point, I could never deal with collectors. [00:14:03] This is another funny thing. When people started to collect my work, I avoided them. I didn't understand them. I didn't understand people that collected art. This was in the '70s—'80s, in the '80s. And—and I had very few collectors, very, very few. Most collectors didn't—were not interested in what I did, so I felt intimidated by them because they didn't buy my stuff. Then, I started collecting these 19th-century drawings. So at a dinner party with other—and I'm always put at a table, and there's always a collector if I'm at a dinner table, someone buys something and so I said, "So what do you do?" and he said, "Oh, I collect this person's work." I said, "Oh, so you're a collector?" And then I start—I'd say, "I'm a collector too." So I don't even think of myself as an artist when I'm talking to them. I say, "Oh, I'm a collector" and say, "What do you collect?" "I collect 19th-century drawings and also Neolithic stones and very primitive stuff and comic books when I was young and blah, blah, blah, blah. Books, I've collected lots of books. I have books like Piranesi and so forth and then they shut up. They say, "I—" They say, "I collect what I like." "What's that?" They go, they don't talk to me. Some people would get very intimidated. They know I'm an artist, I'm asking about their collection, they do not want to spill the beans.

And, uh, I think—I love—I have collectors of mine who collect everything. There are some collectors of mine, and they collect ephemera, so they have every poster that I've ever produced, every book I've ever produced, every announcement card that I've ever produced. They collect everything. And it's been—they are wonderful. I love talking with these people. They know more than I do. They are—they are amazing. What a resource. And at openings, big openings like museum shows, you get the collectors showing up before the opening, and they have piles of books. [00:16:05] They'll come, like 15 books. Al gets the same thing, I'm sure of it. They come with their books, and they want you to sign all of the books, and I do it. I have no problems with my signature. Some artists cannot sign stuff because there's a market for their signature. I never think about the market for my signature, so I signed anything. And I even do a drawing on whatever it is I'm signing because I like that. I'm subverting my own market by doing this, but I don't care. I make—I've made a lot of work in my life. That's why the prices were made low, which means that these guys can still buy my work.

There's a collector who was buying three artists—me, Artschwager, and Marlene Dumas, the

three of us. That's all he collected. Those were his three artists, and he'd collect not just the work but anything he could get on them. And then Marlene Dumas went out of his market. She started selling work for hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars, and he couldn't afford it, No, no, I can't collect her anymore, that's finished. I'm the only artist—Artschwager did the same thing, he can't—but he can still collect my stuff. He wrote me once. He says, "I'm on my way to Amsterdam, and I am about to buy—I'm looking for—" he was like on a safari. He's looking for the—"I'm looking for the first time your name was mentioned in a Dutch magazine." [Laughs.] He knew the magazine that I was in, and he wanted to get it. So this is the kind of collector I love, of course, and it—he's fantastic. I even think about him sometimes to send him books that are rare, but he has almost every book I've ever produced. He has more books than I do. Every poster, he—I give and I tell him. I say, "Look I did a poster for this institution, why don't you try and get it?" and he does. He gets them all. So this is another thing. [00:18:01]

But when I talk to other collectors that are really in it for the investment or they just—they say, "I play—I collect what I like," but I'm interested very much. I even gave a—I gave a lecture at Christie's some 15 years ago, 10, 15 years ago on collecting because I am an artist that represents collecting in my work, and I'm a collector, and I've collected, so all three. And so I talk about that with this group. And then I was put down by a fellow collector who was on the panel because he was not interested because I was not—I was not selling art for more than a million dollars, so I wasn't interesting for him. So since I was not selling art for that much, huh, who are you? You're not interesting. So he's already qualified money as being that—that is the—that is the arbitrator of truth. That is true. I have never done well at auction, I probably never will, but I have a life, and my work continues to live.

So this is—this is all more recent kind of activities, but all these books I've never sold—I have not—I have yet to sell a book. I have made—I've made about 10 now. Not one has sold yet, and they' are super important to me. *The Meaning of Things* is a piece that I think should sell. It's the most important piece I've done in the last 20 years. No one has bought it, no one can buy it, no one would buy it. They would buy Hanne Darboven because that's what she does, but this is too difficult for people, and so. But I get to show it, which I love doing because most of my shows are not in commercial galleries. I mean, as I said, I told you how many shows I've done in my life, and it's an extreme amount, and it continues. I'm lucky. Al and I both are lucky because we love doing what we do, and we continue to have a success after midcareer, and midcareer is a killer, and I manage to survive it, so far, so far, so good. [00:20:07]

I had dinner with Joan Jonas. She's like there. Did you want me to ask to—could I talk about what—why my work is important?

ANNETTE LEDDY: How about this? I think—how about if you answer this question?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I've only been an hour and a half so far. Shouldn't it be two hours?

ANNETTE LEDDY: Well, we don't have any time-based goals here.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Okay. [Laughs.]

ANNETTE LEDDY: It's really about are we saying—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I could go on for another—

ANNETTE LEDDY: —to go—circle back—

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: —five hours easy.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I know, but we're circling back [inaudible] now. I think there is one final question, which is related to what you just brought up. What has been your contribution to American art?

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Why American art? Why not—why not—

ANNETTE LEDDY: Because this is the Archives of American Art.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: It should be art—American and art both. It should be general art.

ANNETTE LEDDY: American and international art.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: That, there you go, contemporary art. [Laughs.]

ANNETTE LEDDY: Okay, let's say that.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Where we go? I—if I had to really say what my contribution is, and I don't think people still understand it, I would say it is the subject —the fact that my work is about the subject, whatever that is rather than the form. Surprisingly, this is unusual. I'm not a formalist because of that, and the most important part of the subject that I'm interested in that I think really is the key to why I'm different has to do with I'm interested in entering the picture where the picture itself is both the subject and the world. [00:22:13] I—it has to do with representation. Representation is very basic. You can talk about the superrealists as I did earlier, the painters, where you've asked Chuck Close what is his thing, it would be having to do with this idea of representation. I am dealing with representation in the same way that Chuck Close is dealing with it but mine is conceptual and so there is a difference. It's I wanted to prove that stick figures live lives.

ANNETTE LEDDY: Right. You've said this before.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: I've said that before but it is—but it is, I think, key to my work. Talked about—if I say all pictures are mental, then I'm interested in the mentality of pictures and how we feel those pictures, which I said earlier again and again and again. I—my wife says—Valerie Smith, beautiful person that she is, she has had to put up with me saying the same thing over and over and over and over again.

ANNETTE LEDDY: I know.

MATTHEW H. MULLICAN: Okay.

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