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Oral history interview with Jirayr Zorthian,
1997 January 28-July 9

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Transcript

Interview

Interview with Jirayr Zorthian
Conducted by Paul J. Karlstrom
At the Artist's studio In Altadena, CA, January 28, 1997-July 9, 1997

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Jirayr Zorthian on January 28, 1997, July 8, 1997 and July 9, 1997. The interview took place in the artist's studio in Altadena, CA, and was conducted by Paul J. Karlstrom for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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Interview

PAUL KARLSTROM: Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, first interview with Jirayr Zorthian at his -- what I'll call his art ranch -- at the top of Fair Oaks in Altadena, California. We're sitting in his studio and the date is January 28, 1997. This is Session 1, Tape 1, Side A and the interviewer for The Archives is Paul Karlstrom. So we started talking a few moments ago about this very special environment of yours, which of course, nobody listening to the tape can see, but it is indeed unusual and you have been on this property, which is, well, I guess one would say, "In the foothills" of San Gabriel -- at the mountains, is that right? Is how you describe the location? And how many acres do you have?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I have 45 at this present time. But it didn't start with 45. I started with six acres.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What I would like to do in this first interview is focus pretty much on this place -- at this property where you put on these wonderful parties. You open up to include all kinds of people. It strikes me from the time, actually, that I met you, which is about two years ago, I think, or so --- that part of the reason you're here or at least the way you have come to use this place is really to open up and include other people. And particularly interesting people -- creative people. And so without putting words in your mouth, I should let you talk about it. I see the use of this property -- at least in part -- as a venue for a gathering of creative people and perhaps new discoveries -- this kind of thing. That the place itself becomes part of -- you're an artist -- becomes, really, an artwork. And the look of it is very much like an assemblage, there's no question about it. One could say that it's a big sculpture. But that gives a little bit of the idea of the uniqueness of this place and, you know, I'm very interested to know if you see it in the same way and just what the place means to you.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I think, perhaps, it might be interesting for me to give you a slight -- just a small history of it. You know, I'm from the East originally. Was born in Turkish Armenia. Came to this country when I was 12 to New Haven, Connecticut. Was educated there. Went through Yale school of Fine Arts. I won a fellowship to study there. And I won a fellowship to study in Europe. On my graduation - came back and did many, many murals throughout the country. Most of them in the East Coast. And, I was interrupted by the Second World War. I spent three and a half years in the Army. With my first wife, whom I married just before I got into the Army. She was from New Orleans. She, however, was educated in the East, Sarah Lawrence. And when the war ended, I had done enough long distance murals . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: What do you mean by that?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: For instance, I did 11 murals for the [Tennessee]state capitol in Nashville in this studio in New York. And when they were finished, transported them over there and put them up. And I felt . . . I had never really acclimated myself to the East. And I always felt that if I was gonna be an American artist, I should go West. Go West, young man, go West. And, believe it or not, Betty and I chose . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Your wife's name was Betty?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Betty. That was this wife.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What was were maiden name?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Her maiden name was Betty Williams.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Williams.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: She was from New Orleans from a very affluent family. She had 30 suitors after her. She was an heiress. But she and I started having children in the East and decided that we -- first, one of the reasons I -- we -- got this place was -- first, we didn't trust supermarket food and we were very particular about what went into our children's stomachs and we decided to have some land where we could grow our vegetables, our own -- have our own chickens and slaughter our own animals, even though both of us had never done this before. And we bought 10 acres of land outside of San Antonio, Texas and I felt San Antonio was an excellent place for me to fulfill this idea I had of doing murals -- it's centrally located in the country. Now, for instance, if I wanted to do something for . . . and I loved Mexico, too, that was another reason. The southern part would have been Mexico, I could go to Mexico frequently. If I wanted to do something for Chicago, it was a short trip to Chicago. To New York, to San Francisco, to Los Angeles. However, my -- as time went on, it was almost impossible to find a place in San Antonio to live. We lived in the East waiting for a place to even rent.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Where did you live in the East? Where were you living then when you were first married?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: In New Haven.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You were still in New Haven?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: In New Haven, yes. But since, I said, the war interrupted with our, you know, our life. By this time we were living in Maryland somewhere in this country estate of somebody and we became accustomed to this country life and that was another reason we wanted some land and so we were hell-bent on going to San Antonio, outside of San Antonio. But my former wife's mother had other ideas and she said, "You're going live in Texas?". So, somehow, we ended up coming to California and first to La Jolla for three months in some person's house who had temporarily went to New Orleans. And looking for a appropriate place to have a ranch.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What year was that?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: 1945.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay. So, right at the end of the war?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: End of the war.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Finally, I had a college -- Yale classmate -- who lived in Los Angeles and he found a realtor who brought us to this ranch where I am now. Well, the minute Betty and I saw it, we just knew it was the place. And we put a down payment on it and bought it within two months and I have been here ever since. But it started with that concept of being on our own for as -- raising our own food and so on.

PAUL KARLSTROM: To be self-sufficient, really.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: To be self-sufficient, yes. But it also, of course, was an excellent place for me to have two or three studios and be able to do my murals and be able to do my artwork.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So, the property, really, was chosen as a means to realize a certain lifestyle . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . that you sought. And that you, presumably, came to, over a period of time, you and your wife, no doubt discussing how you wanted to live. Is that right?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And did you see in this -- did you think of it as, what should we say, a creative act? That this was an appropriate act for someone who was an artist?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I mean, did you -- you bring these things together?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yes, very much so. That was also part of it. Remember I told you that I wanted to live in the West.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I wanted to be a Western artist.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And, of course, the space, the environment was the appropriate place for me to have large studios and what have you. And so it was, it had a dual purpose. And, I think -- right from the start -- I should mention, also, that I had this great obsession for doing things with used materials. It started when I first came to this country. When my father -- when we arrived in New Haven, he said, "What an incredible wealthy, abundant country. How rich, how wonderful. But alas," he said, "How much they waste." "How much they waste." France could live on what the United States wastes. And that became an almost . . . all my life, I used to go and find things in dumps or trash containers and so on and make things with 'them. New pieces of sculpture or something. So this place that we bought in California was the perfect place for this. I decided I was going to build with recycled materials.

PAUL KARLSTROM: From the very beginning?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: From the very beginning. And it became an obsession, actually. And to build my own environment. And also one of the wonderful things about my place was this -- that I could have done this -- what I'm talking about -- 50 miles up the way from civilization, but I wanted to be very close to a metropolitan city, since I'm an artist . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . and since I'm mural painter. And this was perfect because we had the country and we were a stone's throw from the city.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Now, that was also very important.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So you wanted it both ways?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I wanted it both ways.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And you still do?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And I still do. And I still do in a much larger way because the original acreage we bought was six acres . Then we bought five more, then we bought three more and then we bought four more. And then there was divorce between my first wife and myself and I kept on buying . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: And you obviously, in whatever settlement there was, ended up with the property here.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yes, oh yes. Well, that was only part, a small part of it, actually.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: But then I, no, I bought most of my property with my own funds, of course. My father, who was a -- when he died left us some money and that was the beginning and then, of course, the rest of it I made myself.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Now tell me again. You told me earlier but remind us how many total acres you have now?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: 45 acres. We started with six.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And ended up -- now you have 45. You acquired adjacent properties . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . which, obviously were available, you were fortunate then. They were available.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Very fortunate.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Was there one big purchase that laid in most of the property or was it really bits and pieces?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: One big piece was the most profitable -- most promising. I bought 19 acres from a man who was the head of the Micro-Dot company, Max Lewis. I bought his house, his acreage, his stables and that,

perhaps, in value, the most expensive part of my property. It might interest you in that when we first came here -- 1945 -- just a year before, acreage around here was going for \$200 an acre . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . and by the time we got here it was a \$1,000 an acre. I hate to estimate -- they tell me, I don't know but they tell me, that if you can find acreage now it's \$200,000-\$250,000 an acre.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So you wouldn't be buying up at this time any more . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I was very fortunate I got it when I did. Now mind you, remember, I've been here 50 years so . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, you know what interests me, well, lots of things interest me about you and your story and this place and I think you know I feel all of these things are linked. That you can't really separate them. This is one of the things that make you so very interesting. You're an artist but you're also -- you've also had this opportunity to realize -- create your own art environment, if you will. Not very many people get to do that. There are a number of aspects of this that I think are interesting. Some of 'em I hope we can take a look at. But one of the things that strikes me is that you don't live elaborately by any stretch of the imagination. You have a very modest, crowded little house.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And yet you're building all around as if working toward something much more elaborate. But I get the feeling you've been working that way for years and years and years. Is that right? I mean, is it the process that interests you as much as actually then something completed and you can say it's done? How do you feel about that?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Well, it's a little bit of that, yes. I think I have this concept of having huge rooms and so on but I think I've become distracted and work on -- with this same concept of using recycled materials -- end up becoming works of art. Walls and . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . sculptural walls, etcetera. Dabney accuses me of just building, building but not ever putting a top on anything. Poor girl is frustrated because all these promising things are going up but . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, she has a point . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yeah, she has . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . you know, there are all these marvelous entry, wonderful walls and then it's all open. How does she feel about this? I mean, does she share -- presumably, to a certain extent, she shares your vision and you for this place and you are in sync, presumably, about lifestyle. I mean, I have to assume that because you've been together for a long time. But how do you think she feels about this always working towards and never, in a sense, completing in a traditional way? Do you think she would -- is she looking forward to having the home completed according to ideas about it so she can enjoy that? What do you think?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Apparently she goes along with it because this year, you know, is going be our 40th anniversary so . . . she wasn't always like -- she came from a very wonderful big house in Los Angeles and her mother and father lived in the Hancock Park. Extremely residential . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . highly socially prominent family. But living here, she has fallen into the same philosophy. We, for instance... I think, perhaps I find the indoors less attractive than the outdoors.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You mean, in general?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: In general. We -- I mean -- I sleep outdoors every night.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Except when it's raining?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Except when it's raining. And then we, grit our teeth and stay in the house. But she loves the outdoors. She loves the mountains. She loves horses. You know, we have lots of animals and it's a new way of life for her but at least half of her life has been spent here. More than half, what am I saying? I met her when she was 20 and we've been married 40 years so . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's right. That's two-thirds, I guess, that's been spent here. Do you feel that she -- well we

don't need to go into -- at this moment anyway, how you came together and why she chose you and by choosing you she chose this -- but do you feel that part of the reason, I guess Dabney could speak for herself on this, but just as far as you know, do you think she was consciously, then, rejecting this presumably upper-middle class, residential, Hancock Park background? What do you think?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I don't think -- no, first, I think, you must remember that when you said bohemian . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes, that's right. Now we got the word out there, that's good.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Although I came from an Armenian family, my background, I mean, Turkish Armenian, my father was a very learned person. He spoke seven languages . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Wow.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . he was a writer. He was involved in a plot to overthrow the Turkish government. He was going to be executed -- he escaped -- that's an entirely different story.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Ah, I see. Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: We came from a family in Turkish Armenia where, we were not certainly poor but in the United States my father -- first job he got was a night watchman in a factory. Later he had a tailor shop and so on. Then he played the stock market and . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Was this in New York?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No, in New Haven.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So you really did -- he went directly to New Haven?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And I was educated in Yale, etcetera. So my circumstances improved as far as our social life was concerned. And Betty, of course, was from the highest social background -- from New Orleans. Her father was head of the Whitney National Bank and when we came to California we immediately started meeting people who apparently liked us because we used to go to these fancy Valley Hunt Club parties, constantly. So, it was through a social gathering that I met her. There was this Spinster's Ball, it was considered one of the fanciest parties of the year and so the -- it wasn't completely bohemian, that's pretty . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, I understand that. I mean . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . we -- I have a very important philosophy about that. I have never, ever, I think, been in any cause to try to prove a point about how one should live and doesn't. For instance, I was never caught up in the '60's . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Counter culture . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Counter culture. Because I felt that they were doing exactly the same thing that people in the Valley Hunt Club were doing. The Valley Hunt Club you played tennis, you had swimming pools, you wore tweeds and talked a certain way and the hippies wore sandals and smoked marijuana, and talked a certain way. But in my experience in all my life has been that I've been able to travel in almost any circle so it wasn't that Dabney was throwing away her social life, at all. We went to many, many social gatherings and still do.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes, I know you do. Well, then do you feel, really -- you saw all of this as increasing your options of experience -- amplifying your experience. You know, keeping the connections with more established society?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Not purposely. It seems that, for instance, we got to know some very -- Betty and myself -- we used to frequently go to the Hixons. Adelaide and Alex Hixon, who live in San Marino. And -- but Betty's mother was very much against -- now I must make it very clear -- she was very much against this concept of life. In fact, she used to call it the "dirty old farm". She once came to me and said, "Jerry, look, if you feel that you've made a mistake, don't worry about the money. We can give it to charity. We can get rid of it. We have enough money for you to live in much better circumstances, certainly. For instance, you should live in San Marino." And, "I brought my daughter up to be a lady and now you've made a farmer woman out of her". This kind of thing. And, of course, as I said, we frequently went to these parties where all these people lived and I remember once -- the Hixons were very much aware of this -- and when she came to visit us from New Orleans once, they gave a wonderful, wonderful party for us. Only about 14 people were there and it was the most luxurious thing and when it was all over -- on the way home -- Betty's mother said, "Now, Jirayr, why is it that you can't live like the Hixons? Why can't you buy a house somewhere in San Marino and live like those Hixons?"

PAUL KARLSTROM: And what did you say?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I said, "Look, I don't want to live like the Hixons. I'm very happy the way I live and so is Betty". But, just not too long ago, about six months -- eight months ago, maybe -- I did something for the Hixons for charity. I did a picture fence, I think you've seen it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm. Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: While we were having lunch, discussing this thing, I told Adelaide this story . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: What are their names? Adelaide and . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Adelaide and Alex.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And I said, "Do you remember", I said, "that party you gave some 40 years ago, 30 years ago?", I done forgot where it was. And I told her the story about how Betty's mother told me this thing I just told you and before I finished my sentence she grabbed my arm and she said, "And we want to live like you."

PAUL KARLSTROM: I love it.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: But you see they can't live like me. This is the fascinating part of it. They have to live the way they do. The environment they've created requires that. They have to . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: They have their jobs and so forth.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Pardon me?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Their jobs, businesses, there are all these . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Their business, their every -- their social everything. Give a party, they have to invite certain people. You know, it's just -- they can't get out of it suddenly.

[SESSION 1; TAPE 1, SIDE B]

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . .[continuing] with this first interview with Jirayr Zorthian. This is Tape 1, side B. We were learning about the history of this place -- your property. What I call the "art ranch." Is that alright to call it an art ranch?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Alright. Fine.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What do you call it?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Well, I'm sure eventually it'll end up being some kind of an art center where artists and creative people will meet, which is what we do all the time anyway.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm. Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: But, probably be officially something like that. Right now I call it Center for Research and Development of Industrial Discards with the Emphasis on Aesthetics.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's a mouthful. What a title. Center for Research and Development of . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Industrial Discards . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . Industrial Discards. Uh-huh.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: With the Emphasis on Aesthetics.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I like that.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: That last part has to be there or else it isn't . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Do you see -- let's, you know, forget for a moment about lifestyle and those kinds of choices and maybe even how you're perceived, how you perceive yourself. The property itself -- this place -- this Center for Research and Development of Industrial Discards with Emphasis on Aesthetics -- do you see this as the reification of your ideas about art? I mean, do you see it as, like, a process piece? The whole environment? Do

you think of it that way? Is it your artwork? Or is that something we bring to it? How do you feel about that?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Well, it is my artwork. I think, in my -- I think if you -- my calling card, my letterhead says, "Painting, sculpture, architecture and ranching.

Those are the elements and then I . . . you know, Paul, I think one of the things that might be important for me to bring up is that I have never, ever, in all my life, looked for a job. I have never, ever gone and asked somebody could I work for them or -- everything that's happened to me has come to me because they found out that I could do something and someone's asked me to do it. I was, in fact, I've developed a philosophy. If you don't chase the buck but pursue diligently, the things -- not the thing -- it has to be more than one thing -- the things you love to do most -- suddenly the bucks start chasing you. People come and say, "I understand that you do such and such" or "I understand you have this and that" and I think that through my entire [life] this has been almost a creed in every way. Review back. All these murals I did. I actually entered something -- my concept, and I won it. Or somebody heard I was a painter and gave me a scholarship to -- or seeing my work -- gave me a scholarship to Yale School of Fine Arts.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm. Is that how it happened? That's how you got to . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yes. They saw my work. Someone was so interested -- showed it to the Dean of Yale. He saw my work and gave me a scholarship. When I won my fellowship, when I graduated I graduated with honors and then I entered the competition and that competition won me a fellowship study in Europe. Buying the property here because we thought we'd like to make sure that our children ate well. For very little money -- now it's worth a fortune. That, too, has to do with the things I love to do most is to have land, an expansion or -- and suddenly it starts getting or becoming valuable. So, the whole thing ties in very well together.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What you're saying -- or what I understand you to be saying -- is that, even though you're surrounded by stuff and have lots of property, you've never been a materialist. Seeking things, in that sense. It sounds to me that you were trying to realize certain ideas. The goals had to do with, well, values in life. How you wanted to conduct your life. You know, deal with your family and this sort of thing.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Things have happened because of certain things -- from certain achievements. For instance -- give you an example -- that house -- that property I bought. Someone lived in it who was the father of our babysitter and he became so intrigued with my life here -- he was the head of something called Engineering Science. He had 11 offices all over the world. Water reclamation projects. One day when he came over we were having a drink together. He said, "Jerry, I want you to work for me." And I said, "What do you want me to do?" And he said, "I want you to design my buildings." I said, "C'mon, Harvey, I'm not a licensed architect." "Hell you aren't. I like what you're doing here. I like the imagination, the -- very exciting. Look at Wilshire Boulevard, look at, you know, the so-called architects do these dull buildings. I want some exciting building." Before I knew it, I was consultant to the president of Engineering Science and they couldn't call me an architect because I didn't have the AIA so I became a consultant. And I designed buildings for six years until he sold this company and things went by. Same thing happened with Nash department store. They wanted me to -- there, too, I became a consultant and I did these huge decorations for the -- promoting some of their sales and so forth. But I've never -- it's always been that people have gotten interested in what I'm doing and offered me a job or offered me a position.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Do you think that people are attracted to you and to this place -- and when I say to you, I mean to you and Dabney and the whole environment -- because they see you living out an alternative to the kinds of lives they are? Most of us are fairly constricted -- even me -- in our jobs. We work for institutions and, you know, we have responsibilities in that respect and we, you know, there are real limits. Do you think that you represent a kind of symbol for what might be? What is possible? Even though most of us don't achieve it. Have you thought about that?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Well, I think some of that is true, yes. I think I that I have built my environment and I think everyone, somehow, would like to do the same thing. I've had artists come and say to me, "Zorthian, what are you trying to do? Are you trying to be some kind of a lord, a barron, or do you want to be a -- have this phenomenal estate -- in luxury" and so on. And then the same people have come back and said, "By golly, you're doing what everyone wants to do. You're building your own nest like a bird builds his own . . ." It's my way of life. For instance, when I was a young person I was a Boy Scout and I loved camping always and my Scout Master once said, "You know, Zorthian, five hours of outdoor air is equivalent to eight hours indoors from the benefits you get from sleep . . ."

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . "Cause no matter how many windows you open, you're still breathing back that carbon monoxide. It's good for the plants but it's not good for you."

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: So any chance I've had -- all my life -- I've slept outdoors. When I was a Scout Master and I talked the Chief into building this huge tower, on top of which, several of the Counselors and I used to get up and sleep. I wanted the tower so that we wouldn't have to see the trees on each side. So that I could feel that I floating in the sky or something. So, it's been prevalent all my life. I've always wanted to. I talked my father into letting me have the attic section, which I built my own studio -- my own environment.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, would you agree that the way you have chosen to live your life and the environment that you've created for yourself and your family -- could reasonably be called -- if not bohemian, at least unconventional? I mean, would you agree with that?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Oh yes. Of course, I have a license. You've seen that diploma of mine the readers of the Pasadena Weekly have voted me the most eccentric in Pasadena area. And I am very proud of that. And they've also voted me the best artist. I'm more proud of the fact that I'm an eccentric.

PAUL KARLSTROM: The Pasadena Weekly people voted you the most eccentric . . . ?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yeah, haven't you seen the ...

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, I'll have to take a look.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Alright. Okay. In fact, when the girl from the paper called and said, "Mr. Zorthian, I'm supposed to write something about you and can you tell me -- you've become the most eccentric or you've voted the most eccentric and I have to write an article". And I said, "Is there anything, especially, that you have done lately?" and I said, "Well, among other things, I just became a Tennessee Colonel because the government of Tennessee made me a Colonel because so many people are so happy seeing my murals". And I said, "How can I be a Colonel and an eccentric at the same time? It's just -- the two don't gel". And she said, "Maybe that is the reason you're so eccentric, that you do . . ."

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, I think there's something to that . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Contrasting things.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Because you and Dabney certainly, as you said earlier, move in these different worlds and when you appear down there in Pasadena or, you know, elsewhere in LA on the west side, you strike a very colorful figure -- the two of you do -- and it seems to me that you enjoy that, I mean . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Not only enjoy it, I'm very flattered that Dabney and I -- most of the parties we go to -- not most, maybe at least half of them -- we're the only ones above 30 or 40 years old.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: The -- I don't know -- young people seem to enjoy having us and I'm very flattered because -- and happy -- because I learn much more from them than certainly people my age. And, fortunately, they're vital, exciting people who are doing -- they're going to be the next generation. They're the ones that were running the country. It's interesting.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What about the notion of, again, of bohemianism, of that word? It's a word that -- I looked it up in the dictionary and, of course, it's generally used in connection with artists and writers and so forth.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But it says something to the effect of, you know, I can't remember how exactly it went but it comes down to this, in effect, "Creative people, such as artists and writers, who choose to live unconventional lifestyles, often together in a group". And that seems okay for a start of a definition but it seems to me -- I'd be curious to know what you think of this idea -- the choosing of the unconventional to establish an identity as an artist -- as a creative person. I mean, that may sound overly causal or simplistic but . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: You know, this is very interesting. Betty, my former wife, who came from the highest socially prominent family in New Orleans -- she went to Sarah Lawrence and in those days -- in the early 30's -- during the Depression -- many of the intellectuals embraced, for instance, the Communist . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . concept of -- Communist philosophy.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: In fact, Betty joined the Communist party.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And she -- can you imagine living in a home where they had seven servants and she dropped the towel on the floor, somebody picked it up. And her father was very, very -- he was a wonderful man. I never got along with the mother but the father was a wonderful man and he said, "You know, Betty, this guy, Karl Marx, sounds like a pretty interesting man. I read some of his things and he believes in giving everything away and sharing and sharing alike, etcetera. And you know, you have a pretty good trust fund left to you by your grandfather and I can't do anything about it but I think I can find some lawyers who might be able to get this income from this thing and we could make an arrangement to give all this to your Communist party. How would you feel about that?" Betty changed her mind very quickly. But see, I have never joined any of those things. I mean, sure, I think, I consider myself a liberal, I've always been a Democrat but I've never joined any of these "isms". I don't know. There's a different between being -- I don't smoke, I don't even smoke cigarettes. I've never smoked pot. I think I tried it once and I didn't know what it was -- it did for you. If bohemians -- if the word "bohemian" embodies all of those things, I think I might be considered very conservative. I don't mind going to formal affairs where I wear a tuxedo and I . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . I even have a white tie and tails and we go to some very fancy balls and I find people of all backgrounds interesting. In other words, I'm not doing this purposely.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I am what I am, like Popeye the Sailor Man. I am what I am, that's all I am, I'm Popeye the Sailor Man.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I think it's, the bohemianism probably -- it would be true in that I lead an individualistic life.

PAUL KARLSTROM: A new noun. That's a good point.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: My own philosophy.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What about -- and I don't know that there are requirements -- that there are requirements that have to be satisfied for one to be a bohemian. I don't think that it's that clear and I think the individuality is very important. I think seeking to be unconventional is also important. Which then, you can do it for various reasons but it suggests wanting to separate yourself a bit -- on your own terms -- from the way most of the others live and certainly a middle-class situation. You know, to distance [yourself] from that. But also, it seems to me key to this is an idea of personal freedom and that can take many forms of expression. For me, that's central to the idea of bohemianism, whatever that may be. And, it seems to me, in your life -- to the extent I know about it -- many of the things you've done are really claiming that . . . brief interruption [in recording] there. Let me try to recast the question a little bit. Within an idea of bohemianism, choosing an unconventional life -- conducting your life in a certain way or one's life a certain way. It seems to mean freedom -- notions of freedom . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . are very, very important.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: That's very important.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And I wonder about your thoughts on that. Perhaps, well you know, how you say it's important to you but perhaps the different ways you're able to realize it. It seems that there are different expressions that have become -- not exactly cliches -- but areas in which the quest for freedom works itself out. Now that was a little longer interruption [in recording] but that's okay. That was great. I wonder if we could just, you know, we obviously need to move on . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And for the records, wouldn't you say a very pleasant one?

PAUL KARLSTROM: A very pleasant -- very pleasant interruption, indeed. We had our picture taken by the lovely Susan Lawrence. There. Now it's on the record.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Who, by the way -- besides being extremely beautiful -- is a very fine artist.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's very true. And maybe I'll interview her next but right now it's you. I would like to pursue just for a few more moments this idea of freedom. We won't, of course, exhaust the idea but I think you agreed that that's been a very important goal for you to try to -- to the extent you can -- achieve that and -- I guess what I was trying to ask earlier, what are some of the forms, the expressions of freedom that you feel you've undertaken or made? You know, what are the symbols of a personal freedom that you have within this life you lead and the things you do? Let me make it more specific because that's too general, perhaps, of a question. But, you know, you think of the German Expressionists, you know. Whether or not you want to call them bohemian -- I think you would have to say that those Modernists were seeking out a bohemian life.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What they would do is go off to these -- just as an example -- to these islands, I guess, in the North Sea, I don't know [exactly] where they were, and go back to primitive -- go back to nature. They would go around, you know, run around without their clothes on and . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right? And they would, then, in many of their paintings you see this. So, one has to believe that this lifestyle -- this particular activity, for them, was an equivalency to freedom -- turning away from the conventions of the society.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Alright.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: But see, I want to make it very clear that that is not the way I have lived.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I think -- when they -- certain people who do this reject or object to another form of living. I do not object to any other form of living. I think my freedom comes mostly from not purposely living an unconventional life.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: But my work. My artwork.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: My interests. For instance -- I'll give you an example of something. I belong to three horse groups and you have to really -- in order to get into these horse groups you have to be recommended by someone and then when that person recommends you, three other people have to write letters and then we joined these horse groups -- they watch your horsemanship, they watch the way you take care of your horse. You have to go to three or four years of these events and then you finally become a member. When new members come in, they try very hard to please each other. I remember once -- I rode for at least an hour and a half with someone and he said, "You know, Jerry, you're a very interesting person. Now look at me", he said. "I am the symbol of the American dream." I said, "Oh?" He said, "Do you realize," he said, "I was one of IBM's top executives." Have I ever told you this story?

PAUL KARLSTROM: No. No.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: "And I am now 54 years old and I worked so hard and amassed enough money and I don't mind telling you I am independently wealthy. I amassed enough money so I retired at age 50. Now how many people do you know in your acquaintance are able to retire at 50 and not have to work the rest of their life?" And I said, "I don't know," you know. I said, "I retired at age 3. I don't know the meaning of the word work." I said, "Perhaps what . . .", oh no, but then he said -- oh God, the most important thing, he said, "However, he said, you know I'm 54 years old now and I don't" . . . he said, "The last four years of my life have been the most drudgerous, most boring, most unbelievably agonizing." He said, "Some mornings when I wake up I keep the sheets over my face for a half an hour wondering what I'm gonna do that day." I said, "Well, it could be that when you were 27 years old and you were climbing up in the ladder of IBM, when the executives over you said, "Stay in this weekend and get out those reports," you should have said, "I'm sorry, sir, but my wife wants to take me to a concert," or "My children want to go to the zoo," or that "My family wants to go up and do some hiking or something" and I think you've deprived yourself of so many things in life that now you don't know . . . how can you at age 50 do things that you should've done before. I think that's where freedom comes from. I think if you live that kind of a life and if that's bohemian, then I'm a bohemian. But I don't want the derogatory connotation of that . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . that you join a group and you separate yourself from other people. I love rich people, I love poor people. I love boring Republicans and I love . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: You love people.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I love people. When I'm dancing at the Valley Hunt Club with a gal with a plunging neckline, I don't question her . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Her income?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . her income or her philosophy of life. I love the life I have and . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, that's certainly what you celebrate up here. And I think that that's a very good answer. And probably we should -- well, we're just about done with the tape anyway. We probably should stop now for this session . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And then . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . because we have -- your guests are arriving.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Okay.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Thanks.

[SESSION 2, TAPE 1, SIDE A]

PAUL KARLSTROM: Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, an interview with Jirayr Zorthian at his art ranch high up in the hills, San Gabriels, Altadena. This is session two following a session back in January. I think it was January, let's just see here -- 28, yes. That was session one, this is session two. The date is July 8, 1997 and the interviewer for the Archives is Paul Karlstrom. This is Tape 1, side A. And this'll be a very interesting conversation. I view this as a special opportunity for a good conversation because what we have -- since we talked last -- an article, in fact, a rather comprehensive and somewhat in depth article profile appeared in the LA Weekly and that date on that was . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Okay.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . June 13, 1997, which was less than a month ago. This article is, to me, very interesting because it's an attempt to tell your story to a broad reading audience. To really - to characterize you -- represent you. And it, first of all, it was by Dave Gardetta , whom we know. He interviewed me a little bit early on in the preparation for this article. He's known you, I think, for quite a few years and he's a very good writer and this was a very important article. It was a cover story. Big picture of you on the front. I'm not gonna say too much about the article but I think it could be useful in providing us something, then, to talk about and maybe get into some issues that go beyond -- considerably beyond what Gardetta was able to get into the piece. I think -- my personal review is that it's very well-written. These are very good investigative journalists and yeah, it was, he made selections about his take -- his particular approach to his subject. And there are lots of truths, as we know. There are many truths and he chose a particular truth and that's the one he dealt with. Well, it's, of course, incomplete and so what I'd like to do this afternoon is address that and perhaps flesh it out a little bit. And see if we can look at a couple of the things in there and look at his choices and then see where that leads us. First question I would like to ask you -- keeping in mind in our earlier session we really did cover much of your background and we talked a lot about the ranch and what it means to you and so forth. We didn't talk quite so much about your work. I would say that in my view, this piece doesn't really address that in a meaningful way. There are a few quotes and so forth. Sort of allusions to what may be viewed as controversial aspects, so forth. What I would like to start out with is asking you what your honest response is to the article. What your expectations were, maybe what your hopes were. And then what you felt when you actually read it. Because you didn't see it, presumably in galleys or anything. It just came up and you read it. So, Jirayr, how did you feel about this?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Well, to begin with, I think David -- I'm not quite sure just when I did meet him, it's been a -- I'm sure that I've known him a while but -- and I thought it was very brilliantly written but I -- there are many, many things that he said that were not, certainly, according to -- first when you said he didn't say very much about my art. I think that's very, very important because I think he knows very little about my art. But -- and he -- by the way, interviewed me with a tape recorder and I'm sure that he should have followed those things but there were a lot of things that he said that were not entirely -- but this, I know, happens often. This, that's not -- that was not my trouble but I felt that what is interesting about my artwork is that very often -- since I've been in

California, I've got to be known as a very interesting character up in the mountains.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's true.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I know so many people who are, I mean, from my first marriage, second marriage -- look at me as a fun person to meet at cocktail parties, etcetera, etcetera. Now, for instance, how many years ago was it when we met Buckminster Fuller. Dabney?[Dabney Zorthian joins interview]

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: I don't know, about 10 or 11 years.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: 10 or 11 . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: 10 or 11 years?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No, more than that. But, anyway ...I admired the person so much that I, for the first time, brought a portfolio to show him. Not so much my artwork but some of my architecture. And he was so impressed by this thing -- it was a big fantastic party just to meet the great Buckminster Fuller and he was so impressed with what he saw that he stopped the whole operation of people coming through to look at this thing and then the party went on and on and on and at the -- somewhere in the middle of the party, he asked everyone, "Please, right now, I want everyone to come to see me and I want everyone to listen to me and please, somebody go upstairs and call people down here because I wanna make an announcement," he said. "I wanna tell, I want you to know that I've met someone today" . . . Dabney, I think you can tell this better than I can.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: It's you.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No, no. But I think this is important.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It's okay. This is Dabney Zorthian and it's perfectly okay that Dabney come in but you need to come in and sit near the tape recorder . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Come on.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . because -- and sitting here will be fine.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Okay. Alright. Sorry to take it away but I was, as usual, embarrassed by my husband because immediately he walked in and there he disappeared and the guest of honor, who everybody was waiting to meet and dying to meet disappeared with him and, you know, I was just thinking how rude and impolite this all was but nevertheless -- after a while a very, to me, strange thing in a party happened -- an annoying thing. If you're in a party enjoying yourself, I mean, I dealt with it by denying it and talking to other people. Okay. Everybody in the whole party was commanded to stop doing what they were doing because Bucky was going to make an announcement and he wanted everybody to listen to this and he wanted them to stop whatever they were talking about and some people didn't and so -- first he came out and made this, he said, "I want everybody to listen to me," and then some people were so involved in their conversations that they didn't stop so he then delegated to the teenagers around to go upstairs into the bathrooms, all over the corners of the gigantic mansion of Pasadena, under the eaves and find everybody and gather them and make sure that they were there so that he could tell them something. So they all came, finally. It took a lot of trouble to get everybody there. There were a lot of people. And, of course, they were now relieved because now they were going to actually see him and speak to him or something. Or he was going to speak to them, at least. Even though he didn't know who they were. So he finally got them all there and he was sure -- there was no talking allowed, even amongst all of the little children who are disobedient and wanna do their own thing. No, there had to be complete silence. Finally, he said, "I have just met a man and this man -- and I've just seen some drawings and this man has taken from -- has come from the East and he's taken from the East and he's done -- he's brought all of these things from the East and brought them to the West and combined them with the West" and then he made his speech, which I'm sorry it wasn't recorded but it was something like . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: What was that thing he said about the vision?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: I'm getting to that, Jirayr. Okay and he said, "Well" and I think he was thinking of himself when he started talking about "the inner eye". This is where he related to you, I think. Because he feels that he has "the inner eye". Somebody I was talking to about this recently said, "Well, we all have "the inner eye," it's just that we all closed it." So, he then said, "Oh well, in the history of humanity and the world, there have been very few people who have "the inner eye." I think he was talking about himself but relating it to, and, you know, "The savior is always wishing to be saved, don't you think? And looking for somebody that he can relate to so that he's not just right all there lonely at the top?" And he said -- God, I'm sorry this is taking long but he said . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Inner eye . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: . . . oh yeah, so he saved the world, "inner eye", some people have it and "In the history of the world, there are very few people who really get into their "inner eye" and then he made a list of the people or artists who get into the "inner eye" and then he made a list of them, which I'm really extremely sorry that I didn't make a [list]-, I mean, we weren't making notes, we were just listening to him so I don't know exactly what, I mean, I think Cézanne was one and then way, way, back far in somewhere, like Bach and this but, "There are very few from the time that we've started, to the present and in the future . . ."

PAUL KARLSTROM: In the future?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: ". . . To be", he said. Meanwhile, everybody sort of vaguely thought that maybe he was talking about Jirayr because he spent all of this time away from . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right. Right.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: . . . his, uh, groveling hordes. And so, you know they were looking at each other, "Jirayr, what? No, it can't be. I mean, he's just this fun person, he's not an artist. Who cares?"

PAUL KARLSTROM: What did he say? Did he say that?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: No. No. I'm just . . . this is me, this is me. For instance . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: They've always looked at me as drinking companions 'cause I've . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: So what's the end of the end?

DK: Oh, the end of the statement. So we finally -- so all of these Pasadena people who take him for granted as this great person who always comes and sort of peps up everything. As far as being an artist, who, "What? No. Not Jirayr. That is totally . . ." but, so he said, let's see, how did it all end? And so he said, "This man, Zorthian, has the inner eye. That's sort of how it ended.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And everybody said, "Bravo".

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: No. No. They just looked at each other very skeptically.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: They were just, "Zorthian?"

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: And they immediately forgot about it but I didn't. I remember.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No, but that has happened to me a number of times. Really. Let me give you another incident. I had gone to this Yale reunion 'cause I happen to be a Yale graduate. Yale School of Fine Arts and then I won a fellowship to study in Europe for a year and half and I've done many murals in the East coast and what have you. One of which has, you know, gotten me a colonelship in Tennessee.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, right. Well, we talked about that in the last, last interview.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I'm a Tennessee Colonel and so on. But we went to a -- I went to a Yale fancy meeting and the Kiputh [phon. sp.], Kiputh was -- his father was a phenomenal athlete and in the days when I was Connecticut champion wrestler, his son was also a wrestler -- was so, so excited and so when we had this, you know, he came all the way from the East to give a talk to the Yale Club and when he started his speech, he said, "It was so wonderful to come here from the East to talk to you all but I met some people I have known in the past and one of whom was Jirayr Zorthian. And in my entire life, he's been my role model and he's one of the greatest athletes I have ever known." He was a wrestler and so on, so forth. And, at this time, when he was talking I had had at least six or seven beers and I was feeling very well and all my friends turned around and looked at me, "Zorthian is a great athlete?" and so on. Well, this is always the fascinating part of it. I am an athlete. I'm a horseman -- I ride horses -- I used to be a Connecticut champion wrestler and a gymnast and so on but people, as you get older, don't realize what you were in the past.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Let me interject something here and try to bring it right back down to what I think is the issue at hand. I don't think anybody denies that you are a most colorful and interesting person with many experiences and actually many, many accomplishments. I think that is exactly how you are viewed. Whether or not they know that you were a champion wrestler, I'm not sure.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But I think there's a bigger point here. And I think that has to do with one thing very specifically. Remember we're the Archives of American Art and in a sort of loose and general way, what we do is document the history of art -- the vision of art . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Great.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . in America. And in a sense, a broader sense, creativity. And what I would like to get at here is, more specifically, what is it that you feel Dave Gardetta was missing? What was he missing in this article? The first thing I wanna ask again is, do you feel as far as it goes, it was pretty fair and even-handed? As far as it goes?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Well, as I said, I think David is a very bright writer. His diction, his . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right. Right. We agree about that.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . but that's wonderful. But I think he didn't say very much about my art and when he interviewed other people about my art, they also didn't know very much about my art and that made me feel a little skeptical but the interesting thing is that, I think, what the whole problem in this whole thing is that today art is in a very, very strange situation. Unless you are very well marketed, unless you have a gallery, unless you have somebody who's marketing you or promoting you and so on -- I would really love to get on Larry King Live show to talk about the art world. I love art. I love, I love art. I love the art world but I really do not like the art game. I think the art game is very, very unfortunate, really. I mean, the galleries -- unless you have a gallery, unless so and so promotes you to so and so, it is not, you know -- and I do my art and I have been doing my art for many, many years and I've gained many recognitions for it. I'm a Colonel in the -- Tennessee Colonel for murals I did 55 years ago and I have 42 murals throughout the country. I did a mural for the Army, a 157 feet long -- it was way ahead of its time. I think it's still ahead of its time. They can't find it right now. It's a fascinating thing. But . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: And in the article, that work was mentioned in a positive way. Let me, I'm sorry . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I kind of am unhappy about the whole article that I have been made a character . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . rather than an artist. I'm a very serious artist. I don't do anything all day long but art. God knows from the time I wake up in the morning until I go to bed . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: But is that really true? Because you have this incredible spread here. You have these projects, in fact, more projects than a whole legion, I think, of people could keep track of and you do an amazing job of it and -- let me ask you this. Let me be real direct. What do you consider as your own, most important, most significant art expression or creative expression? Is it this wonderful environment and the life within it or the drawings, the paintings?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: It's all of it. It's all of it. If you don't think those walls are a work of art, then I've failed because you have no idea what goes into creating those things -- artistically. Into relationship of line, color, form, textures, color distribution, etcetera. And the details that are in there -- they look spontaneous -- you have no idea what I go through creating those artistically. Then if I have too much of that, I go in my studio and I do drawings and paintings and I don't mind telling you but many of the artists who had the ability to do some of the . . . Oh, God, I'm sorry about that. Dabney, can he have another one?

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's okay.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Alright. Many of the artists I've known who were probably my contemporaries are gone now. Now I was -- I think it's important for me right now to tell you that I went to the Yale School of Fine Arts. I studied drawing and painting and composition and what have you but drawing was a phenomenal emphasis. They used to make us draw three hours a day, five days a week. One pose for a -- with a model. We also did Greek drawings and so on. And I very strongly believe that if you can -- if you take these principles of art, the principles of -- that we had in those days -- that you could do almost anything. Drawing is -- whatever you're drawing is your ability to take your hand and create these things so I hope that, you know, I taught at Otis Art Institute for four years, from '60 to '64. I taught from '64 to '67 drawing and painting and it was fascinating that when I was teaching drawing and painting in the '60's -- early '60's . . . have I ever told you this story before?

PAUL KARLSTROM: I'm not sure.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: This is very important. At one point, these three young men and one girl cornered me in the hallway and they said, "Mr. Zorthian, why do we have to draw from the model?" And I said -- it was almost like somebody throw cold water in my face, I said, "What are you trying to tell me? You want to draw something else? Fine." We know more about the human body. We know what we look like. Even if you're an amateur, if you walk down the street with one arm longer than the other, if you're not an artist you know that -- we learned proportions, we learned form, we learned how to express form. "No, no, no", they said. Mind you this was in the

'60's. "No, no, no," they said, "Why do we have to draw at all?"

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah. Now that sounds like a '60's comment. That wasn't unique to Otis.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I said, "What are you trying to tell me?" and they said, "Look at De Kooning. Look at Pollock. Look at their work."

PAUL KARLSTROM: De Kooning is a magnificent craftsman.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: So I said, "How old are you, bud?" He said, "22." I said, "Have you ever seen drawings by De Kooning when he was your age? Or Pollock, who studied with Thomas Hart Benton?" "Yeah, but they have shown us the way. This is the 20th century. We don't have to go through that anymore." So I said, "Look, you wanna be an atheist, it's okay with me, but first read the Bible."

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well said. Well said.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: But I followed the career of those three boys and the girl because that was a shocking, shocking statement.

PAUL KARLSTROM: How did they do?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: None of them, none of them made it so, you know, I believe -- I don't care between hard-edge paintings and, you know, any type of contemporary art that we see today -- you still have to learn how to draw and compose. Learn inter relationship of line and so on. It was ridiculous.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, happily that point of view has come back and it's not a matter of . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Beginnings.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . well, no, this is -- things have changed quite a bit in that respect. For instance, at the -- I happen to know at the San Francisco Art Institute, for instance, even there -- for awhile life drawing -- they offered it but there was almost no interest in that and some of the professors were very frustrated. I happen to know Wayne Thiebaud, who wasn't teaching at the Art Institute but even up at Davis -- some of these, you know, really terrific realist or figurative artists who would meet and draw from the model every week and it was fundamental to their artistic expression. No matter if they were abstract or not. Elmer Bischoff, Diebenkorn. These people valued that. And they would talk, they would bemoan this very situation and I think you're absolutely right but bringing it back to you and to your situation -- I couldn't agree more with you and what you've just said. Drawing -- the importance of drawing, you know, some of the basics, you know, being drilled in this and understanding it before you move on. You, yourself are -- and in this, again referring to the article -- are acknowledged as a very skilled, very capable craftsman.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Does it say that in there?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah. Yes, it does.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Well, it says it in, I think, as if I'm a technician or something.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, I mean . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: That, you see, that's not . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, be that as it may, because you yourself would say -- this leads me to one of my points -- that to have the tools -- the technique is one thing but then, of course, it is what you do with it. And so, you know, let me jump right into this and this is just one of the issues involved here. I think there's no question, referring back to your earlier career involvement with murals, with government arts projects and at that time you were doing some very current work. Work of the moment, if you will. I think what is at issue -- I'm talking about this article . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . what seems to be brought up as an issue is that the technique is evident and there's no question. If you go into the studio and look at the drawings and so forth -- very evident -- but what is suggested -- or at least in my reading of this article -- is that is technique devoid of ideas . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Of what?

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . of ideas.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yes. That's right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And I don't necessarily agree with that but I want to ask you how you would respond to that?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Okay.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You know, what lies behind the . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Right. For instance, 1959, I did an elephant. I wish you could see that elephant. But it was done with power poles, burlap, what-have-you and it was one of the most -- it was shown in a couple of shows. It was done with recycled materials. In it's stomach it had the head of a missionary, Guidebook for Tourists Through The African Jungle, alfalfa and peanuts and so on. It was so far ahead of its time. Then in the article, Laela says, "Zorthian is a trend-follower and he's somewhat influenced by Kienholz." Well, Kienholz, I don't . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Who says that now?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yeah. Laela said this.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Laela?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: That I was a trend-follower for Christ's sakes. I did things before Mela was born that's . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: You mean Laela or Mela?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Le-, Laela . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Laela Weisbaum.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Did I say Mela? Laela. Anyway, the fascinating thing is that I touched on things. For instance, I did . . .

[SESSION 2, TAPE 2, SIDE A]

PAUL KARLSTROM: Continuing this interview -- a second session with Jirayr Zorthian. This is -- date is 8 of July, 1997. This is Tape 2, Side A and you were saying before you were so rudely cut off?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Okay. Well, I had an experience in -- when my daughter was born, Dabney what -- how old was she? I mean, what was the year?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Elsa, you mean?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: When Elsa was born?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Let's see, Allen was 1968 and Elsa was soon afterwards -- 1969. Our doctor told us if you nurse a child, that you won't get pregnant and so we had lots and lots of sex.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And end up with these . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: And I like this. This is good. Go on Dabney.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Go ahead.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: And I got pregnant right away. So she was born right away, too. So the difference between Allen and Elsa was like 13 months or something. And . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: What year was she born?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: She was born in -- let's see, Allen was 1968 and so she was 1969.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: '69. No, she was . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: December . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . no, honey, she was -- died in '69.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: I'm sorry, 1958. 19 -- that's right.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: '59.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: '59 and . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: She was born in 1959. Okay. Those dates are very important because -- I'll tell you why they're important. I have had 7 offspring. With my first wife and my second wife -- I've had some tragedies. I always tell everyone I've had 7 children that I admit to but anyway -- when Elsa was born -- '59, I -- with all of these children, I never, ever saw the birth of a child because it was against the rules to watch -- for a parent to see the birth of a child. But I talked my doctor who gave you birth, you know, helped with the four births of my children -- to let me see the birth. It was the most, most exciting thing that I ever saw in my life and I saw it . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, I saw my daughter born . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And when it was all over, I started doing some of the most exciting, abstract paintings -- to the tune that Jean Varda in San Francisco . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah. Yeah.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . who's one of the great, great said, "Zorthian, these are the greatest things you've ever done." I couldn't get home fast enough to do these quick, quick abstract things. And at that time I also decided to do some pieces of sculpture and I did drawings of what they would look like when I finished. But Dabney and I were so busy trying to make a living and one-third of our income came from our camp -- which we ran a camp for children. Somehow I never got to it. Alright. I did . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Who thought of it?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . I did two of them on my ranch -- years later. No, five years later I saw the work of an artist in New York -- Mark DiSuvero.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And they said, "What a brilliant, new artist with a new direction using recycled materials, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." Well, some years later -- years later I saw -- became a very good friend of Mark DiSuvero when he came to Pasadena and did some pieces of sculpture for the Pasadena Art Museum and so on. And when he saw my drawings, he said, "God, I'm so glad that you didn't do those pieces of sculpture because if you had, I wouldn't be here right now." I mean, you know, isn't it important or isn't it possible that an artist does these things and he doesn't give a hell if people see it or not or, you know?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, yeah, let me ask you about that. That's very much to the point. And again, you know, we refer back to things that were said in the article. You say that it doesn't matter . . . You say or it is said in the article -- one of the observations by some of the people quoted who are close to you -- know you -- some not so close -- and then Gardetta himself chose to quote these. That for all of this talk about the -- let me try to phrase it -- freedom of an artist to create and choose the form of creativity -- the mode responding to an opportunity -- and that it is really a relationship between the creative person -- the artist and the work itself, whether it be an environment, whether it be drawings and so forth and that that's what matter. And that a broader audience -- it could be a few people or it could be many -- [would be nice] nonetheless, the most important thing, as you just said, "Who gives a damn if people see it or not?" On the other hand, the suggestion in this article is that deep down, you would -- that's all well and good to say and fits with the way you have conducted -- created a fascinating, festive lifestyle around your walls -- which I agree are works of art, as you know. The fact of the matter is, the audience is limited and as a few of the people quoted in the article said, that finally, you get right down to it, you would be very pleased to be acknowledged hanging in the Whitney Museum, I think is the institution they mention. Is there truth to it?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I suppose I would be pleased to hang at the Whitney Museum but, you know, that is -- believe it or not -- I really, Paul, do not think that that's too important.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, why -- well, go ahead. Tell me why you say that.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I'll tell you why.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: In the 60's, I did a whole series of works of art, whimsical commentaries on what was going on with the hippies and so on. I did a work of art called Stamp Out Reality. It was a drawing five foot six inches by eight feet high of -- I did something called Love in '67. God, I did some of the most incredible things. It was going to be shown at the Pasadena Art Museum -- by the way, I had a show in the Pasadena Art Museum in 1953 and then this was going to be shown there and Norton Simon bought it and, of course, he . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, he must've told me that. Simon bought a work?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yeah. Norton Simon bought the museum and so . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, bought the museum . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . six months . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . I thought he bought a work?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . no, since then the whole thing fell apart but look I have always -- I don't know what it is but I don't find it that important. Paul, let me tell you something. If you can only just imagine what an artist goes through when he goes into his studio and starts doing a work of art and he works and works and he works. He doesn't stop to urinate. He doesn't stop to drink water. He doesn't stop to eat. And he can work as much as 14, 15 hours, which I have done. And at the end of this, it's almost like having an orgasm without ejaculating. Now, I don't know if that's going to sit very well with your thing but it is the most exciting thing and when you get through doing that, you are more energized than tired.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Now, does any artist -- does any person who does not paint, or sculpt or do things, experience that? That's a -- that's a . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: I'm not sure. I mean, that's a very personal thing and I imagine a very . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No, it's not personal.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, no. I imagine it varies a great deal because . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Michelangelo spent four years doing that Sistine Chapel . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: I know. We know all about him.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . you know what the hell that guy went through, doing that thing? I mean, really, do you realize what -- was he an artist?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Of course, but this, again, is getting into philosophy or abstraction and I know what you're saying but what we need to talk about, because . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: What I'm saying is who the hell cares whether people see it or not, even?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, if that's what you really . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: The experience of doing this . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: I don't think Michelangelo felt that way.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No, no. Of course -- no, I don't know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, we don't know. But I doubt very much . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: I agree with Jirayr. There was, the . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: This is a very romantic notion.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No, it's not a romantic notion. It's the excitement of doing that's more important than having people see it that make you an artist or a character or something.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, then -- but nonetheless -- you know, let's look at this in regards to this situation - to this article because we can only deal with these kinds of [unintelligible], you know? We can't get into too much of the abstractions about this. You know, I'm a big romantic about art and creativity . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I'm not trying to be romantic.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Can I say something very short?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes. Of course. You're always welcome.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Okay. I'll try not to make it as long as the last one. This will be quite short. Alright. I know you said that thing about his wanting to have a work hung on the Whitney and his daughter Barry and I talked to

her about this a lot.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: And I've never quite agreed with her because I more agree with my husband who says about Michelangelo, "That is totally beside the point." I mean, you do the art somehow or another and whether you get, hung ... And Jirayr -- and in a way that's his thing that he -- he wants to explain it to Larry King Live, which is ridiculous as far as I'm concerned but to him, I mean, it's totally -- it's like the artist does the art and he doesn't compromise. He just does the art somehow. That's all I have to say. I don't have anymore.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: But that art has to be good, though. I mean, there are people who can get excited sitting down . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: I get excited and nobody calls what I do art.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No. No. But there are people who can sit down and do things -- hours and hours and so on -- get very excited. But is it valid? Is it a work of art or not?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: One more short thing. Just one very more. There was one book, it was called Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, alright. It's always seemed to me if somebody who can have the gall to write a book called Portrait of the Artist, has to know that he is an artist. Alright, so the artist -- I mean, Michelangelo evidently, probably knew and so forth . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I don't know.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: . . . I mean, I don't have any [unintelligible].

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I don't know what -- I don't know why I brought up Michelangelo. Everybody's gonna . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: I love Michelangelo.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Everybody's gonna consider that I'm . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: It's just a state of mind.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . I'm a Renaissance, uh, lover of Renaissance art . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: This is very . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . which I do, of course. But if any contemporary abstract, you know, abstract artist -- every type of artist that you can think of -- it still doesn't appreciate Michelangelo, they're out of their mind.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Well, it doesn't even matter.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: He is still -- he is the Picasso of the Ren- . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: I don't know anybody -- any artist who doesn't appreciate or any artist [unintelligible] who doesn't appreciate . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I mean, Picasso . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: But, do you see -- forgive me but this gets to be then, beside the point of talking about you because we don't wanna talk about this as if you're casting yourself in the image of Michelangelo . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Of course not.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . this is what it's [unintelligible].

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: That's right. I don't.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: No. It should never be that way.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I'm sorry I brought up his name.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: No. The only reason that -- of Michelangelo is because Michelangelo was a person, possibly with what Fuller called "the inner eye" so Jirayr does not compare himself to Michelangelo.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Michelangelo is simply a great artist -- or was a great artist. It's short and simple.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: He believed in himself.

PAUL KARLSTROM: He believe in himself -- he also scrapped and fought and did who knows what to get the commissions . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . to get the opportunities and he . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: But Jirayr doesn't . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . you know, he actually cared a lot about where he was -- he wanted the most prime spots to be seen and so it's not a good example.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: It's a bad -- because Jirayr has never done that.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No, but . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: And that's what I want to talk about.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . what is -- no, no, the only . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: I don't wanna talk about Michelangelo. I wanna talk about you.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: The one reason I brought him up is that can you imagine a man working and after a year or so, he had not taken his shoes off? But the point is that the dedication to art is so important that . . . you see, it doesn't matter with Michelangelo and so on but it's the desire to create something is so important that unless you do it . . . when somebody once asked an artist, "Why do you do this? Why do you do this work of art?" He said, "Because I have to. Because I have to." It's your existence. You have to do it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I understand and you know that I understand this. But what we're trying to do here, I think, is deal with certain -- the reality of certain issues or questions that are raised by an article because this gives us a chance to talk about bigger issues. And, again, there is the -- there are the observations that, well, let me see -- I have to be careful how I choose words. That there's a kind of dilettantism that you have been able to indulge and enjoy over the years. That you -- you know, you're very -- you're a real presence around here. You're a very visible person. People know who you are, which is, actually, as far as I'm concerned, a kind of artwork in itself but that's another issue. But still, we find that it gets focused back down to certain, more or less conventional media and expressions and sort of being judged out in an art world. Like it or not,uh-oh, I don't know . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Don't interrupt.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: It's okay.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . yeah, like it or not . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Get me another wine, Dabney.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . this is fact of the matter -- that part of what is at work here is an art world and it's an art world that judges on -- and sometimes the judge is wrong and all that -- the impression -- I've read this article, by the way, about five or six or ten times, maybe. I've probably read it as much as almost anybody.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yeah.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: More.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I'm very happy you did that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, and I do it because I keep trying to get at a . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: You did it because you want a good document.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Do a good interview, that's right. But one of the things that is suggested here -- as I said, I use the term dilettantism -- I don't know if that appeared in the article but that's implied. That you prefer to remove yourself from that engagement in the art world, which is being tested and proven by a market -- which I think is capricious. My thinking doesn't matter. And that you have maybe consciously avoided involvement with dealers and with exhibitions and so forth -- the very place where you get validated -- imperfect as it may be. That this has been the way you've conducted your creative life. Kind of an avoidance. And I can't -- I wonder was that always the case? Is it even true? Or what's your response to that?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Okay. Very good. I'm so glad you brought this up. I didn't want to -- situations which happened in my life it was that, you know, I went through Yale School of Fine Arts, went to Europe, won this fellowship, came back, I competed in Euro competitions. I -- salute.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Salute. It's now a matter of official record. That we're drinking wine during this interview.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: You could put a couple of cubes in here, honey. I did a lot of murals and so on but -- so, in those days, my work was with the government. I competed and I . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: You were part of the [unintelligible]?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I competed in a mural for the Bronx post office. Ben Shahn was a famous artist . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh yeah. Yeah.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . who I know very well.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Is that right? You knew Shahn well?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yeah. Ben Shahn won the thing for the Bronx post office. I was a runner-up and because I was a runner-up I got my first mural which started me off in my career. And the war came sometime after that. I had done all these murals in that period. So when I came to California, I decided to go into other type of things than murals. I got a few murals here but most of my work is easel paintings, portraits, abstract paintings and so on. They become more personal kind of thing.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay because -- a more personal kind of thing. That's a point. I just wanna sort of underline that.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Right. That's very important.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I think it's very important.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: At one point, everybody knew -- I wanna emphasize this . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . and it comes out in your Archive -- I hope it will.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I got -- I am not too happy with galleries and they knew I wasn't happy with galleries. Many years ago, I don't know how many years ago, some gallery said, "Look Zorthian, I know you don't like galleries" . . . please put this down, this is very important.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It's going down. Everything you say is going down.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: "I know you don't like galleries". In the first place, they take 50 percent of your income. Right?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And then they promote you, they send out brochures and it's important for them and they have to pay the rent and all that for the gallery but if they have 50 artists and each one of them made \$50,000 through the entire thing, they take 50 percent of the \$50,000 of 50 artists, you know, they make a fantastic sum of money. And I, that's kind of thing . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Some do. Yeah.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . doesn't please me very much. So the . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Is that the reason you don't involve yourself in . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No, no, that's not one of the . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . that's only one of the reasons. But this gallery came to me and said, "Look Zorthian, we know you don't like galleries" and so on, but "we're not even going to, you know, contract or anything. Can't we take some of your line drawings?" See I do these line drawings. If they make it they don't make it, if they don't, I

thrown 'em away. And way back, oh my God, it had to be 25, 30 years ago. And they said, "Look, we will -- we'll give you 50-50, or, you know, you get 50 and we decided to do these line drawings for \$400 each. I would get \$200, they would get \$200. Right?"

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Alright. God, I agreed to it and within, I mean, two weeks, my God, they sold six or seven, then they sold five or six and so it was doing very well. I was beginning to think, "What a nice thing, you know? Maybe I made a mistake."

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm. Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: It was bringing in some kind of an income. One day a friend of mine said, "I want you to go to a collector in Hollywood and see some of his artwork. And I'm gonna take you over there. I've been invited to it." So I went and he had some Picasso lithographs and black and white things of very famous artists. Whole wall of . . . he loved black and white things. Lithographs and drawings and so forth. And lo and behold right among them was one of my drawings. He didn't know who the hell I was, right? Very famous collector. I still don't even remember his name. And so I saw my drawing there and at one point during the middle of the party, I brought him over and I said, "How much did you . . ." -- now mind you I was supposed to get \$200, they get \$200, that's \$400, right? I said, "How much did you pay for this drawing?" and he said "\$700". Now . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: You should get \$350.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Huh?

PAUL KARLSTROM: \$350 is what you should get.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No. So, the money was coming in, I was very happy about that. So what happened was I went to the gallery and they said, "Jerry! Oh, Jerry! Aren't we doing very well? My God, we're selling your work like hotcakes," you know. I said, "how many do you have left?" They were, "We still have seven." I said, "Would you please bring them out?" And they brought 'em out, they lined 'em up. I had a friend with me, Cubby had come with me and so I said, "Okay," to my friend. You take three and I'll take four under my arms and we started walking out. They were, "What are you doing? What are you doing? What are you doing?" I said, "You know God damn well what I'm doing." I don't like that kinda crap. Now I don't know, I don't know why . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Now what gallery was that?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I told other artists about this and they said, "I know Jerry. I know this kinda thing happens but I have a wife and two kids and I've gotta support them."

PAUL KARLSTROM: What gallery was this?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Oh, well, it's gone out of existence.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay. Wh-, wh- . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Two years later they went out -- but I could give you the name of it but . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: But wh-, wh-, where was the gallery?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: It was in, it was in Bel Air.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Beverly Hills or Bel Air?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Near Bel Air.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, really? I never knew of a gallery in BelAir.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Never mind. I don't even want to . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, I think it's interesting.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: But do you see? Do you see what I'm saying? Why I don't like galleries?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, most artists would say they don't like galleries.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Some of them are wonderful.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Some of them are -- I know old-fashioned galleries who think about the artist first and they think about . . . alright I'll give you -- and I won't mention names - if I do she'll be ruined. I had a Mark DiSuvero of sculpture which he gave me as a present, right? Okay. I want to buy a beach house in Baja.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: So I needed to raise some money very quickly. I had a Picasso lithograph. I sold that for something -- for \$8,000 and later it was worth \$90,000. I had this Mark DiSuvero and this gallery said, "Well, maybe we can get . . ." -- Mark himself said, "Zorthian, don't sell it for less than \$15,000."

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, wow.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And they said, "Well, look. We can get it -- I know somebody who will give you \$10,000 for it." So I said, "God, I need the money. Okay. GO ahead and sell it." And this person -- of course it would be disastrous if I told you her name . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, you're not telling me, you're telling art history.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Now she was going to get 10 percent.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And so years later she said, "Jerry, do you know what that thing is worth? What that thing is worth now? That you gave me to sell? It's worth \$90,000 . . ."

PAUL KARLSTROM: Wow.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: " . . . and we only sold it for \$12,000."

PAUL KARLSTROM: Now wait a minute. This is a Mark DiSuvero?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yes. She said, "We only sold it for \$12,000."

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, no.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And I said, "God, you mean to tell me you sold it for \$12,000?"

PAUL KARLSTROM: And it should've been 90?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: This was supposed to be \$10,000 now. She sold -- she told me, "I can only get \$10,000." Which gave her \$1,000. I only got \$9,000. And then she sold it for \$12,000 and made a profit of \$3,000 on my meager little thing that was worth \$90,000 later. Now this is the kind of thing that drives me out of my mind . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . about galleries and those crappy things they pull.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, you see, Jirayr, what you don't like is the art market.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I don't. I love art.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, no, you don't like the art market.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I hate the art world. I wanna get on Larry King Live and expose this God damn racket. It's a racket.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah. You mean, making money out of art is a racket?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Not only making money out of art. But the faith that the -- well, I've given you examples of these things.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JZ: This is what's turned me off these people. Look, for that reason, I have an establishment where I have 45 acres . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Still, I'm not a rich man. I'm wealthy but I'm not rich. If I sell only one portion -- one portion of my property, I'm going to be a millionaire. But I don't care about that because I don't want 50 more houses down below.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right. Right. They would develop it. Yeah.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: So I am very much interested that it stop . . .

[SESSION 2, TAPE 2, SIDE B]

PAUL KARLSTROM: Here we go again. This is the second session with Jirayr Zorthian. It's Tape 2, side B, I think. Concluding, probably concluding this afternoon's session. We've been -- the theme of this interview has been a certain response to the LA Weekly article by Dave Gardetta. It's been fruitful, I think, in raising certain issues for discussion that are important. One of the most, sort of, controversial parts -- the parts that people comment on has to do with this issue that I've been trying to explore and that is Zorthian's art. And by art -- let's think in very narrow-minded terms of pictures. Pictures. What you choose to do in your studio. We're talking about the studio.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Wonderful.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And what we then move into pretty quickly is the artist and the model, which is something, actually, that interests me a great deal. And this is a famous part of your world. These nymphs that appear at the Bacchanal. At the wonderful Primavera party that you have [each May]. People fantasize down there in the flat lands about all these naked girls running around up at the ranch. And, actually, I've never seen anyone running around but maybe you don't invite me to the very best parties. Nonetheless, in the studio -- you walk into your studio -- and I did this about two years ago. Maybe three now. When I first visited. Which is wonderful by the way. And I've enjoyed your friendship ever since. But I walked into that studio and I immediately -- I see a lot of art -- this is my field -- and I saw a figurative artist, very skillful, with large works that were -- I would describe them as a celebration of -- well, it's not my, I'm not gonna be a critic. I'm not gonna critique this. All I know is that which people walk away with is a sense of these obsessively focused works on -- as one of your daughters said -- genitalia. Or both of 'em, I guess. I wanna talk about this. In the final portion of this interview because I think you need an opportunity to -- in a sense -- it's not a defense because this is your business -- but to not respond to this so much as explain how -- what this means in your work, in your art at this time in your life. Jennifer. The so-called Jennifers.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I am so happy that you have touched this aspect of my art. Now, as I've -- I think in the previous part of my interview, you know what I went through -- murals and abstract art and so forth. The past three or four years, I decided to have a retrospective show, okay? When I finish, I am going to show 82 years of art. 82 years. That means from age 5 to the present time.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Wow.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Okay? Now most artists hate to show a retrospective show, which means that they're finished. They're no longer painting. They're finished. They're not anymore. And I didn't want people to feel that I was finished. That, you know, Zorthian was a pretty good artist as a has-been and so on so I decided to do some new things. Now, the past four years I've been doing some new works of art and most of it is involved with the figurative drawing. I love, I love, I love the art, I mean, I love the body. The human body to me is the most exciting thing you can imagine. The form, the crevices, the beautiful things. So most of my later things have had to do with the human body but they are not, they are not -- well, I hope -- you have to see 'em but they are not pornographic. They're erotic, they're beautiful. I love the human -- I love a woman's legs, I love the human woman's body. I love the -- I identify myself with Walt . In fact, I've done a Greek work of art, which is called Three Views of Women...

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . showing all the . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, that's the one that's illustrated in the article.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . wonderful, wonderful, wonderful parts of a woman's body that I have not finished yet. Next to it I have a poem by Walt Whitman, who talks about the crevices, the wonderful things that go in the ear and around the nose and the nostrils and the crevices of the body and so on. I love that and it's -- I'm trying to do it -- now I have not finished another drawing or a great painting I'm gonna do called The Five M. The first one is Five F. Five dimensions of a woman's body. First front view, back view, three-quarters, top and bottom view and then I'm gonna do a male body -- front view, back view, so on. The comparison -- it doesn't mean a damn

thing except the beauty of the human body.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So, that's what those works mean?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: That's what it means.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: What about -- what about the Indian one the Pioneer Barter?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: The what?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: What about the In -- Pioneer Barter or why did you put a naked Jennifer in the Pioneer Barter or -- because that's not only the human body. That also has some sort of social message?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Oh, that was -- no, no, don't distract that. That's different.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Okay. Sorry.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: But the thing that's interesting about the human body is I love, I love the human body and I love the -- the shoulders of a man, the biceps, the torso, his penis, his legs, and so on. I love the human, I love the woman's vagina. All of those things -- I love the crevices and everything else. I hate pornography but what's wrong with the human body? Why are people afraid of looking at a human body?

PAUL KARLSTROM: So what the -- the Five -- what does the Five F mean? Is it a celebration?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: It doesn't mean a damn thing except that was something . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, it's gotta mean something or it's not art.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No, it doesn't mean . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Jirayr.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: In my opinion.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It's gotta mean something or it's not art.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: My interpretation is it doesn't mean anything except the beauty of the human form. You know the film that was made in France -- came over for five days and they made a film of me and when they saw these things, she said, "Oh, this is gonna be wonderful. It's gonna be wonderful." But, I say, "You can't show this on television?" She says, "Why not?" I said, "Because they are nudes" and she said, "You Americans are hypocrites."

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's right.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: "We can show anything we want . . ."

PAUL KARLSTROM: Major prudes.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . in France."

PAUL KARLSTROM: [unintelligible].

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: What is wrong with the American people that they can't show a human body? Now if they -- if it's offensive to them, that's their problem, not mine.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I agree. What about the -- remember now, I'm just the interviewer. What about the description of your work of the Jennifer series or Jennifer works as "cunt art?"

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Jennifer?

PAUL KARLSTROM: And I repeat it so the tape recorder knows that the article used the term "cunt art" meaning - and what that means is that the subject of these works is the vagina.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Who?

PAUL KARLSTROM: It's . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I would like to know who made that remark. It doesn't matter. Whoever made it, I think,

couldn't be very bright. If he had just said, "Vagina", "Vagina" . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Vagina art.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . .Vagina, I would've accepted it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, now, I don't know about that.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: When he says . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: I don't agree with you. Dabney, you tell me what you think about this.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No. no. But if he's -- when he said, "cunt art", it becomes a little derogatory.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, I don't know about that.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: It's not. I mean . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: I don't think it's a bad word. Do you?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: There's more than -- okay, can I say just . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes. Yeah.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: And I hate to interrupt [unintelligible].

PAUL KARLSTROM: I would love the artist's wife on this subject. This is good. Yeah.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: No, to me, Jirayr, tell me if you disagree with me. That your art is not "vagina art" or "cunt art". What it is is just art which does not take away the fact that we have these really important sensations and parts of our body, which I really love. That it's there makes it "cunt art" to everybody else in the whole United States of America because we've been taught that we don't have vaginas and penises and we have to . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Right. I'm so glad you brought that up.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: I mean, you were brought up in Armenia in Turkish bath houses where you saw everybody's and so you take it for granted that you've got one so you put it there and you do not deny it. That's to me . . . there's a lot of other stuff . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: [unintelligible]

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: . . . going on in your art, nobody even sees it because all they see is the things that they have been deprived of for their entire lives.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Dabney. Not only do I not deny it but I find nothing wrong with it. For God sakes, look, I hate, I hate, but I hate pornography. I hate films where they show some woman having sex and she's going, "uh, uh, uh, uh", which is ridiculous and very phony but eroticism is a very exciting and important in our -- where the hell would anybody be here if your father and mother didn't get erotically excited with each other and had you as you are. Right? So on. That's very, very important. Now, vagina is a beautiful thing. A buttocks is a beautiful thing. We go around saying to somebody -- you see a beautiful girl in a cocktail party and it's okay for you to say, "You have lovely neck, you have a beautiful long neck. Beautiful shoulders." Or you might even have the nerve enough to say, "You have beautiful legs." Why can't you tell somebody that she has beautiful breasts? Or she has a beautiful buttocks? Or she has, you know, she has a beautiful vagina?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, because you used to never see that.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Why is this taboo, in my opinion? It's all the same damn thing.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: The human body.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So, what are these drawings, these recent works that we're talking about -- actual works in your studio -- what are they saying? Is that what they're saying?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: They're not erotic, they're . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, no, no. Is that what they're saying?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . they're tactual.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: But, okay . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Why did you choose the . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Why did you put Jennifer into Pioneer Barter or why did you . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Can we talk about that? [unintelligible]

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Okay. Alright. Pioneer Barter.

PAUL KARLSTROM: 'Cause it's a very, by the way, for the sake of the tape, because most people . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: You're going to be able to show this Pioneer Barter?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really, well hopefully we're going to have slides and photos.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Okay.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But here is what has to be considered a major work of yours of the last few years. Is it two years ago . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yeah, those are my last few years but don't forget I'm 86 years old.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Everybody knows.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's, that's, no . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: This is only my last few years.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, that's . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: No we want, we want . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Why do people want to judge me by my last few years?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Forget it Jirayr, come on. We wanna know why it is . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: We wanna understand . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: . . . that you put a naked Jennifer into Pioneer Barter?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: In . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: What is that? [unintelligible]

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Pi-, Pion- . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . phrase this a little bit . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Why I put Jennifer . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: A naked woman.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . partially nude . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Totally nude, except, no she was . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, no, no, no. Wait a minute. Wait a minute.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: She's not totally nude.

PAUL KARLSTROM: May I, may I rephrase this a little bit? Because this is a work and I have been like four or five times in your studio and am grateful of the access and so forth, with different people. The first time, my wife and George and Valerie -- or I guess the second time because I had visited. And this is part of the ritual or the routine in the studio is to then -- is people are up to it, take a look at the erotic and then more erotic works. None of which I find shocking, by the way. I go on record as saying that. But one of the -- the most problematic work and in the time left to us, I would like to have a little conversation about this -- is the work, I can't remember, what is

it called?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Pioneer Barter.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes. Pioneer Barter, it's called. And this is a -- it's a big work. It's . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Black and white.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . it's important because of it's size. It's presence.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: It's not only important but it's a very important emotional thing in my life. Go ahead.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well good. No, so good. What we -- what I would like to hear, then, is, having been in there and been with different people saying it is your description of what that work means. I know what it looks like. I'm just the interviewer.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Okay.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What does it mean? What's it about?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I will tell you. Is there a possibility that when you get this interview, somebody will see what that work of art looks like?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah. That'll be part of your papers.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Okay. Alright. Now, for instance, it -- that particular drawing, I kept in black and white to make it very, very serious, Paul, because it has so much to do with my background and my early, early life. I was born in Turkish Armenia -- 1911 and four years later the Turks killed a million and a half Armenians in a massacre. I was in Turkey until I was nine. I don't even wanna go through the horrible things I went through where I saw executions, I saw people have their heads chopped off and I saw people raped and so on. And they killed a million and a half Armenians and so on. We were very lucky to come here but on the way here we lived in Italy -- my father, wonderful father, who took me through all the museums through Europe. Finally we came to the United States. But that has to do with my feeling about the way, you know, the Genocide. When I came to this country, and I found the way the American, the Americanos, treated the Native Americans -- it has been an obsession with me all of my life. So, when that film -- are you listening?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: When that film . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: I'm always listening [unintelligible].

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . Dancing With Wolves . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . came out, I thought it was high time I did something on the way the American, the Americanos -- your clean-cut Americanos, treated the American Indian. Okay? I know Dabney wanted to know why I put Jennifer with her buttocks showing, with her chaps and there's another girl over there, could be half Indian and half white, with this monstrous looking pioneer who has the head of a blood sucking bat . . . are you listening to this?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes. Yes. Believe me.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And I have all of his guns and his swords and his mucho macho what-have-you, what he used to -- when your early pioneer, contrary to what the movie always portrays him as a great pioneer -- he was nothing but a sleazy, horrible individual. He was usually very ignorant. Never had a college education and he violated the women by giving them drinks, you know, and trinkets and so on and so on and these women, his own wives -- not wives, they weren't even married most of the time -- he didn't, you know, he didn't treat her very well and she didn't live very long working on the farm and so forth. He lived much longer than she did. A woman was not permitted to vote until she was 20 . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right. Right.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . 1926. So, that's what I was trying to express in that thing.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What about the -- now wait a minute. What about the voting? No wait, I don't understand

that.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: What?

PAUL KARLSTROM: The woman not being allowed to vote. Are you saying that this bad guy was controlling these women?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: You know the drawing I'm talking about?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Of course. Yeah. The one we're talking about.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Okay. What happened -- which was very interesting. I -- there was a friend of mine who lived here for a while. He's become a very fine architect and he's doing a lot of things in Las Vegas and he came to me and he said, "Zorthian, how much would you want for that work of art?" I said, "Well, with my reputation, I should get at least \$125,000 dollars." And he said, "Oh, come on Jerry, these people I think would like to buy this. I'm doing a club in Las Vegas that's going to be -- they have so much money, they don't know what the hell to do with." He said, "I think I can get \$135,000 and we'll take the last \$10,000 and divide it between the two." We're working out a little operation, right? So I gave him my film which was done in France, *The World According to Zorth*, which put me into a very, you know, very wonderful position. And he brought that over and he showed them the film. Showed photographs of the work, everybody thought it was just wonderful and one of them -- they thought it was wonderful and they said, "How much does he want for this thing?" "He wants \$135,000 dollars." So, they said, "Well, if he's a known artist, we can see by his film that he's a fantastic artist and so on, that sounds reasonable." But the main man who owned the thing came over and said, "Who the hell is that figure in the center with a blood sucking bat on his head?" He said, "Well, that's the man who violated all the women." He said, "Who the hell does he think he is portraying the noble pioneer with a blood sucking head?" All these years we have been conditioned that the noble pioneer with the John Wayne type. Now, had I been a whore and said, "Look, I'll do you another drawing and put John Wayne's head there," I could've been \$135,000 ahead. This is the kinda thing, Paul, this is the kinda thing that drives me out of my mind.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Can I say one little thing before going off?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No. No. This is the . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Yes. But let me say something first. This is interesting work because it seems to operate on many different levels and I'm gonna tell a little story and then let that be sort of the last observation around which the discussion can go. There is the observation in this article in the *LA Weekly* and among other people, that there is an obsessive focus on what some people call "tits and ass".

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: What?

PAUL KARLSTROM: "Tits and ass. T and A." Which me- . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Wait, wait, wait. I don't . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: That "tits" is breasts and "ass" is . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: "Tits and ass?"

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: "Tit,", that means your bosoms with your nipples and your "ass" which . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, we don't need to explain this to the tape.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: You know what their problems are?

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, no, no, no. Let me just and then you . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: [unintelligible]

PAUL KARLSTROM: And there have been observations -- in fact, I was, you know, we were up here recently and went into the studio with a very smart group of people and I have to admit, I can see this as perpetually an issue. We're looking at the works and everybody is saying, you know, admiring the craftsmanship, the draftsmanship, the interest and enthusiasm about the subject. And what I understand this to be and what I see is that people begin to think that there's this focus -- major interest in bodies. Not so much to celebrate but perhaps to consume the opportunity to interact with these bodies.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: To sens -- sensuous . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: These young bodies.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: To exploit . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sexy, young -- I don't -- no, no. The art isn't necessarily exploitation. It is an interaction. It's the artist to model thing. And I, actually, know a bit about this but in this one -- let me just tell one recent incident with friends who went into the studio with me and this particular friend, a woman, whom you know, whom we won't name her particularly. It doesn't matter on the tape. We were looking at Pioneer Barter. Looked at it and said -- and Jirayr is saying, explaining it in these terms that are, you know very important. There's no question. If this is the theme of the work, it's very significant and very important, but you can say that this is the theme of the work but if you want people to look at it, what they see in it matters and if you don't communicate it, what she said was, "Okay, if this is what it's about, what's with all the T and A?"

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Um-hmm.

PAUL KARLSTROM: "What's with all the tits and ass? Why is" -- she didn't know it [the model] was Jennifer, we know it's Jennifer, "standing there with her cute ass hanging out of her chaps?"

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Was that -- was that a beautiful buttocks?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Wasn't that, wasn't . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: And then she turns, she turns and lets her tits show.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Wait, wait, wait Paul.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, let me finish and then you respond.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Wasn't that a beautiful buttocks?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Give him a chance Jirayr.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You get the rest of the tape. But I think this actually matters a lot because what we wanna know is how -- what you really care about in these works? What are they really about? And some very smart people who are not prudes at all -- they're big-time non-prudes, they look at these and say, "Hey, what story are you really telling here?"

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Okay. Did you ever -- in every drama, Shakespeare, I think, is wonderful in this, no matter how serious his drama is, he -- in every piece of work he does, he adds a little, a little, a little diversion of a little humor or distraction or -- away from the seriousness of the whole damn thing, right?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: You know what the theater is. Now, in my thing, too -- what's wrong with a woman's buttocks, for heaven's sake? Alright. I want to show that the pioneer was so much sexually involved. He went and played the cowboy scene and brought the cows in and so on. When he came home, he had the woman and so forth. But what's wrong with showing a woman's buttocks? What's wrong with that? That's a beautiful thing to look at. It goes back to what I was saying. Americans are so G-d Damn frustrated sexually that you can go . . .

[SESSION 2, TAPE 3, SIDE A]

PAUL KARLSTROM: Continuing a second session with Jirayr Zorthian up at the art ranch. This is, I think it's still 8 July, 1997. And this is now Tape 3, Side A. And I think we're now really into the good stuff. Well, all of it was good but this is very much to the point. In part responding to, I think, a whole direction, a slant, within that article. But also -- and I have to say this -- a response of many people who are thoughtful, they know their art and they care about art. But when they walk into the studio, they're confused.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Such as my father.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: They're confused because they believe that art is important and it has a message and they look and as this one woman visitor friend of mine who I brought up here -- when she visited she said, "You're sending mixed messages. If you really believe in the importance of this subject," and she wasn't doubting that you believed it. Which was genocide. It was the horrible way Native Americans were treated. Why do you give this side show of "T and A?" What do Jennifer's butt and breasts add to a very important . . . okay, I'm not saying this. I'm just, again, opening the question.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Now, very interesting. I wish that I could show what I'm gonna say in that film that was made from France. Some woman came here years ago, about three months before . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Yeah, you said that already three times Jirayr.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No, no, wait. And she said, "You Americans" -- when she saw the nudes, she said . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, now I . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: We have that.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: You've said that, okay. Okay.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah. Yeah. We have that.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: You don't have to repeat it.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: We don't wanna go through that again.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay. So Americans are prudes. Let me put a finer point on this. What does this imagery that you have selected, which you look at the Five F, you look at many of the other drawings and you see this celebration and I actually will go on tape as saying that I appreciate this. I like these.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: You told me something, Jirayr, that was . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: But what does it have to do -- how does it enhance or reinforce -- what does it have to do with this very important issue that you believe that that painting's about?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Jirayr, also, you told me something which every time you've told it to me -- you've told it to me about three times -- is that that the man with the bat head sort of used and abused women. Okay. Let me tell -- get my take on this . . . out of the way so that I don't have to worry about it anymore.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay. Go Dabney.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: I believe that you feel that men use and abuse women. That's what you told me. And that being naked like that showed, you know, proved that men used and abused women.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Aha.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: And that also related to me, that to the olden times of the 1960's when you were doing your other articles of men using and abusing women, let me see, in -- oh, okay -- for instance, in Stamp Out Reality, which is a major work of the world ever in the Buckminster Fuller time, to me, in my opinion, you know of ever, Stamp Out Reality really needs to be examined. It has never been shown except by the Armenian Allied Artists.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: It doesn't matter, honey.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Okay. But in Stamp Out Reality, the person who is standing there says, "I would never have killed the zebra if Zorthian had not told me to."

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No, he said, "I didn't wanna kill the zebra, but Zorthian told me."

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Alright.

PAUL KARLSTROM: To?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: No, no, the "to", I don't think there is the "to."

PAUL KARLSTROM: Told him ,Zorthian told him to kill the . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: No, her.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Her?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: To kill the zebra. You haven't seen . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Blaming it on Zorthian?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: No, this is it. That the woman . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Explain this, yes.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Alright. You've wanna figure this out. Okay.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Remember, this is a tape.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Oh, no, it didn't say, "told me", "Zorthian made me."

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: "Zorthian made -- "I would not have killed the zebra but Zorthian made me." Alright. In Pioneer Barter this -- and also this is a gorgeous woman, too and you've gotta look at Pioneer Barter, I mean, really look at it now that you . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: I've look at it lots of times.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Pioneer Barter?

PAUL KARLSTROM: I'll look at it again.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Oh, you have? Okay. But did you get that part about she wouldn't have killed the -- she is the one who killed the zebra?

PAUL KARLSTROM: I've gotta look at it again. Okay.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Okay. Okay. This naked woman in Pioneer Barter has a gun in her hand.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Smoking gun.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Stamp Out Reality.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: No, Pioneer Barter is different from Stamp Out Reality. Stamp Out Reality was done about 1962 . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Right.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Pioneer Barter was done in 1991. Alright. So, okay, in Pioneer Barter, there's a smoking gun and there's a dead Indian . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes. Yes. That's what we're talking about.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: It's the same thing. There's no difference. They're the same picture. Stamp Out Reality from 1962 is the same thing as Pioneer Barter. You've gotta look at it. That's all I can say. That there's a total -- he's just repeating the same picture time after time and he is probably the greatest feminist that has ever lived . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: What?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Really. You are probably . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: What did you just say?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Feminist. Better than Gloria Steinem. You have more to say about feminism than Gloria Steinem could even come up with. Let's see, I just thought of something else that's now escaped me that you said about it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, this is what other people said about him. I'm just quoting the people.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Dabney, are you being recorded? Honey?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yep.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: As a feminist -- as a supporter of the feminist view point -- oh, Twiggy. Twiggy. Twiggy. Alright. This is a total support of how -- look, the Nazis and Hitler, do you remember that?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes. Are they in this, too?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Yes. Absolutely. Totally. It's the Holocaust. Are you kidding?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Jirayr, is that correct?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Oh, come on Dabney.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: It is totally correct.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: What way are you gonna attach this to this. Okay, you say something against what I have to say. The Nazis and Hitler is in the same painting as Twiggy, who is starving. I mean, she's this rag of bones . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: I remember Twiggy, yeah.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: We know Twi-, actually met Twiggy with her second husband and all it did was verify everything that we ever -- that he intuited about this whole situation. Twiggy is a bag of bones and this delighted, happy bag of bones with somebody controlling her. She's a puppet on a string with somebody controlling her. Jirayr . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Listen to this.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, no, no. NO wait a minute . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: If this does not go with what you say, please tell me in what way . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No, no, it's fine.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But I just wanna make sure that this connects to that particular painting we're talking about.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: It does. Totally.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay. Good. And do you agree? 'Cause all of this is gonna get transcribed and we wanna make sure -- okay.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I did a paint-, drawing - painting . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, now wait a minute . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: He'll go on -- he doesn't even know what he's doing but it totally connects.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What does Twiggy have to do with this painting?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Everything.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I did a drawing of Twiggy in the '20's [?]. . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: I should save our dinner . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: . . . it's getting burned up, as you can smell. It's gonna be totally ruined.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, it isn't.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: You know, the trouble, Paul, is this. I've had people come over here from the high society -- what is their magazine, Dabney?

PAUL KARLSTROM: High Society magazine?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No, Dabney?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: What?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: What is the high society -- Junior League, Junior League.

PJK: I know about it.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: They're the highest tooty toot, money, what-have-you.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: They used to be but I don't think they're like that.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: She came over to write a story about me and she said, -- I took her through, I showed her everything -- this was years ago, I can't imagine -- long before I did all kinds of things -- it had to be at least 30 years ago, and she said, "Mr. Zorthian, I'm supposed to write an article about you." So I took her around and she said, -- when it ended she said, "Mr. Zorthian, I'm sorry, but I could never write anything about you. It is too much for me. I can't conceive of it. Please forgive me. I can't do this thing. It needs somebody who is, you know,

blah, blah, blah, much bigger than I am" or something. That was way back in -- and since then I've done incredible things but she -- way back in those days -- she couldn't write an article because she couldn't figure it out.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Okay. Let me quickly connect Twiggy to Pioneer Barter.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Alright. As fast as I possibly can. Except that -- okay so, this person controlling Twiggy, she's a puppet. In the background is a big stack of people. He hasn't put it in. He cannot bear to do it. It's connected with the Armenian Holocaust but it's these globs of people -- he's told me about it, that's the only way. . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: . . . he won't tell you about it because I just had to get it out of [unintelligible].

PAUL KARLSTROM: What? He won't tell me everything?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: No, no, no, no. I had to get and I remembered it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay. Okay.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Okay. So, he's got this stacks of people who are starving, are dead or something that are cadaver-like, you know, starving people. Like the Armenians, like the Jews and so forth. And there's Twiggy, this delightful person being controlled by somebody. Alright. So this is compared to the Nazis being controlled by Hitler. Okay, meanwhile, there are these people with cameras taking pictures of Twiggy. Alright. That can be connected to, you know, the Nazis killing the Jews but it's a whole different thing. But that is connectable to Pioneer Barter in the way that, as Jirayr explained it to me, which he wouldn't do it to somebody else, that that the woman is taken over and doesn't have a chance unless, just as the Nazis or just as all of us, any of us that partake -- and it doesn't even have to do with women or men -- are taken over if they will consent to be taken over.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Look, Dabney. None of, none of, none of, none of these things mean anything unless . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: He'll deny the whole thing.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . people see my art.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: I don't think that I could say anything more but it's just something that came . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, that's . . . hey, you've been around watching and listening to this.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Anyway, Paul, I'm so glad we've had this interview.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: So, I think, that maybe totally [unintelligible].

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, no, no, not at all. This is the way ideas come forth.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I have another one. I think we've covered enough, don't you think?

PAUL KARLSTROM: No. I think that I'm gonna ask you one more time . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Okay.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . for this tape -- one more time . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Okay. Can you see how thorough Paul Karlstrom is?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: This is such a great university [unintelligible] these people who were responsible.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: He won't, he won't, he won't, he won't . . . now wait, wait, wait. Dabney, please listen to me first before I finish my sentence, for Christ's sake.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Okay.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: He won't let anything go until he gets everything.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Aha. It's probably Philip Cornelius.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Go in the other room.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, knocks. Let me just ask you one more time, just for the sake of continuity here -- the issues you raise in that picture, Pioneer Barter, is that what it's called? Yes. The bat. Are very important. Everybody agrees they're important. What people who observe it say is that it's compromised by very soft, tender butts, and tits, of these cute girls . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: That's their problem.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, but -- if you care about the message, the story you're telling, you don't wanna send mixed signals. This is what they would say. What do you say to that?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: My answer to that question is that when Shakespeare did a work or, you know, wonderful drama -- every so often he would break away and do something which would add a sense of humor or something distracting . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . to break the seriousness or the ominousness. I mean, the subject is so incredibly horrible, that you have to do something to counteract it. Now, if you find that disturbing -- a woman's buttocks, at the same time, is beautiful to look at and that is a good distract of the situation. I don't wanna quote Michelangelo again . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah. Right.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . but when he did the Sistine Chapel, every one of his people were nude and a Cardinal, who was so upset about this -- criticized him, so he -- you never mess with an artist. He put this Cardinal in the depths of hell with a snake whirling around his body, biting his testicles.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, man.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And when he complained to the Pope, he said, the Pope said, "I'm sorry, Cardinal, but I only have communications with Heaven, not with Hell," because he put him in the [unintelligible] of hell. Because he loved the human body. What's wrong with the human body, for Christ's sake?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Nothing. Nothing. Nothing.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I just wanna show the -- any chance I get, I wanna show the human body. His buttocks, his legs, his torso, his penis, his [sic] vagina, everything. What the hell is wrong with that?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Nothing.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And if it -- and the people don't understand it, I'm sorry.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I think this is a great place to end this interview. Because our guests . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Are here.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . your guests are here. Lyn Foulkes has just arrived. Thank you, Jirayr.

[SESSION 3, TAPE 1, SIDE A]

PAUL KARLSTROM: Smithsonian Institution. This is the Archives of American Art continuing an interview with Jirayr and Dabney Zorthian. This is Session 3, probably the concluding session tape. Tape 1, Side A. July 9, 1997. The interviewer for the Archives is Paul Karlstrom, as before. And this is our attempt to tie up some loose ends because I think that yesterday we introduced very important topics. We worked around them and we chewed on them but some points seem to need another chance or some resolution or some clarity. And Dabney, you had several points that you really wanted to make -- you felt strongly about yet felt that yesterday you didn't make the point as strongly or as clearly as you had hoped and so now is your chance to reiterate that and to concisely bring it together.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Alright, shall I go?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: [Reading from prepared text] Alright. Consistent from the start in 1964 of Pioneer, no, I'm sorry, of Stamp Out Reality to Pioneer Barter in the 1990's was something that has come. Women blame men or

woman blames man for "making" her do something she feels (knows) is unethical, like war, Hitler and the Na-, like what Hitler does to the Nazis. An old-fashioned man is subjected to women's liberation (feminism, Gloria Steinem)-- The Death of Piggy -- that came before Stamp out Reality and was the first one that had to do with . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Now these are names of paintings?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Right. Names of paintings. Okay. I'll say, names of paintings that -- after the old-fashioned man was subjected to women's liberation, The Death of, let's see, Pilareed By Feminism, a painting, "The Accident" by it's reality he reacts. Stamp Out Reality is one example. We forget to mention "Triangle" from the 1940's. This is unexplained territory that requires time, patience and a tabling of prejudice. Tabling, I may mean another word but I couldn't think of anything else. And tabling of prejudice and preconceived notions. It is vague -- the vaguest in it's unexamined because unexplored and unacknowledged mystery to be solved. If any acknowledge such vague connection does the artist issues an invitation. Sorry, I couldn't quite read my own writing. That's enough. That's it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay. Before you go away, why don't you say that again but just say it. Tell it to me rather than putting it into some poetry with writing, diacritical [unintelligible].

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: I just wanted to get un- . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah. That's fine.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Go ahead. That was good.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's fine. But I mean there's some main point that you're trying to make there.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: The main point is that there is . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: One point.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: . . . a mystery . . . okay, the one main point is that from the -- way back in the '60's and it started then when he was totally avalanched by women's liberation and he'll talk to you negatively about Gloria Steinem and so forth and feminism and so forth. He made one thing consistently that's gone through, which is that women do things that they do not believe in because men tell them to do it. You'll find that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And that's what these paintings -- series of paintings over the years -- probably what they're about? Is this what you're saying?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Well, I don't know if it is not but it certainly was totally obvious to me that they do things . . . then the connection to the Holocaust is that and the Holocaust is nothing in comparison to what the Armenians suffered . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: I wouldn't overstate that but I don't think you wanna be quoted that way.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: . . .or what the Indians . . . no, no, excuse me, right, I understand that. No, no, alright, we won't overstate or anything like that. There is a relationship like a sibling relationship. Okay, say it's a sibling relationship. The Armenian is the older sibling to the Holocaust, which is the younger sibling -- both of them to what happened to the Indians by the Americans, which nobody wants -- I mean, by the British or whoever took over the United States of America. So, I mean, those all go together. Nudity, I did not go into in my 50 second statement, which is going over 50 seconds because Jirayr only can explain it -- he's explained it to me really well and convincingly when he explained it to you the last time. He deviated, he went into, like, how the art world and Michelangelo and everything so maybe and maybe not, he'll be able to deal with it. I can't explain that to you. But it is something about the vulnerability of the human spirit and the importance of what he's doing is almost like -- it's a very difficult thing for certain men to go through the fact that women are actually able to think for themselves. I don't think I have anything more to say, really.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Let me ask you one more question, if I may. If you're going over it's my fault 'cause I'm asking questions, see? It's not your fault. But you said that, earlier on, in talking about the, what is the name of that painting, the American Pioneer . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Pioneer Barter.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Pioneer Barter. Right. I'm gonna remember that [title]. Anyway, we were talking about that at some length yesterday and we'll talk about it a little more today because it seems to be a critical painting around which many issues revolve. It's useful. And do you -- well when you and I were talking about it, you said that when you first saw it or at some stage, you said, "Why the naked Jennifer in this painting?"

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Would you explain a little bit what you were thinking? How you felt about the use of this imagery in that particular work?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Jirayr?

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, no.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Why the naked Jennifer? I have nothing to say about that. Why?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I'll tell you that when it's my turn.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Okay. It's his turn. I have nothing to say about it. It's only he . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Do you wanna do it now or do [you] want [to wait]?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Yeah, do it now Jirayr.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Do you wanna to do it [discuss] now?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sure. Yeah.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Alright. Did you notice that naked Jennifer was wearing chaps? Right? Okay?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Alright. Now the chaps emphasize her beautiful buttocks. Did you notice right next to Jennifer was a horse's buttocks? Okay? Are you listening?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Okay. Now there was nothing else shown in her except part of her breast. Now, in my opinion, all this business of John Wayne and all this glorification of the pioneer barter, of the noble pioneer is a lot of baloney. They loved their horses sometimes more than they loved their women and I want to show a similarity between his girlfriend's buttocks and a horse's buttocks. And that horse's buttocks was his main occupation. That was his great passion. And a woman was just like one of his possessions. She did anything she wanted to the tune of shooting that Indian even. If you notice that there's a -- she has just finished shooting the Indian. In other words, women were nothing but something they violated. They got 'em drunk and gave 'em trinkets and they were just a passing [unintelligible]. A woman wasn't permitted to vote until 1926, wasn't it? Something like that. Somewhere around there, I don't remember. But what I was trying to show in all of my drawings and paintings, I try -- I'm explaining something to you, which I shouldn't. I want people to read what they want to read into it. I don't want to insult the intelligence of viewer. If they can't figure that out, it's okay. I did it -- my idea was showing the pioneer who came West and he had complete control of the atmosphere, he had complete control of the Indians. He had complete control of anything. The only good Indian was a dead Indian. He destroyed them, he killed them. What-have-you. He was a monster. He actually was a dirty, horrible individual who never took a bath. He was not that noble pioneer. Sure, there were a few wonderful people who came from the East and tried to put a normal life here but most of 'em were just a big bunch of ignorant, crappy people. And their attitude toward women I was trying to display in this thing.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: See why I say that he -- I sort of consider him almost a great feminist?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Feminist?

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: He doesn't realize that.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: 'Course I'm a feminist, I love women. I think they're wonderful.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, that's not exactly the same thing, although it can be. You celebrate women. Would you say you celebrate women?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I don't like -- I think Gloria Steinem had the wrong idea. I think she destroyed women. She got involved with a lot of lesbians and so on. But that's another story. I -- okay -- Dabney, I think you kind of . . .

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Well, sorry.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That was good. This is good. Let me ask you, you know, before we break and . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Before Dabney leaves.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . [unintelligible] go off touring around and so forth. But that I gather, then, is the theme of that painting, what you just described? This has to do with your expose_ of the true circumstances, conditions with the pioneers. A very sinister side of what is presented as a very romantic ideal?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Exactly.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And that the victims and you have to tell me if I'm right in my understanding, now. I didn't understand any of this, by the way, by looking at the painting but that's another issue. But you've told me. You've helped me.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Well, there's a surrealistic aspect of it, too.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Have you seen the drawing? Yeah, you know it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Don't forget surrealism.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Do you remember the man has the head of a blood sucking bat.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh yeah, I remember this very well.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: But, I mean, that's important because he's a horrible . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: And you, then, I gather, are equating the plight of women with the plight of the Native Americans. Is that right?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Well . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: To a degree?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yes. The woman was his possession, it was not somebody he cherished and loved the way we do today and have children so they were just like their cows and their horses and their chickens and so on. If you read between the lines of the American history, at least that's the way it is with me. Now if you feel differently about the noble . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, it doesn't matter what I [unintelligible].

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . noble American who came West and built up the country.

DABNEY ZORTHIAN: Innocent bystander.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's true. I'm just the observer. I'm just the documentator.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: You don't have to agree with it. That is what I feel in that Pioneer Barter and it came from the way I felt when the Turks destroyed -- massacred the Armenians. We did things to the Indians you can't believe. Giving them blankets that were infested with chicken pox. You know, the kind of things that -- the only good Indian was a dead Indian. You know, all that kind of . . . right now all of us say, "Oh, well, I wasn't there then, you know. I wasn't responsible." But . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Do you, do you think that . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . it happened.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And I think that almost everybody who's knowledgeable now would agree with that. But do you feel that that work . . . I just admitted that I didn't get it. This may be my density that I didn't get this as the theme of the work -- I had to listen to you tell me about it. Do you feel that the means that you have used were the most effective ones to make that very important point?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Do you think I achieved the . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah. That . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . thing I'm talking about?

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . with the means you chose?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I think I did. If you can't read that in there then, as I said, I don't try to insult the intelligence of the viewer. If you can't feel what I felt when I did that, that's fine.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, sometimes it's very, very difficult to make that kind of connection because we can all feel deeply and, you know, hope that we express it effectively.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Could it possibly be that you still have some hangover of your Victorian background where nudity bothers you?

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, no, actually it doesn't.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: First place, I think nude, you know, I don't find nudity bothersome at all. I think if a person has a beautiful body, he should go to all cocktail parties absolutely nude. If he has blemishes on his body, he should put on clothes. I mean, I don't care how fancy a party it is. The fact that a person is nude is not the important thing, in my opinion. You can use that nudity to make a point. I hate pornography. I think pornography should be used for badly designed automobiles, badly designed buildings, anything that's in bad taste. I hate those horrible films where the woman is having sex and she's going, "ah, ah, ah, ah" and you know damn well she's not even, you know, there but eroticism is a beautiful thing. If your mother and father didn't get erotically involved, you wouldn't be here today, would you? Nor would you, nor would you. They had to get . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Nor would you.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Nor would I. They had -- and a lot of young people think, "Oh, did my father actually, you know, have intercourse with my mother? I can't believe this." What are we -- what's the matter with us?

PAUL KARLSTROM: After about a 15 minute break, we begin again. Dabney and your very nice guests -- two women -- have left the room so it's just the two of us now and the kitty cats. I don't know, Jirayr, if we really need to continue to pursue this issue of different points of view regarding the effectiveness of subjects or means to express ideas. I mean, I asked that question several times in different ways yesterday and then earlier on today's tape -- I was very happy that you -- I thought very clearly stated what your concerns were in that painting. What the theme was and why you incorporated these images of young women partly nude, the bat -- we keep talking about Pioneer Barter -- and that stands. Those are the reasons. The only question I feel obliged to ask is this. You have a rather horrific subject but you have very -- sort of sweet and seductive images of women. It's not the nudity. I do want to say this because you seem to feel that it's a kind of puritanical objection to nudity, which I would like to set that aside. I don't think that it's quite that simple. I think it's -- perhaps it's the kind of nudes, the kind of nudes that are represented within an otherwise horrific theme and I don't know, do you have any thoughts on that? You know, why you made those choices?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Were you recording those things when I told you about the pioneers . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes. Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . possession of the horse and the woman and that they were possessions rather than -- they were his possessions and I wanted to show similarity, in my opinion, of the fact that this was his property.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And very often, I think, he was happier or he loved his horse more than he loved his -- I can't always say wife because very often they weren't married and she was also another possession and he worked her so hard that she died long before he did by the hard work she did in the farm or in the tough, hard living that they did in the West. And, now, if people haven't understood that, I am sorry. It's a -- that was my reason for doing that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay. That's . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And I've always felt that I'd never want to do something that insults the intelligence of the viewer. Now, if somebody sees a more derogatory or more puritanical concept in it -- I find nudes don't bother me. They -- I use them as explanations of things. And I think I told you -- we went through that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's well-said.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: That's well-said.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's well-said and the only observation that I would make -- and this is much, maybe, for your further insight into why people respond -- my sense, not just from the article, you know, Dave Gardetta's article, which we won't mention anymore, but also from conversations with others who are interested in you and have had the opportunity to see your work -- that the issue is not the nudes or the presence of the nudes -- but

the nature of the nudes, which are very sexy and very -- almost like diverting -- possibly diverting from the theme rather than, perhaps, reinforcing it. It's like two things are happening that aren't related and yet you've explained, now, the connection that you see and the reason for using that particular kind of, sort of, Vargas girl sexy nude. That's all.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: There was -- I think this is very important -- what you just said. Now, there was somebody in the article who compared my nudes to -- he listed them as . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Of old masters?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Old masters.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Botticelli . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: But then he finished up by saying, "Varda."

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right. Vargas.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: "Varga." Who's the most artificial, disgusting type of - he's . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Very, very skillful.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Skillful but absolutely the cheapest kind of nudes. Now if he sees that in my nudes, that's his interpretation. But I can tell you that I had an East Indian gentleman come to my studio and he saw those drawings and my works of art or my nudes and he said, "Mr. Zorthian, you are a master. You're a master of interpreting the human anatomy. The beauty of the body. The magnificent forming of this incredible beauty of the female body." And he said, "But, Mr. Zorthian, why is that woman's legs so fat?" And I said, "Well, have you ever seen a woman in that position?" And it was showing a woman from the bottom up so you saw a foreshortening of the legs, which was very, very strange. And I said, "Have you ever seen a woman in that position?" He said, "No. Oh no." So, look, all that drawing means -- Five F means is five dimensions of a woman. Front, back, three-quarter, bottom and top view of a woman. And I love the forms of a woman. The shapes of a woman. There's nothing, in my mind, of trying to be -- oh God, I don't even wanna mention the word -- what is his name Varda or . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Vargas?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Vargas.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: This -- if that person who saw that said that, then it's, you know, I think it's his problem, not mine. I'm going to do another one called Five M. Five dimensions . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . of the male body where I'm going to show the beautiful, muscular nuances of the -- the beautiful contours of the -- I love the human body. Why are people so hung up on this. I don't understand it? Now if I failed in some people's eyes, I'm sorry. But I find that people I respect who know a little more about art than some of those statements made by others, seem to like it. This East Indian gentleman or any other person who knows something about drawing or painting or so on.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Would you say that your art -- if not entirely to a large extent then is about the celebration of the human body and human sexuality? Would you say that's an important theme or interest in your art?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: But in that particular thing, yes. But then I've done -- Paul, for God sakes, I've done a mural for the Army called Phantasmagoria of Militant Intelligence Training, which has nothing to do with the female body. It's an entirely a different kind of a thing. It shows the military intelligence, the way it . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: [unintelligible]

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . some people through the thing and so on.

PAUL KARLSTROM: We talked about that on the first tape.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: So, the point is that this happens to be a period in my life when I'm interested in showing the human form and by the way, that Pioneer Barter is an exception to that. That's more -- getting a little more serious about the way we treated the American Indians.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right. We've talked about that.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: The others are light-hearted things of -- for instance, I've got one called Sleeping Beauty and the Beast . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . and I've got one called, you know, The Awakening, young boy . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: What year is that one, by the way?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: They're very recent, they're . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: All of them . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: '92, '93, something like that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay. Well, I, you know, I think in some ways -- enough on this because we go over familiar ground and I think you're absolutely right -- that is one aspect of a long career. So why don't we just sort of peacefully leave that part behind, you know, the nudes, the Jennifer series and all of that and maybe we -- maybe what we should do is turn this tape over because my little alarm is flashing, okay?

[SESSION 3, TAPE 2, SIDE B]

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . of American Art continuing this third session with Jirayr Zorthian on 9 July, 1997. This is Tape 1, Side B. There were some things, Jirayr, that you wanted to say, I believe.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yes. I think -- I've had this problem all my life of people trying to put me into some category which they don't know how to do. Really, it's a fascinating thing. Many, many years ago -- it had to be at least 35 years ago when the Junior League Magazine came over. They want to write something about Jirayr Zorthian. They sent some woman . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Excuse me. I hate to cut you off but, you know, having listened to the tape this afternoon -- that story is . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Have I put it in there?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yesterday. Yeah.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And she didn't know how to . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Oh, okay. So if you get it, fine. But I still say -- no, it's important to know that because of that story, they can't classify me in some niche. In the art world, unless you fit into some niche, like an impressionist or a hard-edge painter or a realist or a abstract expressionist or -- it goes on and on and on. They don't know where - how to explain what you do. Really. And so it's a disturbing thing for me because I don't . . . I'm an artist. I paint, I sculpt, I do architecture, I do walls, I do all kinds of things. But, as I told you outside, I'm almost tempted to sing that song, which I wanna do. Do you mind?

PAUL KARLSTROM: No. No. Please.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: [sings] I'm Popeye the Sailor Man, I'm Popeye the Sailor Man, I am what I am, and that's all I am, I am Popeye the Sailor Man. Or I would change the words and say, I'm Zorthian the Mountain Man, I'm Zorthian the Mountain Man, and I am what I am, and I'm Zorthian the Mountain Man. And that's all I am. But, you know . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . why do I have to explain myself the way I do? I don't understand that. I have more fun, I have more excitement doing what I do. I wish, I wish, I wish I could explain the excitement I get in my studio when I stay up 17 hours and work and get the most exciting feelings. It's almost like an orgasm but without ejaculating. And then when I finish, I feel more energy than when I started. If that's good, bad or indifferent, I hope people will accept it. If they like my work, that's fine. If they don't, that's fine. I am -- well, I told you my opinion of galleries and . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, we went over that.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: We went through that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Very thoroughly.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I don't wanna go through that again.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Let me ask you -- and this is -- it's a good idea to sorta now bring it back to, you know, a bigger view or perspective. You operate in a somewhat unconventional way, it's true, within an art world. You're a self-described artist. I'm gonna ask you even though I think that you've just told us -- what you think it is or means to be an artist? What, you know, what is an artist? And I mean a fine artist. I don't mean simply -- not simply but I don't mean a creative person, I mean a fine visual artist? What does that mean to you? What does that bring to mind? And how do you see what your relationship to that? What does it mean to be an artist?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Would you - are you asking me what great artist -- in a way, what constitutes great art? Which I very strongly feel that I'm involved in.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, tell me about that. Tell me why.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Well, may I give you a description which I have sort of worked up?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm. Please.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Clarity of statement. Clarity of statement. If it doesn't say it, forget it. I mean, it has to be clear what you're doing. I don't think any of my things are confusing. I do what I do -- whether I build a wall or build a piece of sculpture or I do a work of art and so on. If it's not clear to the viewer, then I've failed and I think that's true of any great art. If it's clearly -- 'cause people -- but also, I think you have to so much judge the character, or not the character or the intelligence of the viewer. If the viewer finds something offensive or puzzling or something, then you have to consider his intelligence or his background. I have been judged by great, great, great men who love my work. I mean, men with great reputations. Buckminster Fuller, Richard Feynman -- all kinds of people. And if people criticize my work, I have to stop and wonder who they are and if they are not, in my opinion, people who respect or know much about art or respect art. You know, I have to just fluff it off and say, "Well, that's the way . . ." Paul, I don't know how to -- I am not a definite, marketed artist. That's crazy.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right. Right. We know that. Um-hmm. Yeah. That's true. But, more important than that is a self-conception, I think.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Do what?

PAUL KARLSTROM: A self-conception.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Of?

PAUL KARLSTROM: You definately have a self-conception as an artist -- as an artist who is engaged in making significant art with clarity of statement. See, this is something new we've learned. That definition, clarity of statement. What of -- and you do many things. All of -- many of which could be seen as creative of artistic expression. But it finally comes to this. To this moment when we are judged and I'm not saying we have to be or that it will happen. But what would you point to as the achievement, the work of which you're most proud? Your work? What would you finally, over time, want to be understood by, judged by, as an artist?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: In my work?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Well, I would say, definitely, the one which is lost. Phantasmagoria of Military Intelligence Training. I think that's, perhaps, if an artist can say, "My greatest masterpiece is such and such", I think that Phantasmagoria of Military Intelligence Training is the greatest and the most exciting thing I've done. It was way ahead of it's time when it was done and I think it's still ahead of it's time but it's lost and I -- we're gonna find it. I hope we can find it but if we don't, I have very, very specific and very detailed photographs of it so it can still be seen by the public.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Again, the name? The title of the work?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Phantasmagoria of Military Intelligence Training. Now, if that sounds dull, it had - the General who ran the intelligence camp during the war, found that I was a mural painter and asked me to do this. And, Paul, I don't think you've really looked at that very carefully. It's incredible. Can you imagine my hanging that in a room 200 feet long . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . from the ceiling and start -- after going from left to right and then started in the end with my drawings from age 10 and come up to what I've done today? I wanna show 82 years of art when I have my retrospective show.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Where is that -- when is that gonna be? Where is that gonna be?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Oh, somewhere in L.A. I still -- that part is unimportant. If worse comes to worse, I'll put it on myself. I think I can generate enough money and excitement to put it on but I can assure you it's gonna be the most fantastic show you've ever seen. How many artists do you know can show 82 years of art? Really? Now if none of these mean anything to you, Paul, forget it for God sakes. I don't know, I'm getting a little, somewhat -- she wants to do a film. KCET wants to do a film. Everybody wants to do a film and if they found it -- I hope they're not all going to make me into a character. I'll tell you one very interesting thing is somebody named Ray Barger -- 90-something years old in Newport Beach who founded in Yale the School of Fine Arts, that - made this statement to him that, "Jirayr Zorthian was the most famous artist they turned out since 1936". Now, I can't substantiate this. This was his statement. I think famous artists don't have to be, you know, marketed. That's the thing that worries me a little. Marketing -- unless you are in a gallery or unless you're known by all the big, big art kind of thing -- first place, they take 50 percent of your income and all that. I don't wanna go into that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, besides, we dispatched that thoroughly. We talked about that yesterday.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And you made the point very well and very, very forcefully. I think that -- remember that in an interview like this, it's my job, simply, to try to draw you out on as many subjects of interest as possible and I think we've done this pretty successfully. You know, at this point, I think we've actually covered the ground pretty well.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I think we've done it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I think we have.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: If it -- look, if it rises, fine. If it falls, fine.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Isn't that true for all of us?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I'm giving you myself, Paul, I love you. You know -- I know you like me but if you haven't got what you want, I'm sorry. I've given you what I -- you got . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's all we can do. That's all we can do. There's no question about that.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Isn't this wonderful? Do you see what I got?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Children's letters to God.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Just before you came, Peter Mokler came here. Peter Mokler is the son of Lloyd Mokler, who's worth \$150 million dollars. Which means nothing but he's a horseman and I'm a horseman. He came with his children. They swam and they left just before you came and he gave me this thing as a present. He wants to do some things at my Catalina Ride. I'm going to get a show over there. But these are things -- Children's letters to God. Look at that. Please, just thumb through one or two of the pages. It's so beautiful.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And this is a good friend of yours?

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Oh, God. He's the most wonderful guy. He's been to many of my parties. He couldn't make the last one but he is married and has two children. But his father and mother have - they're Catholics . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Um-hmm.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . but it's - they're such beautiful statement.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, you know, I'm gonna -- we're still goin' here and I'm gonna turn off the tape recorder but what I wanna comment on is that one of the things that you must be so happy about is that you have these incredible friends? This wide circle of friends. People that keep coming back -- keep coming up here because they enjoy your company, your place, and obviously you, somehow, enrich their lives. You know, I wanna say that as my, sort of personal wrap up . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Do you still have it open?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Okay. Say it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, I just did.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: No, I -- okay. Are you talking about people, women, or what?

PAUL KARLSTROM: I'm talking about you and I'm talking about people like these friends and the many friends that come up here to enjoy your company.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Paul, Paul -- I don't know. I really don't know. I frankly don't know why they come. I remember one time, when Yul Brynner -- remember, he was the first person who shaved his hair off . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: . . . and someone, some girl walked up to him when it was an opening or something and she said, "Why is it, Mr. Brynner, that women and everybody" -- oh yeah, "Why is it a women are attracted to you? You don't have any hair [unintelligible]?" He said, "I don't know. I'm not a woman."

PAUL KARLSTROM: So you . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I don't know. I'm not a woman. I don't know why people come. Frankly, I will tell you one -- could be one reason is I love people. I love women, I love men, I love people. I enjoy people and apparently they enjoy me. It's fascinating, by the way, and I think this is something you should really put down. That Dabney and I -- Dabney's, what 64, I'm 86. Many, many of the parties -- at least 50 to 60 percent of the parties we go to, Dabney and I are the only ones, certainly, above 40. And very often about 30. An they're all under that age. Now, they seem to love us. They seem to enjoy us and I certainly enjoy them. I learn much, much, much more from them than I learn from people my age. Frankly.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You know, I feel that way, too. I feel that way, too.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Now you explain it to me. I don't know. I don't know why.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, I mean, I have to say, that wasn't a question. I didn't expect you to be able to answer that. It really was my observation . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Oh. Okay.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . which was by way of a tribute to you and this world that you occupy -- reside in with Dabney and that is a wonderful place for people to gather together, like last night . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . when Llyn Foulkes came up. You hadn't seen him for -- well, he was at your big party but I don't think you've had a chance to visit with him for quite a while and then . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: I love seeing him.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And I was happy to be able to kind of arrange that, since I'm doing an interview with him, too. But my point is that he's just one of many -- he happens to be a very interesting artist -- very important artist. Many people who are somehow in your, in some way in your orbit and I guess I really want to sign off by saying that this is something that I admire [and] think is very special.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: And, Paul, thank you for that. But wait, before you sign off, let me make one statement. It's a shame and somewhat rather unfair that people are excited about only that aspect of my life and I seriously feel that I'm a good artist -- I'm a very serious artist and because I happen to be fun to be with and all that kinda thing, which I don't quite understand but I love -- we found the reasons for it. But I don't think I want to be famous just because I'm an interesting, fun person to be with. I happen to be a good artist.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, it's possible to be both.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Of course it's possible. But most people are so fascinated by my being a fun person, that they forget that I'm also an artist. I try to understand this. Anyway, it doesn't . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, no that seems . . .

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Close it up.

PAUL KARLSTROM: . . . that seems to be a very good point to end.

JIRAYR ZORTHIAN: Close it up.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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