



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Joe
Feddersen, 2021 April 29 and May 6

Funding for this interview was provided by the Leon Polk Smith
Foundation.

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Joe Feddersen on 2021 April 26 and May 6. The interview took place at Feddersen's home in Omak, WA, and was conducted by Cécile Ganteaume for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. The interview was conducted over Zoom. This interview is part of the Leon Polk Smith Native American Oral History Project.

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

Interview

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Okay. So—hello. Today is Thursday, April 29th, 2021, and I'm Cécile Ganteaume, a curator at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. I'll be speaking today with the artist, Joe Feddersen. Joe is a widely known, highly respected multimedia artist, whose works, fine art prints, paintings, baskets, glass vessels, and installations, and photography, are held in several prominent museum collections, including, I'm proud to say, that of the National Museum of the American—that of the National Museum of the American Indian. Over the last four decades, Joe's work has been featured in many landmark solo and group exhibitions, and has been written about in an equally impressive number of essays, catalogs, and books. Joe and his work have already been the subject of one major retrospective and monograph titled *Vital Signs*. This was in 2008. Joe, of course, continues to create art and garner public and scholarly attention. Joe is a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. Joe, good morning. It's a pleasure to be talking to you today for the Archives of American Art. How are you?

JOE FEDDERSEN: I'm doing well.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Good. Good.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So as you know, this conversation, it's intended to provide primary material for future researchers who wish to write about your life, career, and art for their scholarly projects. So hopefully we'll provide them with some helpful, perhaps even critical, previously unpublished information. And we'll begin our conversation by taking a deep dive, with your permission, of course, into your family, your childhood, your young adult years, and your education through your college and university days. Does that sound good to you?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Sure, that sounds great.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Okay. So let's start really simply with you telling us when and where you were born, and also, how do you describe your cultural background?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, I was born in Omak, Washington. It's—Omak is a small town near the Canadian border.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And your date of birth?

JOE FEDDERSEN: [Digital distortion]—and it's May 3rd; next week.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Aha.

JOE FEDDERSEN: I'll be turning 68 in a couple days.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh, wow.

JOE FEDDERSEN: I usually refer to myself as Native. I'm Okanagan and Arrow Lakes lineage. My—we would—as a child we would go visit my grandparents at—who lived on the Penticton Reserve in Canada. That's where my—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: —mom was raised. I'm not too sure what I'm supposed to be talking about, but—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: That was good. That was great. So tell us now, what kind of household were you raised in? You were raised by both your parents, but did any of your grandparents or older relatives live with you?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, I grew up in a family; I had five siblings. It was a large household. My dad worked in a lumber mill. He's from a German heritage. I think his—I'm not too sure if it's his dad or his grandfather came from Germany. But they lived in a—kind of a German community in a place called Havillah. And that's in the northern—that would have been in the northern half of the Colville Reservation. But so he grew up speaking German, and my mother grew up speaking English—I mean Native, Okanagan. So the English is both of their—both second language to both of them.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So they both had accents. They both spoke English with accents?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes. My mom had a Canadian accent. [Laughs.] I guess we would—I don't think so, they didn't really have accents.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So how do you remember your dad? And did you mention what he did for a living? Did you say he worked in a lumber mill?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes, he worked in a lumber mill. My mom stayed at home. And he grew up on a farm—you know, in the farm near Havillah, and so he—they both came to the—to Omak to reside most of their lives. We've always lived here. We've—you know, they were married until my mother passed away in the early '90s.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: You had them for a good long while.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes. We think that, you know, she was getting older then, but as I look back, she was still young when she passed away. She was only, like, 64 back then.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Well, she was; she was.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So what was it like growing up in Omak? It was—it's a small town today. It must have been quite rural, was it, when you were growing up?

JOE FEDDERSEN: It's still a small town. Omak is on the edge of the reservation. Half of it is on the rez, and half isn't. As a child, we—you know, things were different in the '50s. Kids could—I guess the whole community raised the kids, I guess, because we would just do whatever we wanted without adult supervision. There were no such things as helicopter parents back then, or—

[Cross talk.]

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: [Laughs.] And no soccer moms.

JOE FEDDERSEN: No. We would, as a group of kids, look out for ourselves and do things all day long.

[Cross talk.]

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And did you grow up visiting relatives, aunts and uncles, grandparents?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, my grandparents lived under 100 miles away. And what we would do is we would often go up and visit them; go up to Penticton, and especially during the summers we would have extended stays up with the grandparents. So I'm not sure if you know the geography of Canada, or Penticton, but Penticton is a summer resort kind of place for Vancouver.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: A little off the reservation is—there are two lakes; and one at the south and one at the north of Penticton. And as a child we would go as groups to go swimming at the lakes. And I couldn't imagine that today, seeing, like, probably about four or five kids going to a lake all by themselves—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Right.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —and going swimming then—and then we would walk all the way across town to go to the north lake and go swim at that one, and then come back in the evening. And so we were gone pretty much all day, as kids. So, and if we weren't going on the lakes to—we were climbing the hills around my grandparents' house.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Sounds wonderful. So—

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: How old were you when you started attending school, and was it a public school, a religious school, a BIA school? What kind of school was it?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, I attended Omak school districts.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: A public school.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Public school. Back then they didn't start school until you were seven.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Really.

JOE FEDDERSEN: So—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Wow.

JOE FEDDERSEN: There were no kindergartens or preschool or anything.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Wow.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes. So—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So were you learning to read at home?

JOE FEDDERSEN: No. [Laughs.] Actually, I think I had a late start on reading. I don't—I think—I remember in the second grade, they were saying, "You know, you're supposed to learn your alphabets." And I guess—

[They laugh.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: —I was having a really good time in first grade, because I didn't notice I missed it.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And then there was life to learn your alphabets, when you were like eight. So—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So, in grade school, were most of the kids Native or non-Native?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, Omak—[digital distortion]—Omak was about ten percent Native in my class. When I was going to school, my class was one of the largest classes and it had, I think, a hundred and ten. So—and most of the students, you went from first grade to high school, where there might have been ten, maybe 15 that came in after first grade. So you—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And were—

JOE FEDDERSEN: —pretty much knew everybody since the first grade.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Were any of the teachers Native?

JOE FEDDERSEN: No, there were no Native teachers.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And did you ever feel like you—

JOE FEDDERSEN: I think—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Did you ever feel like maybe you were being taunted by the other kids because you were different, or was that a nonissue?

JOE FEDDERSEN: No, not—you know, not really. Like I said, we mostly grew up together—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: —for 12 years.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah. But did your family have a TV?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes, we did.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So you were growing up, though, during the heyday of cowboy and Indian movies and TV. Do you remember what kind of an impression these shows made on you when you were young? Did they tell you that being Native made you different, either in a positive or a negative way?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, we didn't—I don't know, what I remember—I just barely remember, like, the Lone Ranger and Tonto. It's very—it's not very a vivid memory on mind. I do remember that our house was one of the few houses where our parents let us watch television before school. So I think, at like seven-thirty or eight o'clock in the morning, our house was filled with kids, and then—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And cartoons.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And cartoons; and we would—then we would walk a block-and-a-half to the school—[cross talk]—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Hmm. And do you—did you go—your high school, was that also a public high school?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes, it was.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And it was the same makeup, a small percentage of kids were Native; most—the majority were non-Native?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes, that's right.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And do you remember being taught anything about Native history? In high school you would remember better than grade school.

JOE FEDDERSEN: No, they never taught very much about Native history.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah.

JOE FEDDERSEN: They didn't talk about anything.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Anything related, yes.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So outside of high school, but during those high school years, what sort of cultural community-wide events do you remember attending on the Colville Reservation; whether it was something like a rodeo, or a Fourth of July parade, or some sort of ceremony?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Were you going to community events?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, things were different back then. You know, today there's like powwows almost every weekend, and so on. But in the '50s it was a lot different. There would be a salmon feast in Penticton. You know, we would go home in Penticton, and we

always—even though we have a lot of relatives in—you know, in the—on the Colville Reservation—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: —or—my first cousins and my, you know, aunts and uncles would be in Penticton. So it would be, you know, more distant relatives down here.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Ah, that's interesting. I was going to ask you a question that maybe it doesn't apply, since you weren't spending that much time on the Colville Reservation. But I was going to ask you, when you were growing up, if you remembered people, adults talking about the flooding of Colville Reservation lands because of the Grand Coulee Dam. I know that happened a good over ten years before you were born, but I was wondering if people were still talking about it.

JOE FEDDERSEN: That's quite a ways away. You know, the Colville Reservation is pretty large.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And most of my family ties were up into Canada, up the valley.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Okay.

JOE FEDDERSEN: The Okanagan Valley starts at the confluence of the Okanagan and the Columbia, and then it goes a couple hundred miles into Canada. So where we're living is traditional lands for Okanagan people. This is—the part of the reservation that we're on—that I grew up on, is part of the—our traditional lands. And it's—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Okay, I see.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —not a part of the Grand Coulee.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Okay. Do you remember where you were when President John F. Kennedy was shot?

JOE FEDDERSEN: I think I was in like second or third grade. I remember that we were out in the playground, and then that happened. So I'm trying to remember. That's like early '60s, and—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Sixty-three; '63.

JOE FEDDERSEN: I was probably—yes, probably in third grade or something.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And did you watch Neil Armstrong's "one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind" on the television with your parents?

JOE FEDDERSEN: I'm not sure we did. I knew—you know, we knew that was happening, but—and I don't recall my parents really watching very much news.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: We were locked—we were often pushed out of the house. "You go out—" [Laughs.] And it—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: "Go outside and play."

JOE FEDDERSEN: —you know, "Get out of the house. Go play."

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah. Yeah.

JOE FEDDERSEN: You know.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah.

JOE FEDDERSEN: So—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Interesting. So, in 1968 you were still in high school. I figure you were

about 15 years old when the American Indian Movement was founded. But that would mean, when they were undertaking their form of consciousness raising among Native people, and gaining more and more attention in the national press, you were perhaps becoming old enough to become aware of their activism. For example, the Alcatraz—the occupation of Alcatraz was 19 months, from late '69 to the summer of 1971, and I think you would have been about 17 or 18. And then, the takeover of the Bureau of Indian Affairs' headquarters in Washington, DC, that occurred in '71. You would have been about 18. And then the Trail of Broken Treaties was '72, and that was this very large cross-country caravan that started in the West, of Native peoples traveling to the Bureau of Indian Affairs headquarters in DC. You would have been about 19 at the time. And then ,what has become known as "Wounded Knee Two," that happened in '73 when you were about 20. And, just for the sake of our visitors, AIM was invited to the Pine Ridge Reservation, and—however, their presence there, along with the activism of Oglala Lakotas, resulted in a showdown with the FBI that turned violent. Do you remember these events?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, on the early part, I was busy with high school and the social events of high school. On the later ones, you say—after I finished high school—let me see. I was—after I had finished high school, I was—you know, like, I applied for different schools to go to—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: —and I was accepted at the University of Washington. And then they sent me a letter saying that I couldn't go because my English SAT scores were too low.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And my—I had found out that I had to find a school immediately to go to, otherwise you get drafted. I think I was on the first drafting lottery.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: I'm coming around to that. [Laughs.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: But I ended up going to Wenatchee Valley College.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And that was—that was really a good thing for me, because even though I —after I was at Wenatchee for a month, I—the University of Washington gave me—called me and asked me, "Why aren't you here?" And I said, "I got a letter saying I wasn't supposed to go."

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And they were saying, "You shouldn't have gotten the letter." Because my grades in high school were high enough that the SAT didn't matter.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh, wow. Great.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: But—

JOE FEDDERSEN: It—but I was there already.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Right.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And what I did do is I found a really supportive community—

[Cross talk.]

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It sounds like it was a nurturing place.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And one of the—Anita Cheer would come to Wenatchee, and she would guide Native students. But she was a local elder from Omak. And also, the art department, I met people that—they were friends from the rest of their lives. A lot of them have passed away now.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes. The—one of the art teachers, Robert Graves, was especially kind and mentored me a lot.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And Daryl Dietrich, and there were a couple others. It was a really strong art department for a really small school. And I'd only went to Wenatchee for one year.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And my mom's best friend—who was kind of like my aunt, she lived in Wenatchee, and she said, "Joe, I have the job for you. It's an opportunity of a lifetime." And it was to work for the Public Utility District. And in this job— nobody ever turned down a job there. It was really secure and highly sought after.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: I'm sure.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And so I started at the PUD, and I earned a bachelor's—I mean—I—during the time I was at the PUD, I had finished my AA at Wenatchee, at night school.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And I also earned a journeyman card in hydromechanics, and I also earned a journeyman card in hydro-operator. That's the ones that—I don't know if you've ever been to a hydro-electrical plant?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: I have not.

JOE FEDDERSEN: It's where you sit behind the desk, look at all of the dials—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: The engineer, sort of?

JOE FEDDERSEN: And you just sit there. It would be the—you know, like that big power outage in Texas?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yes, I do.

JOE FEDDERSEN: It would have been the ones watching the main power down there, doing that. But at that time, you know, I was—I guess I wasn't settled there yet, because I was 26 years old. And I was second in command of a dam.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: My goodness. Wow.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And it was through no brilliance of my own. It was—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: It may have been.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes. People were retiring ahead of me really quickly.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: But I had decided that that life wasn't for me. And I realized that, you know, I had 23 more years before I could retire. When you're 26, that's a long time.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Of course it is.

JOE FEDDERSEN: So I cashed in my retirement, and I went back to school. I went to the University of Washington.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Good for you.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And a lot of it was through the encouragement of some of my colleagues at the dam that—and—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Well, they saw a bright young guy.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —and Robert Graves—you know, because we still kept in contact with both him and Daryl. They encouraged me to go back to school.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Well, that's wonderful.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And I would have led a very boring life at the dam, sitting behind the desk looking at the dials.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: It would have been a different one, that's for sure.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes; very different. And—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So I'd like to go back to the Vietnam War, because you were—you would have been, I believe—because you—I think you're the same age as my brother. You would have been old enough to still possibly get a draft card. So was that a concern and a worry of yours, that this might be showing up in the mail?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, I was in the first lottery. And my number was too high. So—

[Cross talk.]

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh, great. So that was dealt with quickly.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes, so I didn't—and my older brother, he was in school, and he never did go into the service either. He—I think he—you know, he finished his master's in social work.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Well, you're very lucky. I want to ask you, this time when you're in college, when you're in college, not yet at the University of Washington, how exposed were you or not to Plateau arts, whether it's basketry, beadwork, quillwork, traditional clothing? Were there any Native cultural objects in your family home? Were you knowledgeable at all about, say, Plateau art traditions at this period?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, my grandmother worked hides.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And made gloves. And I had an uncle—he passed away really young, and he carved. He did kind of realistic carvings.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And I remember as a really young child, we had this long hallway in our house, and at the end of the hallway was a dining table. And I remember getting up, probably really early, and seeing my mother at the dining table. And she would be sitting there drawing. A lot of times she would be drawing horses, and it was her favorite subject. And she would have the time between when my dad left for work, and then when we got up. She probably had about a half hour, or an hour before the kids got up. So she was spending her time sitting and drawing. Like, I remember that pretty vividly.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So when you were at Wenatchee Valley College, were you taking, like, a liberal arts course load? You weren't just taking studio art classes, were you, or how did that work?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, you have to realize that Omak is a really small town, and how people looked at the larger world was very different now than it was back then. When I first started at Wenatchee, I remember you had to get into a line, and then you had to declare your major. And I really didn't know you could become an artist. But I said—I thought to myself, "If I can't be a major in art, then I'll major in math." I was very good in math. And sometimes I think, "Ah, if I had just said, 'Math,' it would have been perfect timing for all of the computer programming that happened just shortly after that."

[They laugh.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes. And maybe I would have been working for Microsoft and all this. But I'm not sorry. It—I've had a—I've been really blessed with a really wonderful career in the arts.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So when did you start becoming aware of the larger—

JOE FEDDERSEN: I'm trying to remember. Yes?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: When did you start becoming aware of the larger sort of art world and what contemporary artists, Native or non-Native artists, were doing? And so, for example, the Museum of Modern Art in 1980, they had, you know, what they considered a landmark exhibit. And what made it so special is that it was an exhibition of prints. And the artists were David Hockney, Jasper Johns, Lichtenstein, Rauschenberg, Frank Stella. So, and they were saying—they were presenting their work as fine art. And so, this was something new and bold for the Museum of Modern Art to do, that they had discovered printmaking, more or less. Of course, these artists began making prints and doing print work during the '60s. But when you were just—when you were starting out in college, and when you were learning printmaking, at the same time were you learning about these mainstream artists who were making prints?

JOE FEDDERSEN: I keep thinking, things were different back then. [Laughs.]

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Word didn't travel fast.

JOE FEDDERSEN: No, and—and I'm trying to think, 1980, that would have been the first year I was at University of Washington. And a lot of art history was very limited on Native art .

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: I'm sure it was.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And at the University of Washington they had a program that—but it mostly talked about coastal art.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And—when I was at the University of Washington, I was really fortunate to tie up and to be mentored by Vi. Vi Taqwseblu Hilbert. I'm not sure if you know her. She was a legendary storyteller from the Skagit area.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yes. Yes.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: I met her. I met her.

JOE FEDDERSEN: She became a mentor of mine. And we became really close friends until she passed away. So she was really one of the really valuable connections I made there. And she always loved it when I would include stories in my Native legends in my work. It just pleased her to death.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Well—

JOE FEDDERSEN: The other person I—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: —oh, no go ahead.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —studied was Glen Alps.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: He was a printmaking—I became his student aide for—or his studio aide, so I would help him print his work. And it was really kind of strange, because even though he was a printmaker, and printmaking is often heavily embedded in process—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: —learning how to do things, and the correct way of printing and all of that, at his funeral service, they had me—they wanted me to do a demonstration. And I was at a loss, because even though Glen was, you know, a really important printmaker, our relationship wasn't based on that. He would talk about Asian philosophy; ways of looking at things.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: His ideas of personal freedom, to choose your own direction. And he would often talk to the classes and the students about these things that were approaches to ideas,

that—rather than how to print a woodblock or something.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And so, that really affected how I approached art, and my thought processes behind looking at things and approaching things. Later on, when I was working at Evergreen, I invited Glen to come and talk to my class. And I—and that morning, I told him, you know, "This is public speaking. You know, you should be organized, and have your thoughts down and be direct." Glen came to my class, and he talked for two and a half hours on breathing naturally. And his idea was that, when you go to the doctor they ask you to inhale and exhale, and then when they're finished with the examination they say, "Go ahead and just breathe naturally now." And he correlated that with producing art. And when you're in school, this very heightened awareness of this kind of process. And the—but it—the artwork that you do should come naturally, like you're breathing. It should be part of your whole existence, part of your life.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And that's something you've tried to incorporate?

JOE FEDDERSEN: And I've tried to approach my work that way—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yes.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —that it's a natural extension of me.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Fascinating. I was mentioning earlier, I did meet Vi Hilbert, because she came to the opening of the National Museum of the American Indian in 2004. And she came with an anthropologist named Jay Miller, who I happen to know. And that's how I got to meet Vi. And she did have a very strong presence. And you—I don't think you had to be in her company for a very long time to recognize that she just seemed to possess this kind of poise, and dignity, and she projected, you know, this sort of inner serenity. And how would you describe her personality?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, you're talking about these approaches, but she was really an activist. She was—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And she was very busy.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Right; not—she was pushing the boundaries. And a lot of more traditional people did not like what she was doing. She was much more liberal thinking than a lot of the other elders. And but she also had the poise and dignity to be able to do that, to go against a lot of other people. And especially when her son started painting pictures of the smokehouse.

A lot of people were not very pleased about that, but she said it came to him and he needed to do that. And so she was very vocal, and supportive of the arts. And, you know, and her son, too.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Well, but she certainly was aware of the fact that there were becoming fewer and fewer Native speakers. And my guess is—and you tell me what you think.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: My guess is that she was very much motivated by the fact that, without Native speakers, the stories could be lost forever. And so I would assume that that's what motivated her work to transcribe and translate stories.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes, she founded a Lushootseed foundation to preserve the language and to work on it. A lot of the people that I went to school with are—became fluent more; I couldn't. I was 26, and I remember her—because I was taking the language class at the U-Dub. I remember standing in front of that class; my knees shaking, perspiration coming down over my forehead, trying to speak Salish; because this is coastal Salish, and our language is interior Salish.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: But so, we were kind of similar, but it's—the crest of the Cascades of—that's between the—you know, the interior and the coastal peoples. But as far as distance

goes, she was not very far from the Okanagan. You know, it was just over the Cascades pretty much.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: The plateau area [Cascade Mountains to Continental Divide, a couple hundred miles into Canada down to Northern California -JF]. And I'm trying to think about what we were talking about.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Well, I wanted to throw out a crazy idea, and that is that to me, in some way, in her own way, you know, she did dovetail with the Red Power movement, if you will, in that, you know, she wanted—she didn't want these stories to be lost. And she was going to do whatever she could to preserve them, and to—and not only to preserve them, but to get other people and younger people interested in them, and to respect them, and to treasure them, and to value them, and recognize that there was great learning and wisdom in them.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Uh-huh [affirmative].

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: She also—well, she also had a reverence for nature that I should think would have spoken to you. She talks about how her—her parents' generation, that they didn't have to be book learners, and they weren't book learners; because it—that's not what they needed to know, that what they needed to know was to be able to read the messages in the clouds, or the flow of the river, or the messages in the way the trees grew, and the plants. And I should imagine that should have spoken directly to you.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes. So, it was like in probably about 1980 when I first met Vi. So we—So we—you know, our friendship was for quite a long time. And I'm trying to think of—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Well, my—my question for you is, you know, obviously you have a deep concern for nature. And I was wondering if being around her, being with her, being exposed to her didn't perhaps impart to you a way of regarding nature on a deeper level.

JOE FEDDERSEN: I don't recall her specifically talking about that. But it was evident that—about the language. And even though I could not learn the language, she finally agreed that I could learn it after—

[They laugh.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: —struggling along, because you need to be immersed in the language, and to try to learn the language in a couple hour sessions a week was not doing that, and—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Right. Right.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —but we do learn a respect for the language. And, I also took Lushootseed literature from Vi at, you know, U-Dub.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Well, did knowing Vi, and having her be a part of your life, did that encourage you to go back and talk to your own older relatives and see how you might be able to learn from them, say, traditional cultural knowledge?

JOE FEDDERSEN: I—you know, this is—during a—the whole time is during the time where that wasn't encouraged in the early '50s. That was—so, when we grew up, it was not encouraged at that time. It wasn't until much later that that—you know, that your language and cultural identity were more important.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: But I'm talking about during the period when you were at the University of Washington.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, Vi would bring us to—are you familiar with the Smokehouse?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yes.

JOE FEDDERSEN: She would bring us to the Smokehouse ceremonies. It was the coastal longhouse ceremonies. And she would welcome us into the community; her students at the U-Dub. I'm trying to think. It's hard for me to remember, because I—you know, we would visit and talk and stuff, but I don't remember anything specific exactly.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative]. So this time when you're at the University of Washington, it seems to be that just so much is going on. So, you've got this acquaintance and this friendship with Vi, and you're studying printmaking with Glen Alps. But at this time, if I have it right, is this when you're also meeting really a significant number of Native artists, whether it was through the Sacred Circle Gallery, or the famous 1982 Native American Studies Association Conference that was held at the University of Washington, and Truman Lowe showed up, and Jaune Quick-to-See Smith, and others? I mean, is this—in this period right now when you're still at the University of Washington, is this when you start meeting a whole lot of other Native artists?

JOE FEDDERSEN: It is, but it was—before the '82 conference, I was exhibiting at Sacred Circle.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well—

JOE FEDDERSEN: And—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah.

JOE FEDDERSEN: You know, it was always a surprise to the—you know, the—what was the conference?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Native American Art Studies Association.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes, because they actually invited contemporary Native artists to it.

[Cross talk.]

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: That was something new and different. Because I used to—I attended those conferences for years all throughout the '80s, and virtually all the talks were devoted to historic art. And now, the conference, most of the talks are contemporary art. But back then it was mostly historic art.

JOE FEDDERSEN: So this was a big—

[Cross talk.]

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: But of course, Seattle was a—you know, a hub for contemporary Native artists in that larger region, correct? Is that true?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, there was like a—there was a network of galleries that—you know, like George Longfish was working at Davis, with the C.N. Gorman Museum—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: —and the Community House in San Francisco—or American Indian Contemporary Art Gallery, I think—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: —and Community House in New York. So I can't—I think I was familiar with most of those before the '82. But what the '82 did was it introduced me to Jaune. I met Jaune at that time, and also Truman—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yes.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —and Ric Danay, and George Longfish. I'm trying to think of other ones that were there. I remember we had a huge table, we—at this one restaurant that we were talking at. And I believe there were more. You know, Larry Beck was alive back then.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yes.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And they were—these artists that you just mentioned, they were a bit older than you; say, a good ten years older than you?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes, most of them are. I felt like I was a kid a lot.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: [Laughs.] I'm sure. Do you remember the very, very first time you met Truman Lowe?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes; we were sitting at that table I mentioned, and—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yes.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —George Longfish said, "Let me introduce you to Truman Lowe. He's on your other side."

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: [Laughs.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: That was the first time I met Truman.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yes. And so these folks all became lifelong friends, of course. But you called out Jaune Quick-to-See Smith first. Was that because she was an especially important mentor to you?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes, we had a—you know, we had a very strong friendship starting—we just, you know, hit it off really well. And she mentored me. She—you know, we would—back then you could get round trips to New York for, like, \$99.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: You're kidding. [Laughs.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yeah, well, you could get the redeye and take off and be in New York at eight o'clock in the morning, and—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Amazing.

JOE FEDDERSEN: I would go—you know, Jaune and I would go to New York to look at bookstores, and we would—you know, I don't know if you noticed—you probably can't see, there's like books all around.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: I do; I do.

JOE FEDDERSEN: But Jaune would buy books and go to shows, especially ones that we felt were important to see.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: We would also go to, like, the Chicago Art Fair, you know, when it used to be on that old pier and stuff, and we would go to things. And yes, so—you know, and Jaune—you know, she mentored me a lot. You know, she included me in the—we did a collaborative art project they had called *West Seattle Cultural Trail*, where Jaune and I and Don Fels created artwork on this trail in West Seattle. So yes, you know, she was very important.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So can you talk a little bit about—so, you know, at this phase in your life, you're definitely coming into your own, or trying to come into your own as an artist and, you know, have your own voice as an artist and that sort of thing. But is it fair to say that you were thinking about yourself as a Native person but also as a modern contemporary artist, and you're trying to see how those two work together—come together in your art? Is it fair to say that that's something that you were grappling with, and maybe some of these older artists helped you, how you could consider yourself and think of yourself as both a Native person and a modernist artist?

JOE FEDDERSEN: These people were really supportive on whatever you wanted to do as a Native artist. They didn't have any predetermined direction for me to go, or they weren't guiding me, they were more supporting of whatever I wanted to do as a—I hope that makes sense.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: It does, it does, it does. But were they—was this sort of like an artistic challenge for all of you?

JOE FEDDERSEN: I'm not—all of who?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Contemporary artists; Native artists working at that time.

JOE FEDDERSEN: I think—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: To both exposing yourselves to contemporary art currents, wanting to know what the contemporary currents are, what's happening in SoHo, what's happening in LA, what's happening wherever in the, quote, unquote, big city, the big art world, and also working being sort of quote, unquote, true to yourself as a Native person, and trying to create your own style, work out your own vision, and figure out what it is you want to accomplish as an artist.

JOE FEDDERSEN: In what you're saying, that's really true, that we were exploring and looking. We—at least I was, you know. And I think trying to find, you know, your own direction. You know, you were—you know, we were—you know, like we were in groups talking, you know? In Seattle we would have like, you know, Larry Beck and Jim Schoppert, and Lillian [Pitt], and Gail Tremblay, and Dorothea Romero, and we would get together and talk about Native artwork, and kind of the art world. That would be back in, you know, the early '80s.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: At that time, I was—I don't know if you're familiar with my work. My work at that time was, I was doing these pieces called the *Rainscape* pieces.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And I was still a senior at U-Dub back then. So I was showing, you know, across the nation at all of those galleries. And Jaune was also introducing me to other galleries. She got me into the Marilyn Butler gallery in Santa Fe, the one that was representing Fritz Scholder at that time.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Pretty impressive.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And that was probably about '82 or '83 also; and a number of other ones, too. There was one in Germany—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Germany; Stuttgart?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Katrina—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Berlin, I think?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes, it was in Berlin. It was Katrina Gallery back then. So I was included in the group that were showing at those places back then.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So they were quite accepting you as the equal, not as the kid?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Probably, it was—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: [Laughs.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: —they were these—you know, these were my friends, you know? They were—

[Cross talk.]

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: So—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Well, it's amazing what happened all throughout the 1980s, because, I mean, you are—it seems like, you know, just you're exhibiting throughout the entire country, as well as international. And you have, you know, several artist-in-residency programs. So it seems like in the '80s, you definitely shift into a new gear.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes. Yes, and I was very fortunate because, at one of those gatherings, Truman asked me to—if I wanted to go to Madison to go to the University of Wisconsin. And I was a little reluctant because, you know, I had a gallery—I had a studio in downtown Seattle. I had, like, half of a floor in the building—of a building near Pioneer Square—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: —an artist kind of area back at that time. And I was working, you know, pretty much as a professional artist. But the idea of getting a master's intrigued me. The person I was subletting the studio from was Diane Katsiaficas. And I'm not sure if you know of her work.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: I do, I do.

JOE FEDDERSEN: She's—she was teaching at—in Minnesota. I'm trying to remember, Minneapolis, at the University of Minnesota.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And she wanted me to go there. And I went out and visited. And I wasn't really into their area. I didn't like it, I guess. And then Truman asked me to come down to Wisconsin, and I liked that a lot better.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And was Truman on the faculty then already?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes, he was—I'm not sure, he—you know, because he was in Native Studies, and then he went to the Fine Art faculty. And it would have been probably either his first year on Fine Art, or really close to then—

[Cross talk.]

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh, I never—I didn't know he taught in a Native Studies department.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes, he was one—he was the reason I went there, and he guided me through that process, because I was still showing during my tenure at Madison.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And how many years did you end up at Madison for?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, I was there two years. And then I went—my last two credits were moved back to Seattle, and I had a teaching position at Evergreen.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So how much did you consider yourself related to the quote, unquote, counterculture when you were in your 20s and such?

JOE FEDDERSEN: I'm trying to remember what the counterculture was back then.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: [Laughs.] The hippies.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Oh—[cross talk]—the hippies—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Maybe even Beat poets; Allen Ginsberg maybe.

JOE FEDDERSEN: I was thinking more though that would be more in the '60s. I was—[cross talk]—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And that was '60s, but it kept on going.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Oh.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: What music were you listening to? Let's put it that way.

JOE FEDDERSEN: In the '80s, I was listening to jazz and—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Really?

JOE FEDDERSEN: —fusion kind of music, like—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: What kind of music?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Kind of—there was kind of Asian fusion music. It was like, Kitaro?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And, you know, like Miles Davis, and Monk, and so on. You know, Seattle also had a lively jazz scene.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh, wonderful.

JOE FEDDERSEN: So I was listening to a lot of, you know, contemporary jazz and—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: —older jazz.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative]. It sounds like you were really—well, it sounds like you were going with, you know, what life was presenting you with; but it also sounds like you were on a definite trajectory.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes, I actually have friends that they have their whole life plotted out, and I never really did that. I don't—I didn't have a plan, so to say. I did not think that, you know, when I was going to school, you would realize that people that were in grad programs were graduating and working in frame shops and, you know, for like minimum wage. And I was selling enough work to get by back then. Some weeks it would be caviar, and other weeks it would be beans, but we were making the rent, and going through. And I don't remember exactly why I agreed to go to grad school, but I was encouraged by Truman and other people.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And, fortunately, I agreed to go, because right at that time was the big art bust of the '80s where a lot of galleries went under—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: —and—including the Marilyn Butler galleries. And so I was very fortunate to be in kind of a safe harbor in grad school during that, you know—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: True; true.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —age of the art world.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: But after you worked at the dam, you never considered anything else other than being an artist, correct? I mean, obviously you taught for decades. But I mean, essentially, you were an artist. You weren't going to consider any other professions.

JOE FEDDERSEN: I tell people, this is my nightmare. I would wake up at night, I would have a dream. And my dream would be I would be back at the dam—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: [Laughs.] I'm sure.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —thirty years later, because I have these journeyman certificates and they would expect me to turn a generator on after being gone for 30 years. And this would be my nightmare. And I remember it would always—I would lighten up when I realized that, even if you just dumped a generator on, they self-center anyway. It would not be a pretty scene, but they would all synchronize very soon.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: [Laughs.] Crazy. Crazy.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And so, my nightmare was I was broke and had to go back to work at the dam. [Laughs.]

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: I could see where that would be chilling to think of the possibility.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So I think we've covered the ground that I was hoping that we would cover today, which is essentially your early years through your university days. And so, I think this would be a good stopping point for today. And if any—

JOE FEDDERSEN: Okay, there were a couple things—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: What's that?

JOE FEDDERSEN: There were a couple things I think would—that we missed.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh, my goodness. What?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, when I was in high school, I also—I worked at a ceramics shop. So my earlier, you know, mentor, was a guy named H. H. Hall. He ran the ceramic shop and I would help them in their shop. And so I was working and, you know, they would control things on how to do ceramics, and I would teach the other students that as I was in high school. And—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And did you get into glazes? What type of glazing were you doing?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Oh, it was like more of the commercial kind of—not like, you know, the—some ones where you pour the slip in and then the people come in and paint them, basically.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: I've got you.

JOE FEDDERSEN: But that was really important, because it kind of gave me a little inkling of what the art world was like, or what was out there a little bit.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: As a business, too? Is that what you—was that your point?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Uh-huh [affirmative], it was a way of—you know, being a teacher, and as a way of working in the arts. And there was another story that—I think it might have been in some of the books. But when I was really young as a—as like a toddler, my mom would put me in the gravel driveway and give me two cans. And one of them would be filled with rocks. And she said that I would sit there and I would look at the rocks and put them into the other can as a toddler. And I think it—that kind of—that curiosity is still with me today the way of approaching art in that way of like looking at things and kind of studying them and being curious.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: If that makes any sense.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: No, it absolutely does.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And if somebody did that today, they would be arrested probably.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: [Laughs.] Some people would be a little concerned about them.

JOE FEDDERSEN: "How many rocks did he eat," or—I don't know. [Laughs.]

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Probably quite a few. [Laughs.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: But yes, so those were really important. And it was—I've always had really kind and generous people around me that helped me out throughout the time—[cross talk]—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh, I did want to ask you, what sort of values do you think your parents instilled in you? What do you take away from them that taught you how to live your life; what to value, what to think is important?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, you know, my mother was always encouraging to follow your dream and to do whatever you wanted to. And especially when I quit this job that anybody would just love to have. You know, I think I was the only person that ever quit the PUD; that it was so highly sought after, you just did not leave the job.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: You had job security. And I would have been making a lot of money when I retired. But they were okay with me quitting, and cashing the retirement check, and going back to school.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So as far as their expectations for you, it's not that they wanted you to be a banker or a doctor, but it was different than that.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes, I remember my—you know, my mother she mentioned to me one time

that my grandmother had talked to her, and my grandmother had wanted her to come home and bring the kids. You know, we were all so—the kids were like in their 30s back then. But my grandmother wanted us home. She wanted to bring us back home.

And that's been really important to me, especially lately, that I want to do these projects that bring artists together and create community, rather than being so individualistic and about yourself and your own career. It's about helping others, being [a leader], you know, hopefully encouraging others. And I think that a lot of it is how other people have been so kind to me, like—you know, like Jaune and all of those people. And I try to do that now more, you know, to help others. And I'm working on projects for that now.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Wonderful. Wonderful. Any one in particular you could talk about?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, I was trying not to. A few years ago, I did a project called *Terrain*.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And *Terrain* was—I was envisioning that as the land. And in this project, we—I wrote a grant for it. And what we did was we invited Plateau Native artists to submit a five-by-seven linocut. And it was a book project. And we—and, you know, I was guiding it, so I decided that, "How can we have a book project with no text?" And so we invited a bunch of poets to interlace with the artists. And I'm really glad that we did. We have poets from across the Plateau country, including Sherman Alexie. He's probably the most well-known; and Elizabeth Woody, and Gloria Bird, and Rhonda Wilson, and Vic Charlo. And only one person declined to participate.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And I'm sure they're sorry now. [Laughs.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: I don't know. You know, it's all—when you ask, it's what's in their mind. And for some reason they—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Well, what was going on in their schedule and life and all that business.

JOE FEDDERSEN: I got the feeling that they were being taken advantage of regularly. And the project was not about taking advantage. It wasn't about making money. It was about—I have these nieces and nephews, and I've always wanted them to meet, like—now I'm trying to—well, like Ron Carraher. Ron taught at U-Dub when I was there, and he—I don't know if you know his work.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah.

JOE FEDDERSEN: He's a photographer. And he actually—where I live now—you know, I moved back home and I live where Ron grew up in East Omak. He kind of comes over and he points, "Yes, I used to visit my grandmother, and she used to live right around over there." And it was about bringing them together; like Leo Adams. And when I went to the University of Washington, people would always ask me, "Do you know Leo Adams?" And of course, I would think this is kind of a racist thing, you know. "All Indians know all other Indians," you know, kind of a thing. But it also gave me the idea that I could look him up, and find him, and actually meet him, okay, which I did. He's a wonderful guy from Yakama. And so it gave me a way of introducing all of these young people to all of the older artists, because—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Wonderful.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —we had ones that were 17 years old, just starting, to, I think one's in their 80s. And we invited them all to come to Evergreen to print the book. Because we—the idea behind the linocuts was that you could put them on a support, and then run them through Vandercook presses; it's a book press. And I remember that Ron said—he came up to me and he said, "Joe, do you know how many prints you're going to be making? You're going to be making 4,000 prints." Because we made enough prints to give every person two sets of prints, and we set aside, I think 15 sets of prints to go to institutes. So I'm not sure if the Smithsonian has—[cross talk]—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: I'm going to find out.

JOE FEDDERSEN: But we—The Heard, the Portland Art Museum, the Seattle Art Museum,

Missoula Art Museum, the Jordan Schnitzer collection has one; and so on and so on. So all of these younger artists have a pretty substantial list of places that they have their work now. And it was about helping the young people. And it's all bringing people together. Because when we went to Evergreen to print, you became kind of like in these group things, where it takes, you know, one person to hand the paper, one to ink it, and one to set it in and run it through. So it was—there's nothing like working together to create bonds, and—

[01:10:13]

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Absolutely. Absolutely.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —change of pace—[digital distortion]—book things, and so on. And it created this bond that everybody had together. And what I'm working on now with the Museum of Art and Culture in Spokane, is to do a book and an exhibition on Plateau Native artists. And it's kind of, again, about bringing them together.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And I keep trying to tell them that it's—that this is not about exclusion, it's about inclusion.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And celebrating.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Celebrating the community. And—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yes.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —one way of doing that is by having community participation.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Absolutely.

JOE FEDDERSEN: We want to bring the communities in on this, and we're trying to find a way of doing a project. Because Washington State has a regulation that they have to teach about Native art and, you know, culture, in the high schools.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Good.

JOE FEDDERSEN: It was when I was there.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Sure.

JOE FEDDERSEN: So I'm trying to tell them that this could be a book slated that would fit in to high school education. It would be so great to have a book that would educate our young and the rest.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: I'm more interested in having something that would help our young people to realize that there are these things, and you can do this. When I grew up here, I didn't know you could do anything. We had very, very little information. We would—like we would—we lived in Omak, and we would go from Omak to Penticton often; and maybe to Wenatchee. But we would never really go east that much. It would be rare that we would go to Spokane or something. So we had a really limited view of the world in general back then. And so, this is a way of just trying to bring them together to realize that they're not alone. A lot of times I've been in school, and you're the only Native there in the room. And to bring these people together; and to create friendships and bonds amongst them. So that's the goal of this new project.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yes. Very laudable. Joe, how much of your success as an artist did your parents see?

JOE FEDDERSEN: [Laughs.] My parents don't really understand it.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Well, they—did they come to any gallery openings?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, they came to one of my gallery openings at Sacred Circle. And, you know, my mom was really wonderful. My dad was going around telling people my work costs

too much—

[They laugh.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: —and they quickly moved him into the back room.

[They laugh.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: But they have a limited understanding of what I do, and—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: —I guess, you know, who I am, or whatever.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: But in their own way, are hugely truly supportive.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes. My—you know, and my mother passed away in the early '90s. And my dad remarried. And one—you know, one time, I was—I went over for dinner, and I said, "I have good news. The Whitney just bought a piece." And they all said, "Great. Great." And then they asked, "What's a Whitney?"

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: I knew that was coming. [Laughs.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: And that kind of tells a lot about how they don't really understand any of the art world at all.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: You know, and what I—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: What about your siblings?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, my older brother, you know, is very, you know, inquisitive, and has an affiliation towards art. He actually does photography. And he—I think he has a Facebook page. I don't do Facebook, or—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: I don't either.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —and so I don't really know. I have people tell me that he does. And his daughters are Carly—Carly is—she went to IAIA, and she studied jewelry. She does wonderful jewelry.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Fabulous.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And his youngest daughter, RYAN!, she's doing really well right now. She does what's called participatory installation work.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Interesting.

JOE FEDDERSEN: She—so she does a lot of public art and installation pieces.

[01:15:00]

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yes.

JOE FEDDERSEN: She's doing really well. And my older sister, Yvonne, her son Bill—I think they came to my opening out at the Heye Center in New York, when I did the centennial one.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: *Continuum?*

JOE FEDDERSEN: What's that?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: *Continuum?*

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes—[cross talk]—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Truman's show.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes, Truman was the curator.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yes.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And so my sister was there with my nephew, Bill. And Jim—I think it was Jim—[digital distortion]—he came up to my nephew and he said, "What are you going to be?" And my nephew said, "I'm going to be an artist."

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Fabulous.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And you should have seen my sister's mouth drop. [Laughs.] And—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Like, she didn't love that! [Laughs.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes. He went to U-Dub and he just got his glass—his—you know, he had a BFA in glass. He's just hit his stride, and things are going really well. I'm not sure if you know the Pilchuck glass studios. They run summer programs. And he's been chosen to be one of the—I'm not sure if it's a staff or a help person. Because of the COVID, they're only having fellows come with the staff. So it's limited. And he's going to be out there working in glass with all these international artists, for three months in the summer.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Wow. Wow.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes. And that's going to be amazing.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Sure; I should think so. Yes.

JOE FEDDERSEN: So I think that things are going well for them.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Excellent.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yeah. I just try to help them along a little bit, you know, like, you know, Jaune helped me out tremendously. And—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —people have helped me, and I just want to help them a little bit.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: That's wonderful. That's wonderful.

JOE FEDDERSEN: So.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: That's terrific. So next week, we have another date?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Okay.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And next week, we'll actually talk about your art. How's that?

JOE FEDDERSEN: [Laughs] Okay, great.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: [Laughs] Well, thank you again for being so generous with your time, Joe.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, I hope that's what you wanted this morning, is—[cross talk]—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yes, it is. And I do think we've covered material that does not appear in—you know, that hasn't been published already, and so I'm very happy about that, to flesh out your story; because that's what we're trying to do here.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Great, yeah.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: All right.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Okay.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Terrific.

JOE FEDDERSEN: So next—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So until next Thursday.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Okay.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Okay, thanks, Joe.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Okay, thank you.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Okay, bye-bye.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Bye.

[END TRACK fedder21_1of2_digvid_m.]

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Okay. Hello. Today is Thursday, May 6. And I'm Cecile Ganteaume, curator at the National Museum of the American Indian. I'm speaking today with the artist Joe Feddersen for the Archives of American Art. Joe is truly a multimedia artist whose work has been displayed in numerous exhibitions over the last three or four decades. And his work is housed in a great many prestigious museums. Welcome, Joe. And thank you for participating in this Archives of American Art conversation. Hi, Joe.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Good morning.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So, I thought I'd start out by asking you about your studios and beginning with your first studio, because the last time we spoke, you said—I believe you said, um, Truman was trying to get you to go to the University of Wisconsin in Madison where he was teaching. And you said you were kind of hemming and hawing about it because you just set up a studio, as I recall.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Oh—well, I had just graduated from University of Washington. And, uh, and I'd, uh, you know, I told you that I'd rented—you knew Diane Katsiaficas.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yes.

JOE FEDDERSEN: I think you said that—yeah. And I was subletting her studio in Seattle. So I had half of a floor of a studio. And, uh, I was actually reluctant. You know, Diane invited me to go to Minneapolis, to, uh—University of Minnesota, at Minneapolis—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: —teaching. And I was more impressed with Madison, because Truman had also asked me to consider going to grad school there. And, uh—I found that to be a better suit for me—match for me.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Sure. But this studio, then, um, how long did you have it for before you had to give it up?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, probably about three or four years. I was, uh—there at—probably my senior year at U-Dub. And, uh—and then about two or three years after that. Like I said, it was really fortunate that I agreed to go to Madison because I wanted to learn things. And right then I was very successful about—with the imagery of the *Rainscapes*, the kind of landscape pieces I was doing. And I was, uh, exhibiting a lot across the country. But, uh, I didn't want to do the same thing over and over. I wanted to learn more things—what's that?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Well, when you say learn more things, do you mean learn more technical things like printing techniques, or learn more things like stylistic approaches, or something more like that?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, it's kind of hard to imagine today, but, in 1986, computer imaging was just getting started. And I wanted to explore that. And I also—you know, Madison is known for their glass. And I wanted to do a little bit of glasswork. And, uh—so I wanted this time to kind of develop these skills without the pressures of, uh, of producing all of the time for commercial shows. Even if I was exhibiting while I was at Madison, I wanted to—to have time to do research and development, basically. So it was really fruitful. It was—it's really, uh, difficult to kind of take a look at your career and decide that, um—maybe I didn't want to do *Rainscape Number 500*, and whatever. You know? And to work on my work and my career, I needed that kind of hiatus from that market.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative]. You might not realize just how many of your

works are in the collection of the National Museum of the American Indian. It's about 30. Did you have any idea of that?

JOE FEDDERSEN: I was just—last week, um—um, I had a note from Charles [Froelick], my art dealer in Portland. And, uh, evidently, Glen Alps' estate collection opened up or something. And when Glen was really ill and was passing away, he gave a lot of the artwork that we'd traded over the years back, but evidently he had kept some. And one of the pieces, I think that even—I think the Smithsonian bought it, it was called, uh—it was out of my first exhibit, uh—*Sheltered from Night Rain*. And that piece was in Glen's collection. It was kind of surprising to me, because that's like 1982, or something like that.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Very early. One of your earliest, right?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Uh-huh [affirmative].

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And actually, Rick Bartow donated pieces, I think literally months before he passed away. But there are some *Rainscapes*. And I was wondering, um, when you were studying printing, you had to be looking at Japanese prints. And of course, you know, there are Japanese, uh—woodblock printers who do these incredible rain scenes. I was wondering if they might have in any way, you know, been simmering in the back of your mind.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yeah, you know, when I went—to, uh, to University of Washington, you know, I was an undergrad, and Glen was on his kind of last years there. And I'm thinking now, he's my age now. He was kind of forced into retirement when he turned 70. They had this thing where people were retired to kind of bring in new blood, and also not to pay them so much, you know, at the university system. So they kind of forced people to retire.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And he did not like that very much. And he—but while I was there, the other—the grad students who would normally use this research area, they didn't like it because it wasn't part of the art school. It was a building that was on the University of Washington Avenue. There's a big, um—I don't know. You've probably been there. Um, The Ave, you know, on the U District. And so there was this little, uh, storefront that Glen had, uh—you know, the University of Washington owned a lot of the real estate. And he had this storefront set aside as a printmaking research area. And none of the grad students wanted to use it. So I got to use it all by myself. And there happened to be some of those Japanese prints there. So I did see them there.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah. Yeah. Extraordinary.

JOE FEDDERSEN: But those prints were made, um—when I was working with Michael Spafford. And they had done something that was different. Usually, when you're in classes, you get, like, weekly assignments. You do this. And Spafford's approach was that you pick one topic and work for it—work on it, for 10 weeks. And I remember them saying—and I chose rain. And they were going, "Rain? What are you going to do with rain for 10 weeks?" And that really kickstarted my career there, because that was a lot of the first show that I did in Seattle, and so forth.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah. And the other thing I want to ask you, based on this *Rain* series is—I mean, obviously, you're an artist. But, I mean, what do you think was nurturing your color sensibility? Because in that *Rain* series, your sense of color is just—you know, it's just phenomenal. Where do you think that came from?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, I'm not exactly—I never really thought about it. But it was, uh—a lot of it was the way of exploring, you know, by picking a general topic here. It kind of frees you up in other areas. When you have one direction you're going, you can explore and, uh, experiment within the kind of confines of the direction.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And on the *Rain* ones, they were—a lot of them were printed twice, with, uh—relief rolls. And I found it really important to work on the color because, uh—the two, um—the two prints, if you—you have to be aware that you're overlaying with complementary colors. And the way that the little diagonal lines are actually a residue of part of the plate,

the plate's that's open to the colors underneath it. So you have to be aware of how the colors are progressing, if that makes any sense, because you can have really vivid lines. But the overlap of them becomes muted.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah. So you have to be super attuned to what you're doing with the color.

JOE FEDDERSEN: The contrast and the—a high value, usually in the range, to be able to have them—to come forward.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative]. Um, before I forget, I wanted to tell you something, an anecdote that Truman told me. And when I look at your, um—glass baskets with the, um, HOV pattern or whatever, Truman told me this story that, um—when he used to go to town with his mom to go shopping, his mother would never park the car in between the lines for where you're supposed to park. And he'd say, "Mom, you've got to park between the lines." And she said, "Why? We were here first."

JOE FEDDERSEN: [Laughs.] That's wonderful.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah, I thought so. So, I thought you started really getting into glass after you got into basketry. But you're saying, um, that you started getting into glass when you were at Madison, at the University of Wisconsin?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Uh, yes, I did glass sculpture, casting, when I was in Madison. Um, I made—I think I had made some, like, canoe paddles and, um—things there when I was there.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: So it had a little bit of glass. Nothing like that I did after I, you know, doing the *Continuum* show. I think I told you that, uh—I was making the baskets. And then the glass pieces were kind of recreations of the handmade pieces.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Huh. So I can't help wanting to ask you this about, um, you know, when you're talking on videos, or people are writing about your art, you know, obviously they're talking about how important Plateau motifs are to your work, and, you know, what you see around yourself. But I hear very little reference to, um, how you're influenced by mainstream, um—currents, or artists in any way. And, um—Gail Tremblay mentions, um, I think it's Jasper Johns, you know, being in the back of your mind when you were, uh—working on one particular piece. But I'm wondering, you know, are there other artists? And these are just connections that come to my mind. And maybe they never happened for you. But when I look at your *Flotilla*, I think of Calder, and I think of Calder's incredible circus, um—sculpture that was in the Whitney for years. So I'm just wondering. And the other person that I think of when I look at your art, non-Native person, is, um—Keith Haring and his subway art, you know? I'm wondering, are there any—well, I'm wondering, who are, who are non-Native artists that you admire, that you've looked at over the years? Or maybe you've been to an exhibit, and you really liked the exhibit of this person's work?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, there are a lot, you know, there were, you know, like, uh—Rauschenberg.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative], that's one of the—I was wondering if the color field painters really spoke to you, you know—um, you know, even Helen Frankenthaler, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, all those people.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, I really love Judd a lot. And maybe I—can I take a couple seconds and go get a piece I made? This isn't a piece that is shown or anything. It's just something I wanted to do.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh, I'd love that. That would be terrific.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And it has to do with Judd.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: The Archives of American Art would like that, too.

JOE FEDDERSEN: I'm not—I'm not exactly sure how this will present itself. This is ceramic with a glass inlay. And, uh—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative], yeah. It shows. Yeah.

JOE FEDDERSEN: This is after—I fell in love with this piece by Judd that was a copper box with probably a plexiglass cover on the side. It was at the, um—uh, it was at the Chicago—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: In New York, or—?

JOE FEDDERSEN: —Chicago Art Institute.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And it was just this really, you know, nice piece. And the, you know, the, um—it was just beautiful. And, uh—I kept thinking about it, and then I had made this box, and I thought, yes, if I put a glass cover on it, it would remind me of that piece of, uh, of Judd's that I just loved. And, uh—so that's a little thing. You know, and Eva Hesse works in—I did a whole set called *Codex*, where it referenced Eva Hesse's work—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yes.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —and, uh—except it had Plateau designs in everything. We made a little Blurb book about *Codex*, and it was referencing her [*Repetition*] *Nineteen*, the plexiglass kind of vessels.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah, I know exactly what you're talking about. Yeah.

JOE FEDDERSEN: That look like, uh—the baskets, the cylinder baskets. And so I reference those too. A lot of times, you know, in the *Canoe Journeys*, uh—you know, like you mentioned, uh—the ones—those ceramic pieces?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yes.

JOE FEDDERSEN: One of them references *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, except it has Coyote in it. And it's actually kind of referencing Trump and, you know, his fiascos there.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Great.

JOE FEDDERSEN: So he's in this little boat and it's part of the thing. Uh, those things interweave, also. And I was doing a lot of, uh—you know, I was—okay, I teased Jaune [Quick-to-See Smith] a little bit. And Jaune, I was—we were doing this thing about canoes and stuff. And Jaune sent me a canoe. And then I made a whole—one of the canoes out of the drawing that Jaune sent me. So these things are—you know, in part, some of them are—they're just whimsical kind of things that are part of it. But other ones reference different events going on around me, you know, like Jaune sending me that thing. So I made a whole part that was just Jaune's, uh, canoe in there, and added it into the variety, and other things. Other ones are kind of like personal references involved into that work. So—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So, um, um—this might be a hard question for you to answer, since you are essentially always making art. But is there—was there a piece of art, or a series of art—maybe it was *Rain*, maybe it was something else. But was there a piece of art where you thought, uh—that, um, you know, you had found your voice as an artist? It was more than being technically accomplished. It was just something that you thought was really expressive, and really unique to who you are, and you really thought, you're on the road now.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, if I was to choose that, I would think that, that the—some of the more important pieces would be coming from the *Plateau Geometric*—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Okay.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —because, you know, before the *Plateau Geometric*, with the *Rainscapes* and things, I think there was really, uh—an effort to not—to call attention to where I was from, to be kind of like, you know, an artist, and be successful. Um, but when I came back from Madison, I started the *Plateau Geometric* suite. And what I wanted to do was—you know, I know how to do all of these long lists of processes in printmaking.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And what I wanted to do was to celebrate the process. But I wanted to ground it in where I was from. And I chose to ground it in the baskets, the flat bags with the kind of—a lot of the flat bags are—they have kind of ambiguous geometric designs. And I wanted to not, um—to mimic that, I didn't want to draw a basket, but I wanted to take some of the design elements and to kind of, like, um—expound upon them, kind of like improvisation, like you would in jazz, where you can bring the color and play with the color, but still at the same time have a reference to Plateau art. And that started a whole other series. It started, uh—from there, it became, um—ones like—those kind of morphed into the one, like the *Okanagan*, the large geometric pieces, where they definitely referenced the designs more. And, uh—like the *Wyit View*, from *Crow's Shadow*, the piece I did there, where you can see that that's transitioning into—beyond the reference to the baskets, into incorporating new, um—elements of the landscapes, like the cul-de-sac, or the towers that are—um, you know, these high voltage towers go across our ridges now, where in my youth, you would look up there, and there would be no towers going across the landscape. And so, um, those are the ones that—you know, I think of the *Plateau Geometrics* as, like, the starting point for that whole set of work.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: I love that jazz improvisation metaphor. One thing I wanted to ask you about, um, when you started learning basketry and making basketry, those Sally bags. I wanted to know, um—what was the reason, um, for you working with waxed linen, as opposed to, um—natural fibers? I mean, you know, obviously, of course, you're not making replicas of historic baskets. I get that. But what was the reason for going with waxed linen?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Oh, you would like this. You know, when you work with natural fibers, you see, you have to keep them damp, you know, damp.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: And I would work on these baskets when I was in committee meetings. You probably have been in a lot of meetings where you just go, "I would just love to do something instead of just sit here." And so I would bring them to the meetings, and the waxed—I liked the feel of the waxed linen. And it also enabled me to do them, to just pull it out and to start weaving, sitting there and going to the meetings. And I'm sure you have a lot of meetings, too.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: I didn't plug in my laptop, and it just gave me a message. I'm just getting my cord. It's one second.

All my cords were tangled up like spaghetti. So I had to find the right cord. Um, I know a lot of people who have tried to, uh, learn basketry. And it's not easy for everybody. It's not—it's a skill. It's not only—it's a skill, and it's a discipline to stay at it. And you had both, to be able to do it. And, um, it's not only learning how to weave, or trying to basket. But, uh—working in the designs is pretty—it's an accomplishment.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, is that a question?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah. Well, don't you think it's a challenge?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, I never had that problem. You know, some people graphed everything out. And I tend to be very intuitive about it. I will know that the basket has four rows of 16 going this way, and—do you want me to grab a basket around?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Okay.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um—oh, these are the two baskets I just brought. This one is called, um—*Roll Call*. And when I made *Roll Call*, I know that this has four going this way, and four going the other way. And each one of those has 16 inside of it. So I know that every 16 is a repeat. So, these things—these are all on rows of 16. Basically, um, each person has a row of 16. And while I'm holding up *Roll Call*, I'll talk a little bit about it.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Sure. Thank you.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, well, *Roll Call* comes from, uh—it's about the world around us. So I look at them kind of like winter counts, where it talks about what's around, and what happened. And, uh, so this is kind of like, uh—just stopping and thinking about what's around you. And, uh—you know, there was also this poem by [William E.] Stafford. And it was called

"Tracks." And he was on a train. And he was doing the same thing. He was saying, "Who's around us?" And on a fresh snow, you would see the tracks. And he would say, "Fox is here," and so on. And it's kind of who has survived. And so we have all of these figures, and we have like a television person here, and uh—android.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah. [Laughs.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: Here's an android guy, and a little person there. And, uh—I was out—I think I was up at the Burger King, and I looked across and there was a whirlwind across the valley. And I thought, yes, I should bring that in, and a cat, and so on, a high voltage tower, and a mosquito, and just things that are around you, and kind of thinking that, you know, this is our world today. And, who is here? Who has survived? And we have, like, Eagle here. When I grew up in Omak, there were no eagles, you know, in the '50s. You never saw eagles. And so, it would say, "Ban the DDT." And eagles came back. It's a common sight to see eagles today. And, you know, we have, like, space people, and our trees, and a snake. And this house I live in has these praying mantises. And all of a sudden, they'll be at my front door, and you go, "Oh, well, thanks for coming by and visiting." So it's kind of a narrative about who's here. And it also makes me think of those high school pictures, where they have the class pictures.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: [Laughs.] Right.

JOE FEDDERSEN: All of the people in it—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah.

JOE FEDDERSEN: —and this grid and stuff. And it kind of references that. So these—that's what these are about.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Wonderful. So is it Elizabeth Woody that taught you basketry?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Uh, yes, Lizzie did. Um, she was working with Mary Slick. And, uh, I don't know, it would seem very intuitive for me. And I think—I told you about the story my mom told you, about how I would just take one can of rocks and pick one out at a time and put it in the other. And it's kind of—it's like that when you're weaving. It's just very methodical. And it's kind of like a pacing. It seems soothing to just sit there and work.

Um, and I brought another one along here too, that's—this one is called *Highway With HOV Lane*. So, you can see the highway and the HOV lane. And on these, I really liked them when they—the design fluctuated. Like, you wouldn't normally look at that and think, highway with HOV lane.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Exactly. No, that's not really what comes to mind if one doesn't know your work.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And then you go, "Of course, it is, it looks like traditional baskets, kind of." So some of them kind of have that way of like being in two worlds.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So, did you collaborate with Lizzy on projects, um—over a period of time?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Uh, yeah, we did. We, uh—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Was that working together on art projects? Or was she writing poetry, and you were making an art object? And they were displayed together? I mean, what was that? What were you doing in your collaborations?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, well, it wasn't—it was working together. We would, uh—you know, um, we did one exhibition at, um—the Tula Foundation in Atlanta. And it was about, um—oh, gosh. I'm trying to remember. One of the parts was this letter that Lizzie wrote me. And we did this shelf that went around the casino—I mean, around the gallery, where we put the letter on this glass shelf. And so, it gave the—you could read the letter in text. But it talked about home, and it talked about how, um, she had just left, and she came home. And, uh, I'm trying to remember what the whole thing was about, because we had highlighted it with little texts of Indian wisdom that were in little framed pieces. And so, we worked on that together, to gather the information, and to come up with the—kind of the direction of the

whole piece. And, uh—I'm afraid I'm, kind of like, coming at—this is like 25 years ago.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: [Laughs.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: I don't remember more precisely what we were doing. But we also did a broadside for a local art magazine, *Reflex*, where we, um, did the broadside that folded out. And it had both text and images on it. And, I'm trying to think of other things. We did a number of projects. We always found it really soothing to go on a drive so we could talk and be in peace, and just have a conversation about what we're going to do.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Sure. Well, um, there's another basket maker you knew really well. Elaine Timentwa.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Timentwa.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Timentwa.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Uh-huh [affirmative], Elaine—when I was very young, I was a paperboy. And I remember, she was one of my clients, you know?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: [Laughs.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: I was probably like 10 years old.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh, really?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yeah. So we have a long history. But she was probably in her early 20s then. And after I'd gone, um, I came back, and I think I was one of the jurors for the Washington State Arts Commission. They did a large buy for Plateau and Washington state Native artists. And so, we bought some of her work for that. And I started buying baskets from her, too.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And did she do these figurative cylindrical baskets? Or what type of baskets did she make?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Geometric design baskets. Do you want me to grab—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Cedar bark, the coil? Cedar bark coil?

JOE FEDDERSEN: I have this feeling I'm in the wrong room.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah, it's beginning to look that way. Yeah, classic. Really gorgeous.

JOE FEDDERSEN: So yeah, this is a smaller one. Um, I bought this one when I was being the juror for the Washington Arts Commission. She said this is a snake design.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: It's fabulous.

JOE FEDDERSEN: This piece. And I have a larger one, that I'm loaning it to the, um—the Museum of Art and Culture in Spokane. They're going to do an exhibition of my collection. And I've been talking to them about the importance of—you know, it's a contemporary Plateau, or contemporary Native art collection. And I felt really strongly that they should have, uh—kind of traditional work that's made contemporary into the show, that there's not like a break with the tradition. But everything is all going on at the same time. And so I'm having them put in pieces that are more quite, quote, traditional.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Wonderful. Wonderful. This brings me to another subject. So, the influence on basketry—of Plateau basketry on your work is evident. But, um, not so evident is the influence of Plateau beadwork. And the Plateau folks have a real strong tradition of beadwork. Has that played a role in inspiring you in your work?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, well, some of the designs are from the beadwork. Um, but I just haven't, um, thought about it that much, I guess.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: I don't know if you know, that Linda King, Corky's wife, she's an amazing

beadwork artist. And so, I know these people. But I, uh—I guess I haven't done it in that way. Beadwork has come into the work, but, uh, just in different ways, I guess. I don't know. Maybe it's not as evident.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah. Well, because a lot of the beadwork—well, it can be very geometric. But it can also be floral. And that's not part of your—so much a part of your vocabulary.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, yeah. Well, there is—in this show that's on at the, uh—at the MAC, I actually put one—I have a—my aunt Sophie, I had visited her a lot when she was—you know, she had a, uh—blood—you know, a stroke. And so, she was in a rest home for a long time. And she would do drawings. And some of the drawings were really interesting. And then, this one that she did was a floral drawing. And it had a vine with flowers that were all different kinds of flowers on the same vine. And I was with Elaine Timentwa at the Museum of Art and Culture in Spokane. And we found this historic design that was—it could have just been her drawing that. It had the same vine with different kinds of flowers all along.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Wonderful. Wonderful.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And I thought, "That's the one my aunt drew." And it was just wonderful to see. And that's come into some of the work that I've done, too. The same vine with different colored flowers painted through.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative]. So, um, I'd like to talk about some of the other people you've collaborated with over the years. Um, is the nature of your relationship with Preston Singletary, was that—was he helping out technically, as opposed to creatively? Or is it not possible to make that distinction?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, well, I don't really know. You know, Preston has done several exhibits with people he's collaborated with. And he's never asked me to do one of those. Um, but when I worked with Preston, I felt like I just hired a technician to help me.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: That's—okay. That was my question.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And, um, so I just left it at that.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Um, what about, um—Nora Naranjo Morse? That's more of an artistic collaboration. Right?

JOE FEDDERSEN: I don't know if I've ever collaborated with Nora.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh, then you've just exhibited with her?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yeah. I mean, yeah. She was, uh—when we did the Gathering at Evergreen, she was the lead ceramic artist, I was the lead printmaking artist. But that's, uh—and, you know, she's been my friend for a long time. So, but I don't think we've ever, like, quote, collaborated together to make artwork.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Right. And then that would be the same situation with, um, uh—Wendy Red Star, where you exhibit together?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Uh, yeah, I think we—Wendy and I—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: *Two Generations* was the name of the show?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yeah. At the Schnitzer [Schneider] Museum in Oakland [Ashland]. Yeah.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So in a show like that, do you—is it the curator who's selecting the pieces? Or do you and Wendy, in this case, um, talk about which one of your artworks you think would complement the other's works?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, well, actually, Wendy and I didn't have any conversation about it. They just put the show together.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh, I see.

JOE FEDDERSEN: You know, the—Schnitzer—you know, Jordan Schnitzer, the collector, he

collects Wendy's work, and he collects mine.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh, I see how that worked. I get that. And what about—what about the exhibit in New York City at the International Print Center, of, um, Native printmakers? How did that show come together?

JOE FEDDERSEN: I really don't know. I was just in New York. And they had all of these book fairs going on. I wouldn't—I was talking to this one person. And they said, "You know, you're in our show."

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh, you're kidding me.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And I didn't even realize it was going on. And they even had those, you know, banners on the streets, with one of my images on it. And I really was clueless that anything was happening.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: That's funny. I must say I think you had a print in that show, maybe two of the same name. I'm not sure. *Charmed: Red Deer* print. But anyway, you used spray paint. And I must say, it had a New York graffiti feel to it.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Oh, those are really funny, because I was working on the *Charmed* piece for, uh—the Sun Valley Art Center.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: The glass piece.

JOE FEDDERSEN: The glass piece. And when I do work, I often do multimedia kind of things where I'll make that. And then I'll do a whole set of prints. And I did do a set of prints to go with that. But I hated them. They were boring to me. And they sat in the drawer for like, six months, and I thought, what are you going to do with those? And I looked at them and I thought, I don't have anything to lose. I think I'll spray paint on them.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: [Laughs.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: And I brought out this spray paint, and I did those really quickly. And they just fell into place. And I just loved the way that the spray paint kind of invigorated the work and became more, more, uh, not stale.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh, no. They had a New York vibe, definitely.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yes. That's how that came about. And then the idea that, you know, I didn't have anything to lose, these are boring prints. And I thought I'll just spray paint on them. And, uh, and I just really liked how it came out.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Funny. So can now—can we talk about the nature of your relationship with Charles Froelick? He's been your representative, your dealer, for how long?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Uh, about 20 years.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah, a long time.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, I, you know, I give Charles a bad time, because, um—you know, when Rick was getting started, Bartow, I was, uh—I tried to help Rick a lot early on, try to get him connected and introduce him to people, and so on. And we tried to get him a gallery. And we tried to get him in at Sacred Circle. And, you know, we were going, "This is brilliant work." And we couldn't get them to see. And, um—he ended up going with Jamison Thomas in Portland. And that was in the early '80s. And in the background was Charles. He was this kid in his early 20s. And that's what I always remember. Charles, I give him a bad time about the kid in the background with the long blond hair.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Funny.

JOE FEDDERSEN: But, uh, so that was the first time I met him. And then, uh, when Jamison Thomas closed, Charles opened his own gallery with Rick as one of his lead artists, in Portland. And, uh, so I would—I met him because I would—you know, I was teaching at Evergreen then. And so I'd bring my class down. And Charles did a wonderful talk about, you know, about the art market. He was this speaker that could invigorate the students to demystify the market and to encourage them. It takes a really talented speaker to be able to

do that. And so a number of times, I did that. And I was with Elizabeth Leach Gallery in Portland at that time. And then, uh, I left Elizabeth Leach. And, uh, when I was at the Eiteljorg, when Rick and I were both at the Eiteljorg, Fellows at the same time—I think that was, like 2000. And we were walking together, you know. And I just said hi to Charles, and stuff. And he asked me then if I'd like to join his gallery. And I, of course, agreed. And he's been my dealer since then, since early 2000.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Great. Yeah. Uh, so he was involved in *Vital Signs*. He helped pull that off?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Oh, he's—he was amazing. Um, it's—he did all of those things that, as I think—you publish books. There are a zillion things you have to do.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Tons of details. They're endless.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And he excels at that. He gets it all done. And he does it very—extremely well.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And talking about *Vital Signs*, how did it end up with Rebecca Dobkins and Gail Tremblay, because they're the perfect writers? Their chapters are just—you know, they're perfect.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, well, when *Vital Signs*—you know, originally—um, do you know Barbara Thomas?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: No.

JOE FEDDERSEN: She works out of Seattle, she's a friend of mine. She's an African American artist. And I've known her since, you know, probably '80 or something. And, uh, she was working with the Urban League a lot. And so we got acquainted with her. And they had just published a small book on her work. And so I called her up, and I said, "How do you get a book published?"

[They laugh.]

JOE FEDDERSEN: You know? Because I was clueless. And, uh, she said, "We can do it." Evident—she was on the University of Washington, um—the publishing part. Um, she had something to do with that.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: At the Press?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yeah. So she could propose a book for my work. And then it was, who do you want to do it? And Rebecca had just done Rick's book, the first book that came out of the Eiteljorg. And so I said, "Rebecca, are you interested?" And they agreed to do it. And, uh, of course, Gail is, you know, one of my friends from—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Evergreen?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, even before that, at Sacred Circle. She would come to Seattle for the openings, and met her during that time, the early '80s.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Fabulous. Um, do you pay any attention to critiques of shows of your work? You've had so many gallery shows. You must have lots of, uh, critiques in newspapers. Do you read them? Do you pay attention to them?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Uh, only to the ones I kind of find humorous, I guess. I don't know. There was one for, uh—you know, at the Eiteljorg, they did, I think, this huge collection show. And it was, uh, for the *New York Times*. And I remember that they had picked, uh, my work and, uh —Kay WalkingStick. As like, these are wonderful artists here, and all that stuff. Oh, yeah, I have to—[laughs]—see that. But I try not to read very much press, to be truthful.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah. Yeah. Funny. Well, let's talk about a few more of your artist friends. How about your relationship, whatever it is, with James Lavadour?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, well, you know, James is a friend of mine. And, uh, I got to know Jim from being in Sacred Circle. You know, Sacred Circle was really a hub of Native art in Seattle. And it networked into the nation because of the affiliation with the galleries in San Francisco

and New York.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Sounds like it was a breeding ground as well as a hub.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yeah. And, uh—so I got to know Jim through that, you know, going to his openings at Sacred Circle in the early '80s. We were both kind of just starting at the same time there. And, uh, I don't know. I've been to Crow's Shadow. And, you know, we communicate to each other.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Right.

JOE FEDDERSEN: I'm doing this project for the Plateau contemporary artists. And Jim was one of the ones I called to be on the advisory panel. And—yeah.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: What about, um—artists outside of this sort of Plateau, Northwest—yeah, Northwest region? I mean—well, oh, I know. I was wondering—looking at your early prints and your sense of color, I was wondering if you were aware of what Lloyd Kiva New was doing with his textiles. And if you, uh, you know, just knew about what he was doing, maybe admired what he was doing.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, well, I mean, you know, I knew Lloyd Kiva New. I met him in Santa Fe. And, uh—but he was more—I think he was more the director of them. And not—you know, uh—I did this talk at the Wheelwright. And Lloyd invited Lizzie and I out for dinner before the talk. And Lloyd was really—he talked a lot about the importance of, uh, printed matter, and especially textiles, and printed matter. And, uh—but beyond that, I'm not sure. I did see his exhibit at IAIA when I was down there doing a residency a couple years ago. They did a survey of his work after he passed away.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: What about somebody like Arthur Amiotte? I mean, I see, you know, slight parallels, slight—

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, I don't think I've ever met him.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: I know the work, but I haven't met him.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: But are there—uh, well, you know Nora Naranjo Morse, obviously. But what about other artists outside of, you know, your corner, your neck of the woods? Native artists.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Uh, you mean the Northwest? Or—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah, I mean—yeah. Beyond that region.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, well, there's—there is, you know—I don't know, there's probably several groups of Native artists. And, you know, the ones that—I was more affiliated with, like George Longfish, and Peter, um—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Jemison?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Jemison. I'm starting to forget names, because Peter and Jolene, you know, they were working—they were running the American Indian Community House. This is the mid-to-late 80s.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah. Quite a while ago.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Lloyd Oxendine, I think, was running it before them. And so, I would, you know, know those people. And, um, I think a lot of the ones that I knew were in academia, like, you know, George Morrison. I remember going to Minneapolis one time. And Jaune said, "You've got to go meet George Morrison." And she gave me his phone number. And I called him up, and I remember bringing out this catalog that we just did that was, uh—*New Directions Northwest*, it came out of the Portland Art Museum. And so I brought George a calendar. And he opens it up and he says, "Oh, I just love this work here!" It's, uh—it's Philip Minthorn's work. You know, it was really great. And George and I had actually traded artwork back then. We did an art trade.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: But, uh—and after that, then I saw him a few times, and, uh—you know, I think ATLATL had a conference in Minneapolis, too. So we got to see him a little bit. And, um, and so a lot of the ones who were—you know, were my friends, were kind of in academia, you know, as I was at Evergreen. So, uh—you know.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah. So it sounds like you've traveled a bit throughout the United States. Have you traveled abroad, or to Mexico? Well, you've obviously been up in Canada.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, yeah. Um, well, we went to Germany for a show at that museum in Muenster, um—the Westphalian Museum [of Natural History]. They did a—well, Manuela Well-Off-Man, I think you probably know her. She did an exhibit in the '90s at the museum. And Corky Claremont and I went out for the opening, to the show out there. So we went to Germany. And when I got the Eiteljorg, some friends of mine were going to Paris. And so I thought—so I spent a week in Paris.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh, good. Everybody should go to Paris. Did you like it?

JOE FEDDERSEN: And—it was okay. I kind of liked Germany better. The people were friendlier.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Oh. Parisians are notorious for being stuck up.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And, uh—but I really found an affinity to go to New Zealand, because we—I've been there about four times, because Tina Kuckkahn-Miller, the director of our longhouse and I went to, uh—New Zealand, to invite the Maoris to come to the first gathering. So we went to their gathering at Rotorua, to this big gathering.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: That must have been something.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yeah, it was. And so we invited them to come to Evergreen. And they accepted. They had invited me to go to their gathering earlier, but I think I was in the midst of—go all the way to New Zealand, and not know anybody? And I was a little hesitant. And they keep reminding me that I didn't take up their advice—invite earlier. But, uh, but I've been back. I did a residency there one month—I mean, for a month there. And I went to a couple of the other gatherings there. So yeah, so that's really been wonderful to do that.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Absolutely. So Joe, what do you like to do? How do you tend to spend your time when you're not making art?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, well, I like to gamble. But mostly, I just like to putter around the house making art. That's my mainstay of—I'll have a lot of projects I'm working on. And I'll work on one until I get tired of doing that. And then I'll work on something else. And, uh, that keeps me busy.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Well, um, so you've been making art for 40 years. How would you describe the similarities and the differences between what you're doing now and what you started out doing?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, well, I think I've always been a landscape artist. I've been always interested in the space, in the light, in the color. And, uh, there are figurative elements that come in. But I always think of it as, this is the world around me, and as a landscape kind of a thing. And I think that that thread has continued all the way through the work. So—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: And what about any differences, any things you've dropped along the way just because it wasn't getting you anywhere?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um—I'm not sure about that. I think that, um, you know, I've struggled, like, when I talked about quitting the *Rainscapes* and trying to move on. Sometimes I felt like that was a real struggle, to find that direction, um—to always be more creative. And when you find yourself kind of stuck, to move on, it's always difficult. Uh, but it wasn't—you know, I quit the *Rainscapes*. Uh, but it wasn't for any other reason than to—I felt it was holding me back. And I wanted to move forward. And it was a struggle to find the direction. And I think the next suite of work, I had done a set of self-portraits that, uh—I think one of them was in Lucy Lippard's *Mixed Blessings* book. And I thought that, when I was at Madison, I thought,

I'm moving away from the *Rainscapes*, I'm going to think about the self-portrait more, and there's a whole suite of work that are referencing that work in a more shape kind of manner, kind of silhouettes and so forth, and trying to create the direction that I wanted to follow. And, uh, I think that kind of work was relevant until I came back to the Northwest at Evergreen, when I decided that I wanted to do a suite that was about, you know, printmaking, and about Plateau culture. And that's why those works are really important. It became the direction that I finally, you know, felt secure in after leaving, like, the *Rainscape* things.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Um, it seems to me that, um—there are a whole—or there are a number of people that, if I could put it this way, that helped you find your place. You know, I'd include Vi Hilbert in that, and, um—the women who taught you basketry. Um, you know, it's—but that's a nice way to think about it, that people are getting, you know, little nudges, bits of help along the way from different directions. And then that person pulls it all together for themselves.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yeah, I've been really blessed with a lot of friends. And they've been very encouraging and helpful, you know?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So how—you know, in your years, how have you seen the art world change?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Oh, um, well the artwork's changed in a lot of ways, just as—when we think back to the—when I started, you know, like when I graduated high school, minimalism was at the height in, like, 1970. And I think that influenced how I perceived the world. You know, my—I am fascinated by Judd's work, by the coldness of it. And that coldness is just intriguing to me. And so I think that that's apparent. Uh, and I think, uh—I'm trying to remember how the artwork has changed—how the art world. And so, in the '80s, you really were tied into your dealer, your galleries, you know? In the '80s I think I had, uh—I was represented by almost 10 galleries that were around.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Really? Wow.

JOE FEDDERSEN: And then, when, uh—you know, the crash, a lot of them went under, you know? And that's when I was at Madison, when, you know, the bottom fell out of the art market. So I was very fortunate to be in that place at that time. And, uh, in going into academia rather than the art world, so, the commercial world, is heavily, but, um, and now, I don't know. I really couldn't operate without Charles. He does so much for me. He handles all of those things that I don't care to do, or know how to do so well. And he's really wonderful. But I understand that other people just have websites that they sell their work from, and work out of, and don't necessarily have gallery dealers—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: I think that's—young people today do that, because they do everything, you know, online. Um, do you, and or Charles, or your other dealers—do you think you have a pretty good handle on where pieces of your art are? I mean, I know you've been prolific. But, you know, do you think you know, um, who the collectors are?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Uh, I don't, really. Charles does. Charles has records of all of that. I'm afraid that's not one of my great points, of figuring—of documenting and placing where things are.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Um, Joe, I—for me, looking, you know, in at you from the outside, I would say you've been, like, this tremendously successful artist, successful in having your exhibit—uh, your work shown, and getting written about, and having your works in museums. But, that said, um, within the last, I would even say almost five years, maybe, to be generous, 10, the mainstream art world has been embracing Native art, as they, in my lifetime, they never had before. And I'd like you to comment on that. And so, for example, I remember when Allan Houser and his family were trying to get mainstream museums to exhibit his work. And he'd be told, well, you know, it's regional. So, you know, now there's been a 180-degree turn. You are noticing this, correct?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Oh, yes. I—well, there are also a lot of brilliant young artists, too. And I'm really happy for them, because I think that we may have paved the way for them.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: For sure, you did.

JOE FEDDERSEN: They are doing wonderful things, I see, in the art world. And you can just only, um, be grateful for their success, you know?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Yeah, absolutely. Um, how would you like to be recognized as an artist? So, I guess what I'm trying to ask you is, for example, um, would you like to be known as an American artist who is Native? Or would you like to be known as a Plateau artist? I mean, how would you like to be known?

JOE FEDDERSEN: I don't really think about that. But, uh, I think that you touched upon something on my decision to—when I left Evergreen, I didn't move to New York.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Right.

JOE FEDDERSEN: I moved—and home is more important to me than that other world. And even though, if I'm intrigued, and I like to go to the galleries and the shows, I really want to be home. And I really want to be with my people. I find it—I find it just wonderful to walk into a room that are full of my people, my relatives, that that's more important to me than going to New York, or being a New York artist, or anything like that.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh [affirmative], um, and I have one more question I want to ask you about. And that is that—uh, well, you like to do so many different things. But one of them, I think, that you like to do is make art on a very large scale, occasionally. So how often have you done this? Um, and what would you consider your large-scale artworks?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Well, um, they're the *Okanagan* pieces that—it was kind of funny when I decided that, you know, the intimacy of, like, the *Plateau Geometrics*, that I wanted to talk about scale more. I stretched the canvas that was, like, four by six feet. And I was going to make larger pieces. And then I go, why don't you do it in printmaking, you know?

And then that—and then the *Okanagan* pieces came out of that, where there were tiled prints that were—the smallest one, I think, was like eight-by-eight, and the largest one was, like, 12 by 65 feet, the one at the gallery in New York. Um, other pieces were, you know—Jaune has been very kind to me. And she invited me to be part of the artist team to do the *West Seattle Trail*, which is—I think, the attitudes of that have permeated my work, the idea of the symbols and the way that we deal with the land and the space that you're in.

Um, the *West Seattle Trail*, I think it's like three miles long. It goes along the Alki coast in West Seattle. And her and Don Fels and I were the collaborating artists for that project. And that was in the '90s, I believe. And other pieces, where I did a rather large fish trap for the Spokane Falls Community College. And even before that, in the '80s, I did a large *Rainscape* piece for the Washington State Arts Commission, just before I left for grad school.

And, uh—

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: *Charmed* is large.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yeah, *Charmed* is, yeah, large, and keeps evolving into other things.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative].

JOE FEDDERSEN: It's very, uh—a lot of people are really enjoying *Charmed*, uh—you know, it's at the MIAC right now, the Indigenous, uh—glass exhibition that is going to open soon. And they're talking about having—um, *Charmed* has become kind of like *Charmed-hyphenated*. The first one has a mountain design in it. And I think of it as referencing Omak Mountain where I'm from.

And then, the one at MIAC has all these circles, which are—we have this wonderful medicinal lake called Spotted Lake. It's in Canada. And it really has circles embedded in the lake. It's, uh—some sort of natural phenomena that creates these circles. It's amazing. And those are holding—the one at MIAC, it's kind of that—adds the continuity to the piece.

And I think that—I'm working on one, this *Canoe Journey* that will hopefully be at the Seattle Art Museum in the fall. And it references the kind of the *Canoe Journey* suite that I was doing. And right now I'm working on one called *Bestiary*. And *Bestiary* will be the show for Charles in the fall. But it will also be, I think, a glass installation piece at the glass museum in Tacoma.

The *Bestiary* is kind of unique, in that, you know, I'm here at home, and my dad is at home.

And sometimes I take him driving on road trips around to get him out of the house. And he comes up with these sayings, like, "This is a horrible, barren place we live." And I thought, no, it's not. But my dad is really—you can't argue with somebody deaf.

And I thought, I'll just make an art piece about all of the animals in Okanagan. And that's what *Bestiary* is. It's about the, you know, praying mantises, and then the snakes and everything, even including the COVID virus, are all part of the *Bestiary*. And so it'll be a *Charmed* piece. But there'll be a *Bestiary* about place, about where I'm at.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Nice. Nice. Um, well, one piece you just reminded me that I really wanted to ask you about, since you were talking about your dad is, if I understand this right, is a piece that somehow is influenced by your grandmother. Is it called *Tama*?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Yeah, *Tama* is the name for grandmother. So there was a suite of the ones from, uh—I'm not sure when that was, in the '90s?

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: I think it was later than that.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Maybe, yeah, or later. But there was ones that, you know, were a tribute to my grandmother. And then I did a whole suite of them that were kind of tributes to my aunts, like *Sophie*, and *Lydia*, and so on—*Mary Ann*. Those were referencing all of my aunts.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: They have a different feel from your other work.

JOE FEDDERSEN: So they're—they're kind of about place, but I think sometimes just the name is really good, to just honor these people.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Uh-huh, uh-huh [affirmative]. Well, um, you told me about *Bestiary*. Do you have any sort of collaborative projects with Plateau artists coming up, any further projects that bring together Plateau artists?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Um, well, I can't remember. I talked about—that we're working with the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture in Spokane about doing a contemporary Plateau art show. We're working on trying to get a book made. But we're still, like, about four years out.

And so I've been talking to, uh—to Wes Jessup, the executive director, about this project.

And we're in that place where, you know, I can't curate it because I'm one of the artists, as, normally, that the artists don't curate their own shows.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Correct.

JOE FEDDERSEN: So we're looking for a—really, a Plateau curator. And we have some good leads on some people. And I've just been organizing kind of the underlying part, because there are several things that we—that I find important, you know; that it relates to the communities, that this isn't like the five best Plateau artists and it's dropped on these communities here.

We want it to be inclusive and to be something that brings people together, instead of separating people. So we—we're working on that.

And we want it to be accessible enough to maybe be a high school textbook on Native art, because in Washington State, there's a state law encouraging the school districts to teach Native art and art history.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Great.

JOE FEDDERSEN: So there might be a way of—it's mostly about trying to educate the youth, and also to bring people together. And that—that includes over the border into Canada, because the Plateau area goes up into Canada quite a ways.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Do you miss teaching? I mean, obviously, you said, you know, that teaching doesn't really allow you enough time to devote to your art. But is there something about that interaction with the students that you actually do miss?

JOE FEDDERSEN: Oh, I miss the students. It's strange when, you know, when we went to Germany, I just felt really at home, and in Amsterdam, because you're surrounded by all of these people in their young 20s. And I always, at Evergreen, I was just fascinated by the freshmen, these kids that traveled away from home to go to this school. And they are still kids when they arrive. And those first three months, they just grow up and become adults, I think. And it's just really wonderful to watch that transition. And I really do miss being in the midst of a lot of young people.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Well, um, Joe, this has been wonderful. And I thank you very much. I think we covered a lot of territory today. And, um, I think it's good.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Great. Good.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: So, um, have a good rest of the day. And you'll be getting this transcript, so you can, you know, make any changes or whatever, before it becomes official and then becomes research material for future scholars.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Great. Thanks. I appreciate that.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: All right, Joe.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Okay.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Okay. Thank you so much.

JOE FEDDERSEN: Okay. You take care.

CÉCILE GANTEAUME: Okay. Bye.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]