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Oral history interview with Linda Stein, 2023 September 20-October 5

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Linda Stein on 2023 September 20-October 5. The interview took place in the narrator's home in New York, New York and was conducted by Katie Larson for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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

Interview

[00:00:03.52] KATIE LARSON: Hi. My name is Katie Larson, and I'm here interviewing Linda Stein on September 20, 2023. Linda, thank you so much for agreeing to the interview. I thought to start we could have you talk a little bit about your early childhood growing up, so maybe you could tell us a little bit about your parents and your family.

[00:00:26.48] LINDA STEIN: All right. Um. Let me try to give you an idea of what growing up was like for me in the 1940s now and 1950s. I was born in 1943. I'm just 80 now, so we're talking about much more than half a century ago, a time much, much different than today, of course.

[00:00:54.41] So I was this little ball playing kid who beat all the girls and most of the boys in the popular games of the day, ping-pong, marbles, bowling, yo-yo. I was the district yo-yo champion of my neighborhood, and I just cherished the diamond-studded yo-yo that I won. It cost what I thought was very big money in those days, 60.

[00:01:22.70] And these kinds of games and sports took up most of my non-homework time after elementary school. And playing with girls was rare, though I did have some good gal pals, and I guess with them I played board games and house maybe, which didn't compare in my mind with box baseball and curb ball played on the city streets of New York.

[00:01:53.28] KATIE LARSON: What was the neighborhood you were growing up in, and what were your parents doing at that time?

[00:01:58.08] LINDA STEIN: Okay. The neighborhood was the Bronx, and, um, my parents—my father was in the Garment District, uh, and we're talking about right after—I was born during World War II, '43. But as I was growing up, things got a little bit better for my, uh, father at work. He used to have two or three jobs, but with Roosevelt coming in, at one point he doubled his salary from $20 a week to $40 a week, and that was pretty, pretty big.

[00:02:47.34] So, um, money was tight, but as I was growing up, um, we—we had enough to live on. My mother didn't work out of the home, and, um, I had an older sister. I have an older sister about 10 years older than me.

[00:03:16.00] KATIE LARSON: And what's your older sister's name?

[00:03:18.34] LINDA STEIN: Carol.

[00:03:19.39] KATIE LARSON: Carol. Wonderful. And so growing up, you loved to play sports. You loved to be outside. What were some of your academic interests? Were you interested in art at a young age, or is that something that came later?

[00:03:36.03] LINDA STEIN: I was always interested in art as a very little kid. Comic books was, um, my art attraction and coveted them, sold them on the city streets for 2 a comic book. I think I bought them for 10, maybe. And, um, I would copy the comics or draw my own. So my introduction to art started with comic books, but I drew all the time so that my mother once said to me, You're going to ruin your eyes by drawing so much. And I would draw on the kitchen table because we lived in a one-bedroom apartment in the Bronx, and I didn't have a room of my own, as Virginia would say.

[00:04:39.52] KATIE LARSON: And what were your favorite comic books? What were the ones that you were really drawn to? Were there any particular stories?

[00:04:46.06] LINDA STEIN: Well, I was drawn to Wonder Woman comic books. There—there were others, but I think Wonder Woman intrigued me the most because I didn't realize at the time that she never killed, but she was able to be the defender and turn around the bad guys and make them better without ever killing.

[00:05:15.22] KATIE LARSON: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And was your family religious growing up? Did you attend religious services?

[00:05:21.79] LINDA STEIN: I knew I was Jewish, uh, but we didn't attend religious services because we couldn't afford it for the most part. But my parents were not what you would call religious in any way, um, but we might have gone on holidays, high holy days, or something like that. But we didn't because it cost too much to join a synagogue. But we weren't religious enough to—to walk into a synagogue to pray.

[00:06:06.34] KATIE LARSON: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And so you—it sounds like you were a child of diverse and manifold interests and, uh, perhaps someone who did well in school because you did end up being the first in your family to go to college. Could you tell us a little bit about that?

[00:06:22.60] LINDA STEIN: I loved school. Uh. I, um—I just loved learning and valued it. And I know my parents liked to go on vacation, and they especially liked going to Las Vegas and gambling a bit. And that had no interest to me, and I always said, Oh, no, I can't go with you. I have to go to school. So I never went with them on any of those trips because I didn't want to miss school.

[00:07:03.32] KATIE LARSON: And then so what kind of spurred your decision to go to college?

[00:07:09.95] LINDA STEIN: For me, I never had a contrary thought in my mind. I would tell you how art and—and schooling actually occurred. When I was in junior high school—I took a few tests before entering junior high school. One of them was an art test and a music test, to see whether I would make what was called Special Art or Special Music. I made them both, but Special Music involved renting an instrument for $15 for the year or the semester or whatever it is in junior high school. And we couldn't afford $15, so I think that's why I became [laughs] an artist. To go to Special Art cost nothing.

[00:08:13.74] And in Special Art—which meant—which met an hour before classes started at nine o'clock—I think I had to be there at eight o'clock—I had Mrs. Sulmonetti. And she was just a wonderful teacher and encouraged me tremendously with my art and held up my work to the class and said how good this was. And then at some point, she said, Now you're going to take the test for Music and Art High School. And I'd never heard of that.

[00:08:51.07] My older sister was taken out of an academic course in high school and put into a commercial course because my parents felt that a girl didn't need to go to school, and, uh, she would be a secretary. And so she was taken out of the academic course, put in the commercial course, and I just assumed I would follow my big sister. And when Mrs. Sulmonetti said, Now you're going to take the test for Music and Art, I just came home and said, Mrs. Sulmonetti says I'm going to take a test for Music and Art.

[00:09:35.68] My mother said, Oh, okay. She didn't really think about it at all. And then when I made it—made the school, was accepted to the high school, I told my mother, and she said, Oh, okay, without really giving it much thought. I was lucky enough to have been the second born in my family—we're just the two of us—and, um, by the time I came around, my mother kind of left me alone. So I went to Music and Art High School, and it was Mrs. Sulmonetti that really made that happen for me.

[00:10:19.21] KATIE LARSON: So an important role of teachers early in your life.

[00:10:22.75] LINDA STEIN: Yes.

[00:10:23.50] KATIE LARSON: Could you tell us a little bit about, uh, your experience at that high school? And what was the name of the high school that you were attending at that time?

[00:10:31.71] LINDA STEIN: It was called Music and Art High School.

[00:10:34.59] KATIE LARSON: Okay, so there wasn't any like number associated with it or—

[00:10:38.16] LINDA STEIN: No, no number, Music and Art High School. I think it has, in the last several years, been changed to the High School of Performing Arts. I don't think Music and Art High School exists anymore, but it was—it was changed. One thing that happened was, um—well, I think that probably is enough for now. I was very impressed with everyone at Music and Art High School.

[00:11:14.39] There was a point when my parents and brother-in-law convinced me to switch from Music and Art High School to another college—to another high school, and, um, I kind of rue the day that I switched high schools. But I had a good experience in my other high school as well.

[00:11:41.93] KATIE LARSON: To more—more of a traditional high school rather than one that was so focused on the arts? Is that—

[00:11:49.13] LINDA STEIN: Well, I—I, um—there was a difficult point in which my sister got a divorce, and we all moved into, uh—they all moved—"they" meaning my sister, her two kids, and at some point, her husband—moved into our one-bedroom apartment in the Bronx. So we were seven people [laughs] living in a one-bedroom apartment.

[00:12:21.18] And, uh—and then together, after a whole lot of Sturm und Drang, we moved to Bayside, and I was taking three—three trains and a bus. And my mother would have to pick me up at about six o'clock at night when I came home from Music and Art High School. Um. It was dark, and my mother didn't want me to walk alone in the dark from the bus. And she didn't want to have to pick me up [laughs], so it was a question of whether I should switch to Bayside high school.

[00:13:02.92] And at that point, at Bayside High School, everything was much easier academically, and then I was also voted the art editor of the senior yearbook and became a—a—a big person on campus, so to speak, at Bayside High School. And so, uh, Bayside was—became very good for me, too, in its own way. It was more commercial art that I learned and became interested in, but I had some wonderful teachers at Bayside High School also. I guess because Music and Art was my first, I feel a certain loyalty toward that school, but, um—but Bayside High School was indeed a good school.

[00:14:02.24] KATIE LARSON: Do you have any specific memories of really latching on to one medium or one project while you were in high school?

[00:14:11.08] LINDA STEIN: At Music and Art, I remember being introduced to artists and learning about Motherwell at some point. I was—I was first learning about abstract art, I knew nothing about it. And Motherwell became very important to me. And then when I went to college—and once again, we couldn't afford any schools except the public schools. I went to Queens College. And I was very interested in anatomy, even though everybody was doing Abstract Expressionism, and Pollock was extremely big in those days.

[00:15:06.13] But I went against, [laughs] I guess, the mainstream and wanted very much to be able to, uh, learn anatomy and then started taking classes at the Art Students League with a very fine professor of anatomy on Saturday mornings. And I think I took that class three or four, um, semesters, just over and over again, and learned a great deal of anatomy and loved Michelangelo—Michelangelo, and was very interested in how he drew muscles, how his models were male and he would put breasts on male models, uh, the muscles. I did composition after composition about Michelangelo.

[00:16:05.50] KATIE LARSON: Do you remember the name of the professor of anatomy at the Art Student League?

[00:16:12.61] LINDA STEIN: It doesn't come to me now, but I could look it up and—and give you that name.

[00:16:18.49] KATIE LARSON: Wonderful. And so you're mostly working in pencil and paper, or what was your medium of choice at that time?

[00:16:28.70] LINDA STEIN: I think I was working in all mediums but, um—in every medium

that I was learning about, but I wanted to do mostly figurative work. So I tried every medium I could but preferred working figuratively.

[00:16:53.04] KATIE LARSON: And were you a studio art major at Queens College?

[00:16:58.48] LINDA STEIN: Yes. I think I majored—I—I guess I majored in art with a minor of education.

[00:17:13.94] KATIE LARSON: Okay. And was that something that you had been directed to by an advisor or something that [inaudible] [audio distortion]—

[00:17:23.18] LINDA STEIN: I imagine you have an advisor in college, but, um, you know, we're talking about 1961 to '65, were the years—my college years, and, um, so that's going back 60—60-some-odd years. So I don't remember.

[00:17:49.13] KATIE LARSON: I'm guess I'm wondering if you feel like you were advised to go into teaching because you were a woman.

[00:17:55.96] LINDA STEIN: Oh, very definitely. I was advised by my parents, and I wasn't really given a choice. So it isn't something where my parents would sit me down and say, Now, Linda, let's think about your career, because a girl in those days didn't need, quote, unquote, "a career." She was going to marry, and then her husband was going to work. And she just needed something to, quote, "fall back on," unquote. And that meant if anything happened to your husband and you had to go to work, then you would have something to fall back on. And that was either a nurse or a teacher. Those—those were the options that my circle gave me, my parents and my society, uh, gave me, a nurse or a teacher. And since I didn't like medical stuff, um, I chose a teacher.

[00:19:22.22] KATIE LARSON: And just while we're thinking about college, any other kind of classes or professors that stick out to you that were particularly memorable or that helped influence your development as an artist?

[00:19:42.83] LINDA STEIN: One tea—I was given—because already I was going against the—the grain of the college art world, and by wanting to learn anatomy and focus on that, I had to take a special—I forgot what it was called—a special cour—independent study. I guess that's what it was, an independent study. And I did that with Barse, I think his name was, B-A-R-S-E, Miller. Barse Miller? Something like—last name was Miller. It was something like that.

[00:20:29.01] And, uh, we became very friendly, and, um, uh, I went to his gallery openings when he had them. And we developed a special relationship. And I think Ferris—John Ferren—John Ferren was there at the time, a colleague of Barse Miller, and I took a color course with John Ferren. But it really was Barse Miller that I—I became close to.

[00:21:09.65] KATIE LARSON: And did you develop any friendships that lasted over the years from your college, uh, experience?

[00:21:18.40] LINDA STEIN: Oh there was some fun ones. I couldn't afford to join a sorority, so I joined a house plan. And the—um, you paired with a boy's house plan or a fraternity, and, um—and, um, we created a skit every year. There was this special skit that the house plans and sororities—fraternities put on, and our brother house plan or fraternity had, um—who's the singer, um—Paul Simon. Paul Simon was in that one, and he created the skits for us. He wrote the skits and developed the music. So I sang some of Paul Simon's songs. So I remember that as being very—I didn't know he would become what he has become. But he was very nice to work with, and I remember that.

[00:22:46.50] And, um, growing up in junior high school, just to backtrack a second, I remember Penny Marshall of [eb] Laverne & Shirley was in our group. And she would dress up for the Jewish holidays, and we would—we Jews would dress up for her holiday. I think she was the only non-Jew in that group. So this is backtracking a little bit, but, uh, I do remember that. And that Penny was on my punchball team. Punchball was very big in those days, and I was the captain, usually of every team. So Penny was on that team.

[00:23:32.85] KATIE LARSON: What is punchball? Sorry for my ignorance.

[00:23:35.85] LINDA STEIN: Punchball. So you would have three bases and home plate. And

instead of taking a bat, um, you would just hold a Spalding ball up, a rubber ball, and you would punch the ball as if it were a bat.

KATIE LARSON: Got it.

[00:23:56.37] LINDA STEIN: And the rest was pretty much the same. You would run from base to base, and you would get home runs. But it would be called punchball.

[00:24:07.75] KATIE LARSON: Wonderful. Um. And so it's during this time as you're growing up from being an adolescent into a young woman that you start to explore your sexuality a little bit. Do you want to talk at all about that?

[00:24:24.74] LINDA STEIN: Yes. So I grew up, now, midcentury, so by the '50s, I was just eight, nine, 10, um, and had this decade-older sister, Carol, who was a professional model and a singer. And she was my own role model, and I knew she was extremely sexy and wanted to be just like her and tried to be like her, stuffed—stuffed my bathing suits with nylon stockings so that I could look more like the 38DD that my sister was, although I was probably still the skinny kid, uh, without much in the way of breasts.

[00:25:31.37] But I idolized her, and I thought she was as beautiful as the prime movie star of the day, which was Marilyn Monroe. And I wanted to be like them. So we were taught growing up in my circle that Marilyn Monroe was the ideal female and the role model for what every girl and woman should want to be. And it's important to see this time as, uh, the background for my own life's journey because it was the two of them, Marilyn and my sister, who informed my teenage goals and desires to have my hair one side forward, one side back, movie style. And, uh—and they represented what I should aspire to mid-20th century.

[00:26:48.06] So when I was a sophomore in college, in Queens College, it came as a real surprise to me when I found myself in bed with a woman, and she was two decades older than me, um, returning to Queen's College to get an education degree. And we met in an education 101 class as sophomores.

[00:27:24.10] And I was attracted to her because she was interested in tennis, and she was not just interested but she played tennis every day for hours. And even in the winter, uh, we would take a tennis net from the back of the trunk of her car and bring it to a local public tennis court and, uh, shovel the snow and play tennis. And, um, when we did have sex, it came as a real surprise to me, and I didn't know what the word homosexual meant even. It wasn't talked about.

[00:28:13.21] And we just said to each other, Is what we're doing homo? And she said, I'll ask my therapist. She was in therapy at the time. And I waited to hear her answer, and he for some reason came back with an answer, when she asked him, No, don't call it homosexuality. Um. And she and I both uttered a sigh of relief and, um, went back to going to bed, not—not really knowing that this was homosexual behavior.

[00:28:59.95] KATIE LARSON: And how long were you in a relationship with her?

[00:29:06.21] LINDA STEIN: So this started—let's see. I went to college '61 to '65, so I probably met her '63. I then started teaching in '65, September of '65, and, um, I think by '66 I met a teacher that I became very sexually interested in, also not really knowing what was happening, still dating.

[00:29:51.84] When I graduated college, I went to Europe to find my Jewish American husband. And—I mean I went to see the world, and teachers, after the first year of teaching then seemed to go to travel to Europe. And I did that too.

[00:30:18.51] So in many ways—in some ways, I was a rebel, but in many ways, I just breathed in the culture of the time, the mores of my small circle, and followed the rules. So how long I was with Catherine, um, was several years, but—but very screwy things happened. At one time, I was double-dating with Catherine and the woman I was then involved with. So it became—it became very confusing, and I didn't even know what any of it meant. I was dating men, looking for my husband, wanting very much to be married, and, uh, at the same time I was going to bed with a woman.

[00:31:35.01] KATIE LARSON: Did you find at that time you had a community of people you could talk to about this outside of your individual partners?

[00:31:46.20] LINDA STEIN: No, I had no one, and it was only after Catherine asked her shrink, uh, if what we were doing was homosexual that I thought maybe I could speak to him too. And, um, I didn't even—I guess it wasn't after that, it—because I went into therapy thinking that it would be about six weeks, and my goal was to figure out why I didn't want to marry Elliot.

[00:32:27.48] And I figured it would just take six weeks 'cause Elliot wanted to get married. He flew a plane and said, Hey, you could go to graduate school at Yale, and I'll go to law school. And he said to me, How could you not want to marry me? I'll give you everything. Something must be wrong with you, he said. And I was so naive that I just assumed, well, something must be wrong with me. I'll go into therapy for maybe six weeks and—and figure out what to do with Elliot. I wasn't even going in to discuss my homosexuality.

[00:33:13.14] KATIE LARSON: Did you find that therapy was—

[00:33:14.88] LINDA STEIN: Can you believe that? [Laughs.] It's unbelievable, isn't it?

[00:33:18.68] KATIE LARSON: It's—well, it's so important to hear because it's different than today in many ways.

[00:33:24.12] LINDA STEIN: Oh, yes, yes.

[00:33:25.83] KATIE LARSON: Did you find that the therapist was helpful at all, or was that kind of another, um—another wall, so to speak?

[00:33:39.46] LINDA STEIN: No, he was very, very, very helpful, and gradually, I realized that I had much to learn. And he became, uh, the person I could really speak to and let it all hang out. And it was he that suggested that I start a sketchbook diary, and to the diary also I recounted all my fears and worries and questions. And—and everything that was important to me went into now 28 inch-and-half-thick faux leather-bound diaries, those—those black sketchbooks that you could buy in an art store. So there are now 28 of them, uh, over more than 50 years of what was going on in my life.

[00:35:03.21] KATIE LARSON: So that's been a continuous practice of yours since the '60s, is this kind of diaristic practice.

[00:35:09.90] LINDA STEIN: Yes.

[00:35:11.98] KATIE LARSON: And do you find that it has—like, the basic practice of it has evolved, or does it stay somewhat within the same parameters as when you first started?

[00:35:25.60] LINDA STEIN: When I first started, it might have all kinds of things in it. Um. At one point, I was drawing faces and felt that the eyes of these faces were looking back at me in disgust, because I was now confronting my homosexuality. And the heaviness of being homosexual, or possibly being homosexual was on me, and the stigma of homosexuality was the current, um—the current cultural, um, feeling at the time.

[00:36:20.61] So you have to remember that the Psychiatric Association considered homosexuality a disease at that time, and so I felt tremendous shame. And I was working that out in some ways in my diaries. So the eyes looking back at me in disdain, um. When I couldn't stand that any more—that gaze on me, as we would say in today's lingo—that gaze, I turned the face to a profile position, and I started just below the eyes.

[00:37:12.53] So in my sketchbook diaries, I say all this. I say, oh, These eyes are staring back at me in this way. Let me try to turn the face. i mean, It's all recounted [laughs] in the diaries. Um. And sometimes I look back over these diaries—and I have now maybe 100 single-line typewritten pages just of a summary of these 28 books, so that I could—I know book 14 is when maybe I talked about below the eyes and—and the gaze that I felt on me or book 20 was maybe my interest in the artist and model and the power structure I felt at the time and my research, um, the books I had read about the artist model.

[00:38:17.49] All that is in my sketchbook diaries and—and the—the, um—the books I had read and the paragraphs I had taken out. Uh. Alice Miller was one book, [eb] The Drama of the Gifted Child, and she talks about "disgusted eyes." It might have been dis—I think it was "disgusted eyes." So at some point, I read that book—I'm sure I read it many times, but—and, um, slowly over the years started putting together, um—and growing up and learning

and becoming an educated person.

[00:39:18.41] It was a very, very slow process of this naive little girl that just followed the rules of the day and the rules of my parents to someone who became so interested in books and learning. There wasn't a book in my house growing up. No book, zero books in my house growing up. And I then became just, um, so hungry to read everything I could.

[00:39:59.68] KATIE LARSON: And so these diaries in many ways are the origin of your Profiles series. Is that correct?

[00:40:06.19] LINDA STEIN: Yes, and other series. It's all in my diaries, but the Profiles series is one example. And that one in particular relates to my—the shame I felt as I explored my sexuality.

[00:40:27.28] KATIE LARSON: And you talk about that series at length in your interview "Below the Eyes: Addressing Sexuality and Averting the Gaze" at the Konstmuseet i Skovde.

LINDA STEIN: Yes.

[00:40:37.96] KATIE LARSON: Is there anything else you'd like to add about that particular series that you haven't addressed already in that interview?

[00:40:51.36] LINDA STEIN: Um. The pain I felt as I came out to each person in my life. So I had lots of friends, I enjoyed being with people. But I never told anyone that I was—I didn't even realize it was an affair. I just never told anyone.

[00:41:17.06] So as I got older [laughs] and a little bit more savvy, um, I would tell friend after friend, and the trauma before telling the person, uh—I mean, I talk about it openly because it's so important to me that if I could help it all [laughs] so that nobody has to go through that. I know times are different, but I keep meeting people that are struggling with homosexuality or trans issues or, uh, a variation of that.

[00:42:08.88] But it was painful. So I would think for a very long time about how I would tell this friend that—I don't know whether I use the word "gay" or what. But, um—um, I would think about it. I would plan. I would plan that we wouldn't be out for a—at a restaurant because I didn't want anybody to overhear me, and it was just such a big deal.

[00:42:39.75] So each person that I told reacted differently, and, um, it was very painful to go through that. Their reactions were all pretty good. I mean, they liked me. They wanted to continue being friends, and no one then said, Oh, I don't want anything to do with you anymore. It was just very painful.

[00:43:10.37] KATIE LARSON: Yeah. Um. And the Profiles is a really beautiful and extensive series that is dealing with that. Do you feel like any of your other series are thinking about that, um, pain or about your identity as a gay woman?

[00:43:33.21] LINDA STEIN: Um. Well, you know, what—what—the only way I can answer that question would be to say that I struggled so with what a girl could do and could not do in the world as I was growing up. So, a girl had to make sure that the boy she was with was stronger, smarter, better. So to do that, I had to throw the bowling ball into the alley gutter and the ping-pong or tennis ball into the net so that the boy would always win and I would be helping him play the masculinity role while I played the femininity role. So I work in series, and I'm sure that part of my life plays into all of my art.

[00:44:51.40] So when I created Holocaust Heroes: Fierce Females, a tapestry series of women during the time of World War II and the Holocaust, it was very important for me to gender-bend, to reverse expectations, to say even in the title Holocaust Heroes, colon, Fierce Females, while when I first started it, everybody would ordinarily just think of men. It wouldn't occur to them to—to attach the feminine pronoun to a hero, to the word "hero."

[00:45:50.73] And I even, um, dislike the word "heroine" for that reason, because when I think of the word "heroine," I think of a woman tied to the railroad tracks. I would have said in the old days, a girl tried—tied to the railroad tracks with the train coming, and it was only the boy, the male, that untied her from the tracks, uh, before the train came just in the nick of time. And so she, in my mind, is the heroine, and he is the hero. And I had to reverse that.

[00:46:38.27] So everywhere in my art there is a gender-bending aspect. In my machete Blades series—a girl shouldn't play with knives, but when I was asked to be in a show called *Bad Girls*—and I was walking in the street, on Canal Street in Manhattan, I saw a barrel of machete blades, and I thought, Oh, that's perfect. A girl shouldn't play with knives, and here were machete blades. Oh, that's only associated with boys and men. And so that became prominent in a series I did in the '90s called Blades.

[00:47:33.99] KATIE LARSON: Well, I want to go back just for a bit. Do you want to keep going for a little while, Linda? How are you feeling?

[00:47:39.60] LINDA STEIN: Uh. I would say another 15 minutes, and then let's stop.

[00:47:43.29] KATIE LARSON: Perfect. See I could go on forever, so. [They laugh.]

[00:47:47.85] LINDA STEIN: How is it so far?

[00:47:49.56] KATIE LARSON: It's amazing. You're doing such a great job. It's just fascinating to listen to your life experiences. I was hoping we could just return—

[00:47:59.28] LINDA STEIN: I mean, it's hard. It's so—it—one would think, certainly today, in 2022, my God, what is the matter with this girl that she didn't even know what the word homosexual meant?

[00:48:16.11] KATIE LARSON: Well, it speaks to this age in which you grew up, which really in some ways is so different, but in many ways we're still dealing with a lot of the same issues. And so it's—it's really important to hear and to keep these memories alive, I think.

[00:48:34.36] LINDA STEIN: Yeah.

[00:48:34.75] KATIE LARSON: So I wanted to go back, if you don't mind, really quickly 'cause I'm curious if you have any thoughts about that trip to Europe. Um. Was that the first time you'd been? Did you visit any art museums?

[00:48:48.50] LINDA STEIN: Yes, it was the first time I'd been. Um. First time I'd been away from home for that extended amount of time. I think I may have gone to [laughs] Florida with a bunch of friends maybe once, and other than that, it was the only trip I took away from home.

[00:49:18.78] Um. I went really with the hope, now that I was 21 years old, of finding my husband. I went to a lot of museums. I was interested in art. I was in love with Michelangelo, so when it got to be Florence—and, um, Florence especially was filled with his sculptures—I was in heaven. When I got to the Vatican and I saw the [eb] Pietà—I'm an atheist now, uh, was pretty much then, but just felt this need to—to pray, to celebrate and did some kind of prayer to the [eb] Pietà. Um. I was just enthralled, and overwhelmed with everything in Europe.

[00:50:23.06] At the same time, I was seeking my husband, so I [laughs] would go to a Cook's Tour place in every country, and I would go up to the, mm, cutest boy, in my mind, you know, behind the counter. And a Cook's Tour—I don't know if you know what that is. You would go into this kind of travel office and ask any questions you had about traveling. They would set up certain things, help you with your—with your trip.

[00:51:16.15] So I would go over to the cutest boy, and I would say, in typical '50s fashion—now, I'm not proud of this, but this is what I did. If I'm letting it hang out, I'll tell you that I would say, um, What's a girl like me to do in a town like this? Where do you think I should go?

[00:51:45.55] And every single time, [laughs] in whatever town I was with, the boy would answer, Well, there are a lot of interesting places you could go, but, uh, you really shouldn't go alone. Would you like me to escort you? At which point I would say, Oh, that would be lovely. And that would be the beginning of my courtship [laughs] with—with each boy in each town.

[00:52:24.57] So this is all while I'm carrying on a homosexual affair, or maybe transitioning from one woman to another woman. At the same time, Elliot, whom I didn't want to marry and didn't know why, was sending me weekly flowers to every hotel I was at in Europe. So

this—in my mind, I want to call it a double entendre. [Laughs.] You know, it just was—um, I just was nowhere, right? I just couldn't put two and two together, at all. You know, and went on my merry way, thinking I'm going to meet my, uh, American husband.

[00:53:28.01] You know, and the man in Florida—I have pictures of him, and, um, maybe—I don't even think we had email in those days, so I might have letters from him. I don't know. We're talking about 1966, I guess. Uh. But he was, I mean, really very lovely, and he really wanted to pursue a very serious relationship and introduced me to his family and everything. But I was—I was nowhere in terms of understanding myself.

[00:54:10.28] KATIE LARSON: It sounds like it was a very confusing and complex time for you.

[00:54:14.87] LINDA STEIN: Exactly. Exactly.

[00:54:17.43] KATIE LARSON: So then you return, and you're working as a teacher. Do you want to talk at all about what that experience was like for you?

[00:54:26.17] LINDA STEIN: So then I come back. I'm probably still corresponding with the one man from Florence, who, more than any of the other boys from Cook's Travel Agency [laughs], appealed to me. But, you see, I was in a, um—I had to follow the rule. He had to be, uh, an American man, so I was, uh, very much, um, affected by—by my own circle and culture.

[00:55:10.56] Went back to teaching, and then I think it was that year that I became friendly and friendlier with this other woman, and her husband. He was the chair of the English department, and she was teaching health, and gradually became involved—involved with her. Loved teaching. Loved everything about teaching. Continued to do my art, always was doing my art at the same time.

[00:55:45.93] So I would work a full day at teaching, start very early in the morning. I was teaching at Deer Park High School on Long Island, and, um, I think I had to leave at about 20 to six in the morning. And I was through with teaching at about 1:30 or two o'clock in the afternoon and then came home and started doing artwork. So, uh, always was interested in art.

[00:56:23.13] KATIE LARSON: Any, um, memories or thoughts about teaching that you think informed some of your later activities, particularly, like, the Have Art: Will Travel! series?

[00:56:35.15] LINDA STEIN: I taught for seven years. And every once in a while—I mean, I remember a young man coming up to me in the street and saying, Oh, you were my art teacher at Deer Park High School, and you were so good, you changed my thinking, and I became this, that, and the other thing. So I loved teaching. And, um—but I was struggling to do my art, and after seven years of teaching, I decided that I would take a chance. I was selling, uh, maybe at the time, uh, maybe $5,000 worth of art a year. At that time, that was big money, you see. So, um, uh, I said, well, look, I'm just going to risk it, and I spoke to the art chairman and—and said, I'm leaving teaching.

[00:57:42.36] And that was after seven years. And he—he became so upset, so I guess I was—he thought I was a good teacher. He just—he started [laughs] crying, actually. And, uh, he—he then came back to me a day or two later and said, Look, I will arrange for a grant where you would be [eb] artist- in- residence two days a week. You would just come, and you would do your own art, and the students could watch you.

[00:58:17.83] And I said, Well, I—I—I have to be at Pratt Graphics Center. I've signed up to be a "monitor," they called it. And I could only come one day, and he said, Okay, one day. So one day a week I went out to East—I went out to, um, Deer Park, Long Island. He gave me an office in the high school, and it was within a couple of years that I started what became Have Art: Will Travel! at the high school, taking high school students, art students, um, to—high school art students to other venues, old age homes, junior high schools, uh, centers in town, and had them set—have a table—each had a table. They set up a little art exhibit. They put labels—descriptions on each work of art in their exhibit, with a price. So they exhibited, they sold the work, and they also taught the work. So if somebody was interested in pottery, she or he would take—we would see to it that a potter's wheel would accompany their exhibition, their table. And she would show—demonstrate how to use a potter's wheel, and people could try to—to use a potter's wheel. Or they would demonstrate some kind of sewing technique or

watercolors or whatever they were doing.

[01:00:17.58] So that was how Have Art: Will Travel! began in 1972, and it was in 1977 or so that I incorporated it and it became a nonprofit. And I think we should end it [inaudible]—

[01:00:42.64] KATIE LARSON: I think so too. I think that's a good natural stopping place. [They laugh.]

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[00:00:03.04] KATIE LARSON: Hello, my name is Katie Larson. I am here with Linda Stein on Monday, September 25. And this is the second part of our oral history interview.

[00:00:15.01] Linda, thank you so much again for being here today. I'm excited to continue our conversation from last week. So, last week, we finished by, um, talking a little bit about the fellowship you had received while you were teaching, and then that you had moved on to really working full time as an artist. And you had started to have some success in solo exhibitions.

[00:00:41.11] And so I was wondering if you might start by talking about this time in the '70s when you had set off, uh, to work kind of full time as an artist. And what were those—what were the first exhibitions you had like? Um. And what was that experience for you as a young artist?

[00:00:59.02]

[00:01:42.10] LINDA STEIN: The earliest exhibitions that—that I can remember were—were not until the '90s, really. So let me start with the '90s and—and talk about my machete blade series. The 1990s were the Blades decade. And I had exhibitions that were called *Violence in New York: Ways to Reverse the Trend*, and that was at SOHO20 in 1991. And I had panelists which included, um, oh, the founder of the Guardian Angels, um, Curtis Sliwa. I think Curtis Sliwa is trying to be a politician or is running for something these days. I'm not sure. Maybe even mayor or something like that.

[00:02:57.88] Um. And I had, um—um, other people that were recognizable talk about violence in New York. Another one was called *Violence in the Streets*, at Monmouth County Arts Council in New Jersey. And the panelists there included religious and civil experts on battered women, sexual abuse, teenage violence, that kind of thing.

[00:03:32.51] Um. There was one, um, called, *Should Women Carry Blades?* at the Jamaica Arts Center in New York. And panelists included Roy Innis, the president of the Congress Of Racial Equality, CORE, and others.

[00:03:54.92] And, um, mostly that. There were—there was one in 1994 at the Women's Caucus for Art's National Conference called *Contradictions Inherent in Multicultural Feminism*. And that was at the Hilton hotel in New York. Um. And I loved doing that. I loved working on the machete blades. I loved being on panels. Um. I loved my budding interest, or my really developed interest in feminism.

[00:04:44.84] And one very big conference I had was in September of 1997, uh, a conference called Women in the Arts: Going Forward, which was at my gallery area called the Art Club, and was cosponsored by the Borough of Manhattan Community College. And there panelists included Phyllis Chesler, Sarah Schulman, Arlene Raven. Do you know Arlene Raven? She—she died some years ago. She was a fabulous art critic. Um. Bernice Steinbaum, the gallerist, um, and—and others.

And I did that a couple of times including Robert Morgan, Ann Gibson, Joan Marter, the two—three art historians where we discussed our art critics and historians becoming more assertive in writing about women.

KATIE LARSON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:06:06.85] LINDA STEIN: So my feminism was to the fore, as was my interest in the machete blade and, um, the representation or symbolism of power as opposed to vulnerability.

[00:06:33.48] KATIE LARSON: So if you're looking back, when do you think this idea of

feminism first, um, entered your consciousness? Do you have early moments of saying, that's an movement I'm interested in and that I feel affinity with?

[00:06:51.77] LINDA STEIN: Well, from a little kid when I was playing with the boys—playing ball with the boys and never ball with the girls, or hardly ever. I guess, in school, as I told you, we had a, um, time out during the day in elementary school and junior high school where we played punch ball. That was a new activity to you, I remember. So the girls played separately from the boys. And, in high school, the girls, now I was always captain of my teams. In high school, and maybe in college, but definitely in high school, the girls in tournaments would only play a half court basketball. I don't know if you know that, girls only played a half a court. I don't know, they might, you know, fatigue themselves in some way if they played a full court. And they only played in intermission from the boys game.

[00:08:16.88] So Title IX had not passed yet. Once Title IX passed, that was really after—I forgot the year that it passed. We could check that. But that was after my time.

[00:08:34.07] So, yes, I did realize that girls seemed to be watching a lot. And boys seemed to be doing a lot. And I hated that, and didn't understand why that was so. But I did fall in line as per my parents teaching, mostly my mother and my older sister, and the society and social network around me.

[00:09:14.74] KATIE LARSON: And so when did feminism as a movement become something that you—you were really involved with?

[00:09:21.78] LINDA STEIN: I think it was only until the early—it was only in the early '60s. Betty Friedan's book came out in 1963. I went to Cooper Union and was very interested in seeing her. And remember being in the auditorium. And I remember—maybe I mentioned this last time—I remember one man raising his hand and asking Betty, Well, you know, this will present so many problems. I mean, what would it do—what would a man do? Would they have to get up every time a woman needs a seat in a subway, or a bus? And bathrooms, what about bathrooms? That would make everything so complicated.

[00:10:11.84] And, um, I was very, very interested in hearing speakers. I remember going to Bard's—Barnard's first feminist conference and hearing Natalie Deschenes [ph]—I believe she is a psychologist—saying a man and a woman—man and woman are one, and that one is the husband. You know—you know, and making fun of the way it was. But it wasn't funny because that was very much the way it was. And I fit in. And, as I told you last time, I hit the bowling ball into the alley gutter and the tennis or ping pong ball into the net so the boy could always win and be smarter, better, and stronger than me.

[00:11:19.47] KATIE LARSON: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And I know you have a friendship now with Gloria Steinem. When did you first meet her?

[00:11:28.40] LINDA STEIN: I must have met her at some feminist conference. Um. I don't know how long ago. I know her for—for—for decades. I don't know how many decades now. But I think I met her at a party, at a friend of mine's party, and at several fundraisers. And, um, I always admired her. I think she's terrific.

KATIE LARSON: Yeah.

[00:12:02.92] LINDA STEIN: I hope she lives to be 120.

[00:12:07.60] KATIE LARSON: Were you involved at all with the activities at the A.I.R Gallery?

[00:12:13.43] LINDA STEIN: I was involved with SOHO20—

KATIE LARSON: Okay.

[00:12:16.52] LINDA STEIN: —gallery. And, actually, my first major exhibit at SOHO20 was *Blades*. Um. I'm not sure exactly what date it was, but I did have a full solo show of my Blades taking up three rooms in Soho, at SOHO20.

[00:12:52.44] Oh, here, in February of 1991, *Violence in New York: Ways to Reverse the Trend* at SOHO20. That's where Curtis Sliwa spoke in a—in a panel that I moderated. And, um, Ivan Karp was on that panel, the gallerist. And there was a video that I made. Was that

video—there was—I don't—I think the video was called *Blades*. And, in another room, there was a piece of paper where people could write their reactions to the hanging blades, uh, in the main gallery.

[00:13:53.02] So there were three rooms. One, the main gallery had the blades hanging from the ceiling. And you could hardly tell they were machete blades until you came close. And a second room had this video called *Blades* with some chairs, and people could sit and watch it, maybe 10 minutes long, something like that. And, um, the third room had these pieces of paper headed with, "These blades make me feel," and people would write their responses. And I would then frame those responses and hang them in my next blades show. So I liked very much the interaction with the audience. I always liked that.

[00:14:50.55] KATIE LARSON: Do you remember what kinds of reactions people were having to the exhibition?

[00:14:56.82] LINDA STEIN: Uh. One woman wrote a poem. One woman wrote, um, "When I first saw that they were machete blades, I got very nervous because I was raped some years ago. But I hung around, um, and—and, um, was kind of mesmerized by them and found them, in the end, to be very calming." That was one. Um, um. I guess those are the only two that come to mind right now.

[00:15:39.75] KATIE LARSON: Do those reactions survive in any of your papers?

[00:15:44.13] LINDA STEIN: Yes, they do. They are in my archives, either at Smith College or at Penn State University. My education archives are at Penn State University, and my art and personal archives are at Smith. But I'm sure they're there.

[00:16:07.97] KATIE LARSON: Wonderful. Um. And I'd love to talk a little bit more about the video because it's a really evocative video. Um. You did that in collaboration with another artist or a videographer. Could you talk a little bit about that.

[00:16:23.22] LINDA STEIN: Videographer, Tom Zafian I think his name is. Very good videographer, yes.

[00:16:32.17] KATIE LARSON: Had you written and envisioned what that was going to look like? Or was it a very collaborative with Tom?

[00:16:40.81] LINDA STEIN: I think he pretty much left it up to me, in terms of the filming. So—so I might say if this napkin holder [holds up napkin holder] were a blade, I might say to him, Take my fingers going this way and this way [demonstrates] up against the blade, right? Just going in and out. And I might then say, Take—take this rope that's hanging from the ceiling. Or, um—

[00:17:26.06] So I would make suggestions. Now, it's going back a long time. I'm sure it was done—maybe you know better than me—in the 1990s. But, um, I think I made most of the suggestions. And then I got his raw footage. And I edited the raw footage. And I believe—I'd have to look at the video again. But I believe I had my voice over—do you remember whether there was a voice? And I think I slowed the voice over so that I sounded, in my mind—the reason—so I sounded like a man and left—so there was this play between what I felt was a man's voice and a woman's voice.

[00:18:26.05] So I've always been interested in the masculine and feminine, the combination, the allowing the feminine to have an equal place with the masculine. That—that was my goal from when I was a little kid. When—when my dad would take me and see—see, uh, boys playing ball, and say something like—I'm six years old, seven years old—My Linda could play with you.

[00:19:05.77] And the boys would say, Oh, no. No way. We don't play with girls. And my father would say, Just give her a chance, you know. And I would play with the boys.

[00:19:19.33] KATIE LARSON: No, that's really interesting because there is this kind of call and response feeling in the video, that it's still all you, but it does have this feeling of a male/female, um—

[00:19:29.68] LINDA STEIN: Oh, it did? Oh, great.

[00:19:30.89] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, absolutely.

[00:19:31.82] LINDA STEIN: You felt that? That's true.

KATIE LARSON: Definitely.

[00:19:33.58] LINDA STEIN: That's just what I was hoping would happen.

[00:19:36.46] KATIE LARSON: And it's—and the way you make the video have this kind of fluctuation between sensuality and violence, uh, is really beautiful and evocative as well. And then, um, the words I assume that you wrote yourself as well, these kinds of questions you ask, Do these blades heal? How can I protect myself? We have to heal ourselves. And then there's kind of like a chanting of numbers and, um—and a word association.

[00:20:07.01] LINDA STEIN: The word association and the numbers are very specific.

KATIE LARSON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:20:14.87] LINDA STEIN: The numbers might be one, 10, 78. One would be January, 10 would be the 10th, and 78 would be the year. And the words, "I'm being chased by military men. I—I—I'm tied to a horse. If I could take the rope, the rope would pull me. And the horse would pull me and save me," was directly from dreams. And the dreams were, um, dreamt on the numbers that are the dates of the dream. Could you follow that long sentence? [Laughs.]

[00:21:04.60] So, you know—uh—uh, you know, 11, 14, 62 would be November 14, 1962. But it was important—like, I like letters. And I'm a pencil person and use a lot of words and letters in my artwork. And I think I mentioned to you that I had a calligraphy business for more than 25 years that supported me. And it was a top—or the top calligraphy business in Manhattan. So we did all the work for Tiffany's and Cartier. And, um—um, I think I told you some of the weddings we did—no, I didn't?

[00:21:57.20] KATIE LARSON: Oh, I think that's fascinating. I'd love to hear about that.

[00:21:59.57] LINDA STEIN: We did Victoria Principal when I didn't even know who [laughs] Victoria Principal was. She was the star of a TV program called *Dallas*. And she came to my studio for wedding invitations. And the landlord of my studio downstairs—I was up on the second floor. When he saw her, he just dropped—he just couldn't believe it, you know. And he ran [laughs], you know—so he was waiting for her when she went back downstairs.

[00:22:34.94] And I said to my older sister, I interviewed someone maybe you would know. Her name is Victoria—and my sister said, Victoria Principal? And I did the wedding invitations for Donna Karan and Chris Everet and, um, um, Natasha Richardson and Liam Neeson. And they were so sweet. She came. Of course, she was killed in a car accident. But she came and called him up and said, Honey, what should we do here? Should we take this invite or that?

[00:23:10.55] So it was a wonderful business. And, um—uh, words and writing have always been very important to me. And perhaps that's why I so loved to keep a diary for more than half a century.

KATIE LARSON: Yeah.

[00:23:28.19] LINDA STEIN: You know, I had my sketches in it, but all my feelings, my dreams, and my coming to terms with my sexuality in therapy are all in the diaries.

[00:23:45.11] KATIE LARSON: Wonderful. I love how that connects into the Blades series in really kind of interesting ways. And you mentioned, um, in previous interviews that a curator had been someone that kind of stimulated you to think about beginning the Blades series. Do you want to talk a little bit about that?

[00:24:06.08] LINDA STEIN: Oh, yes. I'm trying to remember her name. Perhaps you know it. But, um, she was curating an exhibit called *Bad Girls*. And she asked me to be included and to make the most outrageous sculpture I could think of. And I think *the New York Times* reviewed that exhibit with the photograph—the one photograph was of my sculpture. It was a group show, but *the Times* writer chose my sculpture for the, um—for the article.

[00:24:58.42] And I think, somewhere on there, there was some kind of cleaning brush,

'cause it had mixed media in this sculpture, that had written on it the word "bad." I remember that.

KATIE LARSON: What—

[00:25:14.95] LINDA STEIN: And that's something I felt from early childhood that I was just so bad. And then when I—bad for—for, um, bringing—bringing home toilet plungers, uh, instead of playing with dolls because the toilet plunger had this wonderful stick that you could play stickball with [laughs]. So I threw away the rubber, [laughs] and my mother would say, Did you bring that into the house?

[00:25:44.52] You know, I found it somewhere on the street and it was a perfect stickball bat. So I was always bad as a little kid. And, um, certainly, I was bad growing up and coming to terms with homosexuality.

[00:26:02.47] KATIE LARSON: And it sounds like you were maybe always a little bit of an excavator, someone who was searching for, finding and bringing home objects. Is that—

[00:26:11.71] LINDA STEIN: I still am. And I frequent garage sales to this day, and—and bring home the weirdest kinds of things.

[00:26:23.80] KATIE LARSON: Do you [inaudible] [cross talk] [they laugh]—

[00:26:24.61] LINDA STEIN: One day, if we ever meet, I will show you how I make my sculpture for the Displacement from Home series, What to Leave and What to Take, which is right up my alley aside from the bigger picture of how meaningful that is. Can I go—can I switch to that topic?

[00:26:49.56] KATIE LARSON: Of course, yeah.

[00:26:50.11] LINDA STEIN: How meaningful it is when people, you know, get this knock on the door and say, Okay, the boat's ready. Just take what you can put in your pockets. Just take one suitcase. What do you leave? What do you take? You know, and I call them cabinets, cupboards, cases, and closets. Um. And that's what I make. I make these, uh, cupboard-like sculptures that have drawers that open. And they're all kinds of things that people don't want to leave behind. I'm sure you have a drawer or two where somebody would look at and say, What is that mess? And you'd say, Oh, no, I have to have it just that way, you know.

[00:27:38.71] So I love garage sales. I love seeing, um, what people collect and save. Last week, I got some kind of big, round clock, uh, with Roman numerals that—the wood around it had so much texture. I just love that kind of thing.

[00:28:05.50] KATIE LARSON: Um. So the Displacement from Home: What to Leave, What to Take, that's a relatively new series begun around 2015?

[00:28:13.48] LINDA STEIN: Yes.

[00:28:14.38] KATIE LARSON: Um. What do you think kind of spurred your desire to start thinking about that idea of displacement?

[00:28:21.14] LINDA STEIN: Well, I have to do a little bit of a transition. First came 9/11.

KATIE LARSON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:28:30.42] LINDA STEIN: Running for a whole day. I think we talked about that, maybe in the last session. I—I don't remember.

[00:28:37.20] KATIE LARSON: We haven't gone into that story too much. And you're welcome to if—if you want.

[00:28:41.79] LINDA STEIN: Well, I'll just do a little synopsis. And I'll take you from 9/11 where, after running, I did a video called *Running*, which related to the dreams I had. As a kid, I had these recurring dreams.

[00:29:03.15] You must have had recurring dreams too, uh, of whatever kind you did. You know, some people have them where they're nude in the middle of Fifth Avenue and in Main

Street. Um. Mine was always running. I don't know if I could ask you now in the middle of this interview. I'm curious if you had any. You seem to have.

[00:29:25.65] KATIE LARSON: I'll tell you after the interview. [Laughs.]

[00:29:27.36] LINDA STEIN: Okay, so mine were always running. So here I was, 9/11, running for a whole day and, um, didn't live in my apartment for eight months—eight months. And came back and thought I would continue doing sculpture that was horizontal and abstract. Up until that point, even with the machete blade sculpture, it was basically abstract.

[00:30:03.74] Um. Uh. All of a sudden, coming back after—a year, maybe, after 9/11, I started doing these figures that had a waist and shoulders and looked like armor. Looked like, uh, um—looked like—to me they looked like knights, symbols of protection. And then I thought of Wonder Woman as a symbol of protection from 1941 to '47, only until her creator died in '47. And I then pitted together Wonder Woman standing as a sentinel with my sculptures as sentinel, protector, bodyguard. In a way the machete blades were bodyguards to me also.

[00:30:58.94] So protection was very much the main word in my life. I think if I had to pick one word, I would probably pick protection. Um. And the knights—then I wanted to incorporate on my body, so it became the body swapping series where these sculptures actually could hinge on the body or have Velcro straps around the waist, and people could wear them and look in the mirror and say all kinds of things wearing them.

[00:31:38.34] Um. That then led to the Holocaust. And I did tapestries and some small box sculptures called Spoon to Shell. The spoon during the Holocaust had a very special meaning. The shell also, as Elie Wiesel wrote in his book *Night* when he described himself sitting in a concentration camp with a shell of a face trying so hard to look straight ahead, not even to blink, just to sit still and hold his face hard like a shell while his father is being brutally beaten next to him.

[00:32:26.82] So the spoon, which I won't go into but represented, um, sexual abuse during the Holocaust, and the shell were in these boxes that would be in the traveling show Holocaust Heroes: Fierce Females, Gender Bending: Fierce Females, which is now at Kent State University in Ohio. From these tapestries, I then went to Displacement from Home because the Holocaust, where so many people were displaced, made me think of today and how many people are displaced, um, um. African Americans that were displaced, Indians that were displaced, and then around the world. So displacement from home is a tragedy that just keeps getting worse and worse. We can't seem to do anything about it.

[00:33:37.70] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, speaks of a kind of larger human story in many ways, yeah.

[00:33:42.68] LINDA STEIN: Yes, so—so as I go to these garage sales and see these items I think, this is something someone would want to save and may even want to take with them if they could only put it in their pocket.

[00:34:03.47] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, this is something precious.

[00:34:05.66] LINDA STEIN: Precious, exactly. Exactly.

[00:34:09.26] KATIE LARSON: I want—if you don't mind, because I do think that the Displacement series, it seems like its roots maybe are in some of these nonobjective abstractions you're doing in the '80s and '90s up until the early 2000s. Do you want to talk a little bit about, um, that practice which seemed to really revolve around making found object assemblages that are really, um, evocative and interesting?

[00:34:41.62] LINDA STEIN: Which series would you like me—

[00:34:43.90] KATIE LARSON: So, before, you know—before the 9/11 benchmark, earlier than that, when you were working in that abstract manner and you—you're making, I think you call them, excavations and then the ceremonial scepters. And then you make the blades series. Do you want to talk a little bit about—about where the where those—where that impulse had come from at that moment for you? To kind of collect [cross talk] and put things together—

[00:35:09.20] LINDA STEIN: I think it came from an artist in residency at Djerassi, in California. Um. That's—I wanted to make tall sculpture. That was my feeling. And then, gradually, it came to be scepters. I have writing about it. So I'm forgetting right now, but there is much writing, um, about it. Let's pause for a moment.

[00:35:52.95] KATIE LARSON: Sure, I'll pause the recording. And let me—tell me when to restart it. [Break in recording.] All right.

[00:35:57.80] LINDA STEIN: Before I accept—now, I did give you that synopsis saying where I, you know—do you want me to go in—[Break in recording.]

[00:36:08.57] KATIE LARSON: Okay. Um, so, Linda, an important experience in your life is—and so many of us here in the United States—is that experience of 9/11. And that shapes a number of the series that you produce in the 2000s. So would you mind telling us a little bit about that day and, uh—and how it impacted your career?

[00:36:37.38] LINDA STEIN: It changed my life, and it changed my art. I was in my studio with my staff. And the police barged in yelling, "Get out of here. Don't lock your doors. Just start running up Church Street." So we left everything. We went outside. And it was filled with debris everywhere. The air—you couldn't even—you couldn't see, you know, a couple of feet in front of without there being debris all around.

And we started going along with the crowd now up Church Street. And, at one point, I turned around and saw what I thought was furniture being thrown off the Trade Tower. And I said, Why are they throwing furniture off the Tower and realized it wasn't furniture. So we kept walking, uh, and, you know, thinking of people jumping.

[00:37:58.19] And then I turned around again, and the building came down in one quick whoosh. And it didn't tilt. It just went straight down, in just a matter of what seemed like one second. And my then studio manager said, Let's keep—let's keep running. Let's keep running north. And I said, Well, no, they bombed the south. I think they're going to bomb the north next, so let's not go north.

[00:38:38.03] And so we didn't. We sat on Canal Street for a couple of hours. Um. Every store closed immediately. We then continued walking holding hands. And, um, uh, there was a young woman who couldn't speak English very well. And we took her on. And we held her hand and kept walking.

[00:39:08.76] We stopped at the Broome Street Bar, which was the only place opened. And they offered you a ham sandwich or an egg salad sandwich. That was all you could get, one price. And we watched Mayor Giuliani on the television.

And we then left and went to—continued walking for the rest of the day. Um. Uh. I went up to 82nd Street to—to live with a woman I knew for eight months. Didn't come back to my loft or my apartment which is right near my loft. You weren't—I came back maybe to check everything was safe and sound in my loft. But my apartment—I was told everything had to be thrown out.

[00:40:12.94] So the carpeting, the mattresses, the curtains, the furniture, everything was thrown away because there was, um, debris all over the place. The Red Cross knocked on my door one day and said, We're here. Do you have any books? We're here to clean your books if you would like us to. And I said, Oh, thank you, thinking I was going to have to throw out all my books. But they came and they cleaned every book on a whole wall of shelves.

[00:40:53.74] And, um, when I came back to my studio, cars still could not come on my street. People had to show a passport or an ID to cross the street. The National Guard, uh, was out in force. And telephones weren't working till, um—for months afterwards.

[00:41:22.33] So, uh, I came back and thought I was going to continue abstract work that I was doing. Mostly horizontal about—this is—that I could hold in my hands. And, all of a sudden, it became vertical. And there was a waist and shoulders. And I thought, what am I doing? These look like warriors. They look, uh, um, like shields.

[00:41:54.70] And, at that point, Wonder Woman came to mind. And I made a connection. There was just a connection, I guess from my childhood and reading her comic books. I felt, yes, that, uh—she "came to America," so to speak, in 1941 to protect Americans during

World War II.

[00:42:25.38] And she, in my mind, stood as a sentinel. And I made a kind of "shadow", quote, unquote, of her in vinyl that was placed next to each of the knights that I made, K-N-I-G-H-T-S. The knights that I made are around seven or eight foot high. Um.

[00:42:54.81] So both Wonder Woman and these knight sculptures stood on watch as sentinels, ready to protect anyone that needed help. And that continued. That was in the—after 9/11, so much of the early 2000s, um, perhaps through the whole decade was about knights.

[00:43:25.97] And then my desire to internalize this power, um, and my thinking about the word protection so much, and remembering the dreams I had as a kid called—and then created this film called *Running*. Here I was during 9/11 running for a whole day. And the film, um, meshed scenes from—from *Psycho* and *North by Northwest* with Cary Grant.

[00:44:09.84] And my running. I actually had a staff person film me as I was running in my loft, in the street, all over. And I made this little two-minute film called *Running.* And thought of all the dreams I had as a kid where I was always running from the bad guys. And, when I had these dreams, I was inclined to write them down exactly.

[00:44:47.40] And I would have these dreams with punctuation marks. So it would say something like, um, uh, the—They were chasing me, comma. They took me to a place and told me that I was, comma, as I was in the last Holocaust, going to be executed.

[00:45:17.52] And, in this very funny dream, the only dream where I really stopped running and stood up for myself and protected myself, I answered them. You can electrocute me, comma, I said, comma, but I have, comma, as I had in the last Holocaust, comma, electrical insurance. And my therapist—at the time, I was in therapy—just roared when I told him that, and said, This is such an important dream. In this dream, you have what it takes to protect yourself. He just thought that was wonderful. So all these dreams have this punctuation mark—these punctuation marks directly from the dream. And, uh, I published them in—in several magazines and journals.

[00:46:25.77] KATIE LARSON: I love how fully formed your dreams are. [Laughs.]

[00:46:29.19] LINDA STEIN: Yes, they were. I don't have them anymore, but they were. [Laughs.]

[00:46:35.85] KATIE LARSON: Um. I think that the Knights of Protection series is just such an evocative series on a thematic and social level. But, also, on a visual level, they are really, really, um, rich materially. And I wonder if you might talk about the process, like, the physical process of making one of those sculptures.

[00:47:01.66] LINDA STEIN: I think when I first started—and I, once again, would have to look at my writing at the time. It was like these knights or sentinels were coming out of the Earth. So, in coming out of the Earth, they had all this stone and maybe brick-like pieces of material.

[00:47:28.33] And they had copper and zinc and other metals. Magnesium on it. And I don't know if you ever want to get—this is a digression. But if you ever want to get to the *Borat*, my appearing in the *Borat* film, uh—

[00:47:53.16] KATIE LARSON: Well, we can talk about it right now if you want.

[00:47:55.08] LINDA STEIN: When he came—and I thought this was this Kazakhstan man who never wore a suit before in his life. And, um, the film was going to help third-world women and it wasn't going to be shown in America. Um. The knights were up on the wall when he came in.

[00:48:16.38] And he said, Oh, I love these—I love these knights. And he was already thinking about the more womanly ones and the curves in my earlier ones. And he—when I—he said, These materials, what are these materials? As we're talking about now. And, when I got to magnesium, he said, Oh, my country exports magnesium. And we went from there.

[00:48:47.77] But, going back now to—to what you're saying and the materials I used, it was

a merging together, coming out of the ground, all the materials that might be coming out of the ground and forming this protector. I don't know if I ever saw that movie with the man who was governor of California for a while, *Terminator*. Is it *Terminator*?

[00:49:23.18] Was there a film where somebody came up out of the ground? I don't know if I saw it. I saw it years and years after I made my sculpture. But I think, at the time, that was the feeling I—I had that it was coming from the ground.

KATIE LARSON: Mm.

[00:49:44.18] LINDA STEIN: From under the ground.

[00:49:46.22] KATIE LARSON: So something kind of primordial almost coming out of the Earth.

[00:49:51.56] LINDA STEIN: Coming out of the Earth, exactly, yes.

[00:49:54.59] KATIE LARSON: Interesting. And, when you make these sculptures, you are, um, sculpting, but you're also collaging and welding and even maybe sewing. Are these all elements of—of the practice in that in those works?

[00:50:13.72] LINDA STEIN: Yes. At the beginning, it was all hard objects that I was epoxying together, maybe, in some cases, welding. But mostly epoxying together, I wanted them to—to meld together in a way that it looked like it came from the Earth that way.

[00:50:42.24] And, later on, I started using other materials. I used paper and, um, uh, did archival printing on paper from comic books. So you have Wonder Woman. And then I gradually added other icons of protection in my mind, um, uh, Princess Mononoke, Lady Gaga, who started an institute at Harvard on bullying, uh, um, Lisbeth Salander from the Swedish version of [eb] The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo—not the American version—Nausicaa, elements or icons like that, and a religious icon, um.

[00:51:42.32] Religious icon—just went out of my head. Guanyin. The religious icon Guanyin, called by other names in other countries, who is a goddess of mercy and protection.

[00:51:58.58] So some of the knights were made of paper, some paper and wood and metals, and some leather and wood. So first it was the hard materials, only epoxyed together. But then it got to be gradually other materials.

[00:52:25.54] KATIE LARSON: Um. And you have a really impressive installation of one of these knights of protection in the University of Portland, is that right? On the heroine walk [sic Walk of the Heroines]. [eb] Do you want to talk about that commission at all?

[00:52:42.87] LINDA STEIN: Oh, yes, that was a very interesting commission. They chose my work. I had to go down to Portland and present—give a presentation.

[00:52:58.31] And I think they were very intrigued with my talk about protection. And, at first, they asked me to make three of them. But I think funds ran out. And, uh, we stayed with one, bronze, about eight foot high. And it's on the—it's the only sculpture in—it's about a square block outside the—outside Portland University.

[00:53:37.01] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, Portland State University. Sorry, I got that wrong.

[00:53:38.93] LINDA STEIN: Portland State University, and it's in bronze.

[00:53:42.53] KATIE LARSON: And is that the only—that's the only public sculpture of this series. Or have there been any others?

[00:53:51.57] LINDA STEIN: Um. It was displayed for two years, one like that, another one at the Adelphi Biennial. Um. I've done other commissions. It was displayed for time—for times. And, of course, I've sold many. But I think, in terms of public commissions, those are the only ones I can think of right now.

[00:54:18.45] KATIE LARSON: And had Portland State University—they reached out to you? Or was that a [inaudible] [cross talk]—

[00:54:23.44] LINDA STEIN: It was an open call—KATIE LARSON: Okay.

[00:54:25.50] LINDA STEIN: —which I responded to.

[00:54:27.87] KATIE LARSON: Wonderful. And did you work with a specific foundry to make the sculpture?

[00:54:35.59] LINDA STEIN: I did work with a foundry in Indiana. It no longer is in existence. But I—I was exhibiting at that time with Longstreth Gallery out of Naples, Florida.

[00:54:53.01] And she suggested this foundry in Indiana. Uh. The man's name is Mark Parmenter. He's retired from the foundry since.

[00:55:08.72] KATIE LARSON: Wonderful. Um. And then, maybe just as a last thing to touch on before we end for the day, um, I see—now that you're talking about the knights of protection and the way you envision them as coming out of the Earth, um, this perhaps is a related series, this 2006, I Am the Environment, the torsos that are covered in natural found objects. Do you see that as being a sister series to The Knights of Protection? Or totally different?

[00:55:37.88] LINDA STEIN: I do, because they're still knights. And so they're knights of protection, very definitely. Um. Some of them—the ones with branches came after a visit to Japan.

[00:55:59.23] You know, my wife has been teaching Japanese religions and society at Harvard for a very long time, before that, Princeton. Um. And so, when we went to Japan, I was very, very influenced and came back and just wanted to make these—these branch sculptures. In some cases, I used branches and paper, some cases a combination of leather and branches, I don't know.

[00:56:35.87] But, certainly, they then had the feeling of the environment to me. And, in the same way I wanted to internalize the feeling of, uh, the knight sculpture, I—I wanted to internalize the—the, um, branch sculpture and decided to call it I Am the Environment. And it was though I could feel myself in these sculptures in some way.

[00:57:14.77] And, at first, it was going to be called I Am the Environment, colon, My Nature, My Gender. And there's all kinds of double entendres in nature. And, um—but I then left that out of the title. But it all has to do with, uh, the environment and—and the parts that I use that were from the environment.

[00:57:53.24] KATIE LARSON: I guess I want to press you a little bit to tell us what about that visit to Japan felt inspirational to you? What—what were you pulling out of that visit that really resulted in this series?

[00:58:07.68] LINDA STEIN: That's a great question. Some of it is psychological, and I don't know myself. But their sense of design and purity and love of nature and appreciation for, um—for what you see in nature and the simplicity of it maybe wanted me—maybe, I say—maybe directed me to home in on the essentials of my sculpture, maybe a skeletal format of my sculpture, bare bones. So, many of the branches in my mind looked like or felt like bones as I was putting them together.

[00:59:13.59] And it became, um—it became very significant in the doing away with as much as possible and zooming into, um, uh, um, the core of these Knights of Protection. And one Japanese woman came to my studio and looked at everything there but came over to one of these I Am the Environment sculptures and stood for a long time in front of it and said to me afterwards, um, I just felt like I had to say a little prayer to it. There was something very religious about it. Or I felt reverential—reverential, is that the word I mean? Um. So she said, I felt like—I felt I had to say something to this piece.

[01:00:31.47] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, that sense of kind of connectedness that it conveys is really powerful.

[01:00:36.67] LINDA STEIN: Yeah, and I remember, just as another aside, that I had an intern once working for me, a lovely woman, who asked me if—she said she was getting a tattoo on her shoulder, could she put that sculpture on her shoulder. So, to this day, she's probably walking around with that sculpture [laughs].

[01:01:01.59] KATIE LARSON: That's wonderful—LINDA STEIN: [Cross talk.] Isn't that

terrific, yeah.

[01:01:02.31] KATIE LARSON: —that [eb] that was so inspirational to her. That's great. Well, I think this feels like a natural stopping point if that feels okay.

[01:01:09.69] LINDA STEIN: Perfect, yes.

[01:01:11.43] KATIE LARSON: Quit the recording then.

[END OF TRACK AAA_stein23_11797_m.]

[00:00:01.93] KATIE LARSON: Okay. Good afternoon. My name is Katie Larson. I am here with Linda Stein on Thursday, October 5. And we are recording, um, the third part of our interview for the Smithsonian. So Linda, we discussed talking a little bit about your series, the Body-Swapping Armor series, which you began in 2007. Um. Could you talk a little bit about where this series originated from and what you had in mind when you were making it?

[00:00:38.32] LINDA STEIN: Yes. We talked some about 9/11, and my being rushed out of my studio by the police on that morning, and how we—my staff and I, along with so many others in the street, were running for protection. And how the day was filled, um—a—with a sense of powerlessness in the face of some catastrophe that was going on.

[00:01:31.46] I didn't know what. I thought they bombed downtown and would bomb uptown. But I certainly did not feel powerful. And though I don't remember feeling scared, as I may have told you before, I put one foot in front of the other and did what I thought was the best thing to do,

[00:02:02.28] I still was running for safety and protection. And so thinking about that day over the next year, and formulating what I then called Knights of Protection. And thinking about bodyguards, and sentinels, and my dreams as a kid—my recurring dreams of running away from the bad guys toward safety, I had this mostly unconscious—this was not anything that came to the fore of my consciousness—

[00:02:55.74] —I had this sense of seeking protection and started to feel like internalizing more these knights that I was creating. The knights were of wood, stone, metal, brick, um, copper, zinc, brass, all kinds of metals. It was, uh, of leather, mostly black leather, to signify a kind of power.

[00:03:39.77] Um. And I had this desire to—as I'm talking to you, I'm kind of wrapping my arms around myself to internalize these bodyguards, sentinels. And it occurred to me that I needed to press them against my body.

[00:04:03.50] And to do that, they needed to be held on the shoulders and, perhaps, around the waist. So I started with lucite extensions that were hinged onto the sculptures that I made, and saw that they were engineered to such a degree that they could rest on the shoulder with two extending pieces of lucite. And then kind of be held around the waist with two other extending pieces of lucite.

[00:04:53.77] And I put them on my shoulders, and walked around the studio with them, and needed mirrors. So I started putting in two or three mirrors in my gallery area of my studio, so that I could look in the mirror while I was wearing these sculptures.

[00:05:20.83] And then I started to read all kinds of scientific articles about the brain and how people could think that, by doing certain scientific things, the, um—extensions could be put on them. For instance—I haven't thought about this in a long time, so let's see if I could remember it.

[00:05:54.38] There was one scientific study where a, um—a kind of mask—eye mask—was put on the body—was put on the face so that the person looking at—looking out would see their belly. And, um, I then would touch something else with a feather. But they would think I was touching their belly, and they could feel the feather, even though I wasn't touching their belly.

[00:06:44.27] So I wondered, after reading more and more of these things—and I'm sure I have them somewhere in—on my server, on my website. So—because we're going back, you know, much more than a decade. But I started thinking if people put these sculptures on

them, would they feel more powerful? What would they feel? What do I feel?

[00:07:16.34] So it was a question then of asking people to come to my studio, put these sculptures on them, look in the mirror, and tell me what they felt or what they were thinking. And I did a video of these, which our video is now in my studio, which I show people. And I'm sure it's online somewhere. So, um, if you ask me to find the link, I probably could send it to you. And people came to my studio to be filmed while they were wearing the sculpture and looking in the mirror.

[00:08:07.66] So all kinds of people came. And it really was interesting. Elizabeth Sackler from the Sackler wing of feminist art—The Sackler Center at the Brooklyn Museum, said, I'll come, but I want to bring my boxing gloves. So she came to my studio with boxing gloves. And before she came, I bought a pair of boxing gloves.

[00:08:38.48] And, uh, I bought a—it was my wife, actually, who suggested, Why don't you get one of those long duffel bags that—in fact, maybe she had one. I'll lend you one of my long duffel bags. Fill it with towels. Hang it from the ceiling, and it's going to look like a—what do you call them—boxing—

[00:09:05.42] KATIE LARSON: Punching bags.

[00:09:06.35] LINDA STEIN: —punching bag. Exactly. So I did that. I wore a sculpture and boxing gloves when Elizabeth Sackler came in with her boxing gloves. And we played around. And, um—and she was punching the duffel bag. And, uh, I forgot exactly what she said, but I think I have it recorded somewhere.

[00:09:36.98] Other people came. One woman wanted to wear gloves. And so we started a tradition of giving people after that, not boxing gloves, but regular gloves—red gloves or bo—red cotton gloves or black cotton gloves. And then we kept the boxing gloves there for future people. And we added weights, and we added a bow and arrow.

[00:10:07.15] So people could then—you'll have to come to the studio, Katie, at some point. And we'll put it on you. And we put it on Facebook and on the server. And people, um, are filmed wearing these accoutrements, and wearing a sculpture, and looking in the mirror and telling us what they feel. One college student said, Oh, if I were wearing this sculpture when my boyfriend wanted to have sex without a condom, it would be much easier for me to say "No, you can't."

[00:10:45.18] I mean, people said [laughs] all kinds of things. One man put on a sculpture with a rounded belly part. And he said, Oh, I feel pregnant. I feel like I have a very big abdomen. I love this feeling. I've always wondered what it was like. He was a psychologist, actually, [laughs] so.

[00:11:09.57] So some people did dances. One woman said, Oh, I feel like I'm the head of a tribal group. Come here, my women, or something. I mean, everybody [laughs] said something different. But it all was an expression of some kind of power that they felt that they didn't feel before.

[00:11:38.26] So they would hold the bow and arrow while I'm taking a photograph, or they would hold up the weights, or they would put on the boxing gloves. And they would be more fierce. And this is what I was, um, wondering about, curious about. Would the act of putting on these sculptures make some people—not everyone—feel like they had some kind of, um, um, armor or protector?

[00:12:18.82] And one woman said something very, very different. She said—to the first one she put on, she said, I feel like it's an instrument. I feel like playing an instrument. With the second one, she said, Oh, it's so close to me. It's so attached. I feel like I'm holding my mother in my arms when she was dying two weeks ago. So it was very fresh in her mind.

[00:12:50.02] She said, Oh, I can't stand this. I can't breathe. Take this off me. So I knew that some people were very honest in their feelings. I imagine some felt they had to perform in some way. But I think others just really got into it. And I had the feeling that this body-swapping activity was, um, indicative of the sculptures having some kind of, um—or the sculptures could lead to a person feeling some kind of power they didn't feel without wearing them.

[00:13:42.91] So they were able, as I was able, to internalize some of the feelings. And it was so important to me to see if the same was true of other people. I tend to like very much to be interactive with my art and, um, even with my profile writing, which was just made up parts of the face. I wanted to show others so how they could do profile writing. And, uh, I guess down the line, they could invent their own writing.

[00:14:21.44] So the teacher in me comes through in—in many ways. But that was the beginning of my Body-Swapping, um, series.

[00:14:33.88] KATIE LARSON: It's such a wonderful series. And I would love to come to your studio and participate in the performance, 'cause I think it's so, um, rich and fun also. There's an element of it just being fun, which I think—LINDA STEIN: Absolutely.

[00:14:48.55] KATIE LARSON: —is [eb] important.

[00:14:49.98] LINDA STEIN: Yeah.

[00:14:51.46] KATIE LARSON: I have a couple of questions to come out of what you've just said. The first is, I mean, I'm just interested in your processes of making. So I wonder if you could talk briefly about, are you modeling the body armor off of specific people? Or are they just kind of speculative figures, um?

[00:15:13.24] LINDA STEIN: I'm not—I'm not modeling it off it's—off specific people. I'm creating, um—I'm creating a figure that I like. I know when I drew from the model, I had a kind of figure in mind. Whether it was something like my mother's figure, I don't know. But the body part—you know, we're attracted to a certain kind of figure, even in our romantic lives. And what kind of figure, whether it's male or female, probably depend—probably goes back to when we were kids. I don't for sure, but I would guess.

[00:15:59.10] Um. And—and so I created some kind of body type that I liked. And even when I was drawing from the model, say, 60 years ago—six-oh years ago—if the model was very thin, it didn't come out very thin. If the model was very heavy, it didn't come out—or she or he didn't come out very heavy. It always came out my kind of ideal figure. So I guess, uh, the body-swapping type—the body type was, um, just an unconscious, uh, desire to make what was pleasing to me.

[00:16:54.99] KATIE LARSON: That's great. And, um—and thinking about this idea of body-swapping, we haven't really touched on the exhibition you put together about the fluidity of gender. Would you want to talk at all about the origin of that and what you were thinking in putting that together?

[00:17:13.17] LINDA STEIN: Yes. So the work I did on the Knight series—and there's overlap. The Knight series overlaps with the Body-Swapping series, uh, which overlaps with, um, the environment—I am the Environment series, because they're all these figures that are protectors to me. So, um, [eb] Fluidity of Gender has more torsos—I think it has four or five torsos that went around to some 30 or 40 museums as a traveling exhibition.

[00:18:00.43] And so [eb] Fluidity of Gender is the name of the traveling exhibition. And it includes works from my Knight series, from my Body-Swapping series, um, and it included torsos that I considered from my Knight series. I do believe it's in my Knight series, these torsos. And they're mostly black leather.

[00:18:38.70] And the ones in [eb] The Fluidity of Gender traveling exhibit are all—the four of them, I think, or five of them—are black leather. And of course, it has all the, um, items that—found items on it that friends give me, or I buy at garage sales, or, um, I feel emphasize my desire to—to bring in a kind of masculinity and femininity into my work. And that's why this traveling show was called [eb] The Fluidity of Gender.

[00:19:20.01] And remember, it was started, um, way before the topic of—of gender has, you know, been so important, and popular, and, um, necessary. But it was—I think I—we'd have to go to my website to see exactly when these works were started. But I think they were started right after 9/11. So that's like at the end of 2001 or the beginning of 2002. KATIE LARSON: Yeah.

[00:19:57.76] LINDA STEIN: But very early in the aughts, as one might say.

[00:20:02.98] KATIE LARSON: It looks like you have [eb] The Fluidity of Gender exhibition starting in 2007, but with works that were made prior to that.

[00:20:10.51] LINDA STEIN: Prior to that, yes. And since 2007, it has gone to at least 30—30 museums and universities.

[00:20:21.78] KATIE LARSON: And what sort of response did you get from those universities or people who went to visit the exhibition? Has that been something you've paid attention to?

[00:20:35.04] LINDA STEIN: On my website under—perhaps under Education—once again, I'd have to go there. There's something that's called, um—what is it called? Dedications? Not dedications. There's another word that we use, um—

[00:20:56.60] KATIE LARSON: Testimonials, maybe?

[00:20:58.49] LINDA STEIN: I'm sorry? Testimonials. Testimonials. On my website, you'll see something called Testimonials. And one response in particular stays with me. And that is, for every traveling exhibition, we would have a performance, a lecture, um, and in the case just right now at Kent State University—and we could talk about that a little more, if you want to go Have Art: Will Travel! and education.

[00:21:36.71] But at Kent, there's a full three-credit course curriculum around the exhibition. So for the performance part, um, the local place, whatever museum, say it's at the Brooklyn Museum, let's just say. They would find local performers that would like to put on a body-swapping sculpture and create a dance, write a poem, write a skit, do a talk, whatever while wearing the sculpture.

[00:22:21.11] So it could be a student at a local university. Or in one case, it was the poet, um, um, laureate of the town of such-and-such in Tennessee. I don't know. Um. Or in one case, it was the—it was the director of the gallery. And I—was that in Montana? I don't know. Now, there are at least 30 or 40 of them. But—but she put on a sculpture, and she—she swiveled around and said, Hey, boss. I work as well as Johnny. How come I'm not making as much money as Johnny?

[00:23:09.29] And she goes on a little bit. And then she swivels around and says, Hey, Coach. You have me sitting on the bench. You know I hit the ball as well as Michael hits the ball. Why am I—And she goes on and on, wearing the sculpture and creating this skit. And the one I remember the most, um—Ferro, I think her last name—or something with an [eb] F—was a young woman who worked with the gallery and uncrated the sculptures with the gallery director, and—or the curator.

[00:23:49.13] And, uh, um, when I got there to give my lecture, and see the performance, and all that, I said—she said, I'm—I'm it. I'm going to do the performance. I said, Oh, what are you doing it on? And she said, I can't say, yet. You'll see.

[00:24:13.92] So we get to the performance, and we're all sitting around in chairs. And she comes up to the dais. And the director comes up next to her. And the director is wearing a sculpture, and the director introduces her. And she says it's easier for her to talk without the sculpture. So I'm representing her right now—and does a little talking. It's all on film under this topic of testimonials.

[00:24:49.80] Um. And she says, look, I'm from Montana—I think it was Montana. I'm from right here in, um, what, Athena, Bethena, something Montana. The name evades me right now. And she says, I know you people all my life. And she says, I have to tell you I'm queer. And that's the word I want to use. And in the fifth row is sitting my husband, and next to him is my mother.

[00:25:30.27] And people have said over the time, over the years, are you a lesbian or not? And she says, I don't want to discuss that. I don't want to be called anything but queer. And I'm telling you this—and this was before gender became such a big topic—I'm telling you this because when I was unpacking the sculptures and I was reading about it, I knew I had to talk to you.

[00:26:06.82] And I tell you, I get a little emotional just repeating it. But the audience was in tears. Whatever [laughs] she continued to say, the audience was in tears. And she said, I

love my husband, and he's the only one I want to be with, but I'm queer. And that's the way you should refer to me. And she went on and on. I don't remember anything else.

[00:26:32.92] And that was followed by a beautiful dance by another person wearing the sculpture and a really beautiful poem—or—or skit—by yet another person. But everybody, when all the performance was over, ran up to this woman, um, and hugged her. And I mean, it was a very emotional time.

[00:26:59.89] So when I say I love my pieces—my art to be interactive, I love that. I love getting a response from the audience. I love touching someone psychologically in my lectures, touching them physically by wearing the art. Um. So, uh, it all is just very integral to what I do in my art.

[00:27:36.23] KATIE LARSON: It's so cool that you give people space to engage with the art, really on very personal terms. And that part of the performance is open ended so that people can respond in ways that they feel emotionally, um, connected to. I think that's really amazing.

[00:27:57.65] LINDA STEIN: Yeah I like that very much. Um. I'm glad you like it. And it's not for everyone. In my "Below the Eyes" lecture—"Below the Eyes, Sexuality, and Averting the Gaze"—I'm very open with my own life and my struggles with my sexuality. Uh. And I appreciate—or don't want to intrude [laughs], you know—depending on whether someone wishes to share something personal or not. You know, that's up to them.

[00:28:45.67] KATIE LARSON: Um. Just, again, going back to this idea of the materiality of these suits, I'm curious, because people are wearing them and there must be a little bit of wear and tear that's happening in that process, especially if people are dancing in them. So what are your views on—in terms of, like, should the scuffs of the wear and tear remain on the bodysuits? Or do you want them to be fixed up so that they look kind of pristine, how you first made them?

[00:29:15.60] LINDA STEIN: Good question. I've asked—I wasn't there at the time when the dancers, let's say, would be practicing before they appeared in front of the audience. Um. And I would have a list of dos and don'ts. And I would ask that the curator is there at the time they practice and that, other than that, no one wear the sculpture when I'm not there.

[00:29:58.25] I would have, during the gallery reception, the wearable sculptures available for anybody who wanted to put them on during the gallery reception. Um. And it was okay to do that. And lots of people—I know, um, in one college, the president of the college put one on. And, uh—and there was a wonderful performance by—I can't remember the institution or museum—by a young man who did Eve Ensler's, um—did Eve Ensler's play.

[00:30:47.73] What was that called? [eb] Um, uh, you know, The Vagina Monologues. Okay, so he read something from [eb] Vagina Monologues. And he said, I always wanted to have a vagina. Now, this is before—this is at the very beginning. You know, we weren't talking about trans—I think we were just starting to talk about trans in this particular case. And once again, the audience—I had tears in my eyes. And there were lots of people that had tears in their eyes.

[00:31:29.05] And, um, so I find that it's a way to have people open up. But back to your question of the materials that it's made of. It had to be really be engineered, uh, very, very well. So the "legs," quote-unquote, of the sculptures are like armadillo. Is that the animal I mean? Yeah, that's the animal. But I'm not sure I'm saying it right.

[00:32:05.02] Armadillo? Armadillo [laughs] legs. So they're made up in sections so one could bend one's knee. That was important to me. And there were some cases where dancers sat down with the sculpture. And if there was any damage—there really was hardly anything—we would fix it when the show came back. And in most cases, it did travel from one place to another, certainly before COVID. COVID changed a lot of things.

[00:32:46.87] But, um, so it may not have come back to me for a very long time. And there were not—there was not very much damage at all. But recently with COVID and the world changing, uh, I just felt that I've been lucky enough with 30 or 40 exhibitions. That means they were crated to go and crated to come back. And in transit nothing happened, as well as at the place, you know, while people at the reception were trying it on, while the performers were trying it on.

[00:33:26.36] I figured maybe I can't take that chance anymore. So I allow people to put the Body-swapping sculpture on when they come to my studio and I'm there. And I help them put it on and take it off, or with the help of some assistants. But I've stopped that traveling show for that very reason. You know. I don't want to push my luck.

[00:33:59.02] KATIE LARSON: Totally understandable. Um. Do you want to briefly talk about your experience with COVID? It is such a kinda major thing that's happened recently. And you do have the series COVID Story, which is kind of a collage series. Is that something of interest to address?

[00:34:16.24] LINDA STEIN: So it interested me so much that I wrote a long poem and did a video about it. And that video, I think it's called [eb] The COVID Story [sic Covid Story 1101] [eb] or—I'm not quite sure of the title. But it's up on my website under the COVID series. Uh. The video is how I felt during COVID.

[00:34:50.67] I live in a high rise in lower Manhattan, and, uh, there's a little balcony. And at about—what was it—you might remember—5:30 or six o'clock, everybody would go outside on the balcony, and take pots and pans and just make noise. And the noise was a thank you to the first responders and health workers. Uh. And it was just so emotional. I was just so emotional at that time.

[00:35:34.23] And, um, every night, I would go out, and I would look at the buildings, mesmerized with the buildings in front of me. And had—had had to write down and film what I was feeling. And, um, it's in a video on my website. I haven't looked at it for a long time. So I'm not sure I could tell you individual things. But it was a Thank You to the first responders, and very important to me during COVID as a way of coping myself.

[00:36:23.84] And as I looked at the buildings, as you could see in my COVID collages and prints, it was as if I could see protectors up on the buildings, or if, instead of a building, there was a knight of protection. So—so next to a skyscraper, I might have a knight of protection the same height as the skyscraper. And, um, kind of I had them weave in and out.

[00:37:01.76] Some protectors became like, um—like clouds in the sky. So they had this ephemeral feeling to them. But the whole series was about protection.

[00:37:20.33] KATIE LARSON: Yeah. It's very evident, when you're looking at the collages, this—that parallel you're drawing between the buildings and these knights of protection. Are these, um, photographs of the city that you've you were taking during that time?

[00:37:34.32] LINDA STEIN: Yes, very definitely. So, you know, I would suggest that you or others go to that—go to the series, COVID, on my website. And below the squares for images, I think there's going to be something that says Poem and something that says the name—the title of the video, which I don't remember right now.

[00:38:06.98] KATIE LARSON: Um, it's not—I think it's COVID Story.

[00:38:09.26] LINDA STEIN: COVID Story? [eb] Okay.

[00:38:10.51] KATIE LARSON: That's what it looks like. I could be wrong. Yeah.

[00:38:13.28] LINDA STEIN: All right.

[00:38:14.06] KATIE LARSON: Wonderful. Um. Well, the other major thing we haven't talked about—although we've touched on it here and there—is Have Art: Will Travel! Um. And do you want to talk a little bit about its origins? And then it's a huge program. You have a number of different really interesting educational opportunities that you've built into the program. So maybe we could highlight one or two of them?

[00:38:41.24] LINDA STEIN: Yes. So I would suggest that people go to haveartwilltravel-dot-org. Um. And the first thing that would pop up—I'm not sure if I mentioned this to you, um—is that Penn State has offered a Linda Stein Upstander Award, honoring the funders of this award—Joyce and Diane Froot.

[00:39:13.88] And yearly, someone will get a stipend of $3,500, a public award ceremony, publication in Scholar Sphere [eb], a framed certificate. And, um, anyone that would like to apply need apply before midnight on February 1 of each year. And Diane and Joyce Froot

have graciously offered that in perpetuity to—to last.

[00:39:46.46] The other thing that comes up with it is, perhaps, more a student kind of, uh, a—award, which would be the Upstander Comic or Graphic Narrative Award. And that's a $500 award, and online publication right now—hopefully it will be hard copy—of a comic book.

[00:40:13.96] So we've done that for, um—three of them are finished. And a fourth one is finished, but we need someone very high up in the world of autism because this is a comic book on autism. And the artist who created it is an autistic person, uh, and therefore is, I think, even more meaningful to have the comic done, um, and talking about upstander behavior or lack of it.

[00:40:58.68] So the beginning of the comic is his feeling, um, bullied and ostracized because of his, as he calls it, disability. And the comic goes on to—to introduce an upstander who takes them on as a friend and sticks up for him against the bully. And, uh, so these are upstanders. And the title of each comic is "Bee the Upstander"—B-E-E, who is the name of our main upstander.

[00:41:44.64] That continues for each comic, although sometimes the race changes. And maybe even the gender changes. That's why—and we have a little ID tag on—on Bee with the name of—so far, I think it's been a female, but not necessary. And, um, the introduction—or on the cover is a quote by Gloria Steinem, who has really supported the work of Have Art: Will Travel!, has been in the film for Holocaust Heroes, Fierce Females, which one could find in that series on my website.

[00:42:38.08] And—and you'll see a seven-minute film with Gloria Steinem, at—Abigail Disney, and others who talk about that particular series. So, um, uh, the Penn State University Upstander Award and the Have Art: Will Travel! Comic Book Award come up first when you go to the website. And then it will take you to all kinds of news, and projects, and stories.

[00:43:23.98] I think stories are, um—I love telling stories. And I think that it is a very good way of getting some points across. Did I tell you, in the last couple of hours that we have been talking—or a couple of days—about the little nine-year-old, um, who—who became an upstander? I'd like to give you that example—

[00:43:54.75] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, please. Go ahead.

[00:43:56.58] LINDA STEIN: —of that one. I went to Santa Barbara, and my exhibition, [eb] Holocaust Heroes, Fierce Females, was on display. And I gave a lecture about the exhibition. And here, I gave, um, I guess, an interactive, performative kind of workshop. And the workshop was of nine-year-olds.

[00:44:28.56] And before I came down, they were asked to choose a hero, because the title of this workshop was "She Is My Hero." And I wondered if the little nine-year-old boys would say, She is my hero? What do you mean she is my hero? How come it's not he is my—or whatever, but nobody said anything.

[00:44:51.85] I asked them to choose a hero—or the teacher asked them, based on what I was saying—to bring in little trinkets about their hero, and to come to this big room with lots of art supplies and paper where we were going to make collages about the heroes that they chose. So I said to them—this is a room filled with nine-year-olds.

[00:45:23.55] And I was told beforehand—I had a microphone—a hand-held microphone. I didn't tell you this story, did I, Katie? Okay. I was told you put a microphone in a nine-year-old's hand, they're going to answer any question you have. So don't worry. So I held this microphone and I said, Well, who did you choose as your micro—as your hero [laughs]?

[00:45:45.12] And they grabbed the microphone and they said, I chose Althea Gibson. I chose an astronaut. I chose my grandmother. I chose, uh, this girl in my class. Um. I chose a superhero. And I said, Well, that's interesting. Well, what words would you use to describe a hero? Can you think of words? They grab the microphone.

[00:46:13.32] You've got to be brave. Brave is an important word. Courageous is another word. One person—I've forgotten now whether it was a girl or a boy—said you got to be kind.

That was a surprise. Now, the subtitle of Have Art: Will Travel! is "For Courageous Kindness." So you got to be kind. And then I said, Well, that that's important. And that's all true. But tell me, were you ever a hero?

[00:46:47.72] And this—there was a pause. And then this little girl walked up and took the microphone—very important—and she said, Well, when—when Karen was making fun of Bobby, I went over to Karen and I said, "Cut that out. Don't be a bully." And then I went over to—well, I've got his name now, whatever the name was [laughs].

[00:47:13.90] I went over to him and I said, "Don't listen,"—Bobby. "Bobby, don't listen to Karen. I'll be your friend. Don't listen to her. She's a bully. I'll be your friend." And then with the microphone in one hand, and her other hand on her other hip like this, she said, I guess I was a hero.

[00:47:35.47] Now, that, to me, is the best kind of education that you could give because that little girl, and maybe a bunch of other kids in that class of, I don't know, 50, 60—there were a lot of people in the room—might say, well, maybe I was a hero when I did such and such with Becky or something like that, or might say, Hmm, I'll go out, and if something like that happens, I'm going to be a hero.

[00:48:11.51] And I think if I had heard that story and seen how proud this little nine-year-old was to be a hero, to be a protector, to be someone that had compassion for someone else, I think it would have been easier for me as a kid growing up to have that as a goal. And so "For Courageous Kindness" is the subtitle of Have Art: Will Travel! And that's what we're all about.

[00:48:55.51] KATIE LARSON: I love that story. And I love that you're also reorienting the idea of what a hero is. It's not necessarily someone who is saving the universe.

[00:49:08.54] LINDA STEIN: Exactly.

[00:49:09.56] KATIE LARSON: Yeah. It's these everyday actions that matter and that make you a hero. And I think that's a really important lesson for kids and for adults to be learning. So that's amazing.

[00:49:23.15] LINDA STEIN: Yeah. Yes. I—I—I really enjoyed that a lot. And one person who is interviewing me for an article, actually, uh—and what I'm about to say was published with a picture at the end of her article—uh, she came to the studio. She interviewed me, put on a sculpture, and looked in the mirror, and did all the things I told you about before.

[00:49:53.30] And then she said, um—I read her article, and there was a little inset at the bottom of the article with her wearing the sculpture. And it said—and I'm sure—I don't know if this is up on the website or not, but I have it on my server—a picture of—oh, it might be in my CV under Articles on my website. So this inset with the picture of her wearing the sculpture.

[00:50:27.63] She said, When I left Linda Stein's studio and I got on the subway, and I was just sitting and reading on the subway, I noticed that there were a group of girls where three or so girls were making fun and teasing this other girl who was obviously having a hard time. And they just went on and on.

[00:50:54.66] And she said, I just sat there and thought, well, Linda Stein would like me to go over there, and be an upstander, and do something about it. But, you know, I'm a little scared. Maybe they're going to hurt me. Maybe they're going to hit me, or maybe someone else will do something. So I sat there for a little bit longer, and she said, and then I got up and I walked over to them. And I said, Why are you doing that to her? Do you really want to be mean like that?

[00:51:28.81] And she said, they stopped and said, Yeah, yeah. Yeah, you're right. Okay, let's leave her alone, or something like that. And she said, I walked out of the train thinking where is my next [laughs]—my next heroic act? And it's in the article, and it really was very nice to see.

[00:51:52.92] KATIE LARSON: I love that. There's an after effect to wearing this [laughs]—

[00:51:56.96] LINDA STEIN: Right. [Laughs.] Right, right.

[00:52:00.04] KATIE LARSON: Well, also on Have Art: Will Travel! you—I mean, it's an extensive resource for educators and for people who are interested in your work and visiting your exhibitions. And you've developed a number of what you call "encounters." Do you want to talk about how—do you develop these encounters—is this just you, or are you working with another educator? And what is the aim of them?

[00:52:27.85] LINDA STEIN: Good point. So if you, on haveartwilltravel-dot-org, go to Education, you will, um, come up with not only some of these stories, but you will come up with social justice art education with Linda Stein's art. And we are in the process of changing that now. So, uh, I think if you give us two weeks—or maybe it'll take a month. But certainly by the beginning or mid-November, we should have that a little bit more organized.

[00:53:13.97] But, uh, we have had thousands, up to now, teachers come to that website. And the, um, encounters that are shown include lesson plans. I mean, there's something that you'll see on the first page that says "What is an encounter." And, for instance, it says, [reading text] "Explore participatory curricular encounters with series of artworks by Linda Stein. Underlying all encounters is teaching toward understanding the value of diversity and understanding that everyone is responsible for the well-being of others."

[00:54:06.82] And so there are all kinds of, um, lesson plans or shorter encounters with art. And this is put together by a whole curricular team. And in the summer of one year, we had a conference in my studio where people from all over the country—I don't know if there was anyone from abroad, but there could have been—would get course credit as a teacher—or as a student, or certain kind of credit as a teacher.

[00:54:51.81] Because teachers are paid by—they can do certain things, and go up on another tier, and get a raise somehow. So it was an accredited conference. And, um, we—we taught—this curriculum team and I taught how you could teach upstander behavior to your students. And that's what these encounters are about.

[00:55:25.92] Uh. One of the curricular team members—actually, the chair of the curricular team, Karen Keifer-Boyd, who, um, uh, teaches at Penn State University, came to my exhibit at Flomenhaft Gallery when I was exhibiting [eb] The Fluidity of Gender there in Chelsea, Manhattan. And she had a number of encounters with—I'm not sure now. I'd have to look it up, whether they were students or teachers of students—educators who would be teaching this.

[00:56:10.61] And she had several different encounters over an hour and a half. And one was, uh—and they would pick a card. And the card might say, Imagine that this sculpture is talking to one other sculpture. Which sculpture would you choose, and what would it say? And there was much more involved with it, but that I remember.

[00:56:40.04] Uh. And there were other kinds of, um, storylines that each committee—oh, I forgot to tell you, they were put in committees of three or four. So maybe there were five committees. And at the end of all these encounters, they would report to the entire group which sculpture was talking to which sculpture and what they would say. And, of course, it all was geared toward upstander behavior, and compassion, and courageous kindness.

[00:57:22.80] KATIE LARSON: Can I ask what is the story behind this word, upstander? Where did you come up with that?

[00:57:31.32] LINDA STEIN: I coined the four B's. And these are words that have been used over and over again. But together, I thought they were very important. And the four B's are the bully, the bullied—the victim—the bystander—very, very important because most of us are bystanders—and the brave upstander. So, uh, that—that word, upstander, was a word that was beginning to be used a little bit.

[00:58:14.99] I liked it very much because I thought it encompassed so many different things. The upstander has to be kind, has to be compassionate, has to be courageous not to just sit on the side because—as this woman in the subway was, and as that little nine-year-old girl was. I mean, at nine years old, I mean, you really could be ostracized if you go against the crowd. And she was very courageous.

[00:58:46.67] So the word upstander stuck in my mind. And, um—and so the four B's are something I use a lot in my own teaching.

[00:59:01.97] KATIE LARSON: It's wonderful. It's important and we need it right now, so [laughs]. Well, I just want to check in with you. How are you feeling? Are you wanting to keep going? Or—I have one more question, if you're ready to kind of wrap things up.

[00:59:14.84] LINDA STEIN: Well, let me just tell you one more—KATIE LARSON: Please.

[00:59:19.34] LINDA STEIN: —thing that I like very much that's taking place now—or I think the show just ended at Kent State University Gallery. Um. Linda Hoeptner Poling created the curriculum. It's a three-credit curriculum. She created it, um—co-created it back in 2020, but the exhibit couldn't go there because of COVID in 2020. But the curriculum took place.

[00:59:54.50] Um, and, um, I think that she did it again this year. And I—I just find that curriculum very terrific. And it's up on this social justice art education with Linda Stein's art website. You'll see the curriculum by November 15, and you'll see the encounters that she devised for the exhibition.

[01:00:34.52] And, um, I think they're just such good educational experiences. And I'm delighted that, uh, my work could have inspired them and inspired students to think about some of these important questions.

[01:00:56.32] KATIE LARSON: Was this a curriculum designed for—a class designed for students at Kent State?

[01:01:05.36] LINDA STEIN: It—yes. And I think the curriculum—I could send you the curriculum just for your own knowledge, if you wanted to see it. Um. It may be on my website, and it may not. But why don't I just send it to you so you could you could see, um—see it? And I want to make sure it is up on my—on the social justice art education website and the HAWT website.

[01:01:41.30] KATIE LARSON: Yeah, I'd love to see it. That sounds fascinating.

[01:01:43.64] LINDA STEIN: Yeah. I will. And we—one of the things that Have Art: Will Travel! now has agreed to do—so we're just at the beginning—and Linda Hoeptner Poling will, um, chair this particular project—is that we'd like to take this curriculum which now relates to Holocaust Heroes, Fierce Females, which is now the only traveling exhibit of mine since I stopped Fluidity of Gender.

[01:02:25.43] And I've not yet started Displacement from Home, or I Am the Environment, or other series. Right now, I think I'm waiting for COVID to be entirely gone. And, um, so Linda will help other institutions create a curriculum based on the curriculum that she started.

[01:02:56.92] So—so we'd like to, in conjunction with the traveling exhibition Holocaust Heroes, Fierce Females, we'd like to help museums and institutions—or museums pairing with institutions, universities to develop a curriculum, or projects, that can be done around Holocaust Heroes.

[01:03:24.03] KATIE LARSON: Wow. That's great. Um. So we've been discussing your teaching and curriculum development. So within that context, where—what do you see the role of feminism as being?

[01:03:47.10] LINDA STEIN: For me, the definition of feminism is equality for all. Equal opportunity, which means equal pay, equal job opportunity, uh, research opportunity, teaching opportunity. And that's it, just equal opportunity for all. And I always felt that growing up female was more difficult.

[01:04:27.11] It was more difficult being female growing up than being homosexual, which I didn't learn about or accept about myself until, um, I was about—in my early 20s or just discovering it in my late teens. So I think I admire you as a teacher for being able to help students who are misunderstanding what the word feminism means.

[01:05:12.67] And I imagine there are some that still think a feminist is a lesbian. And if you admit to being a feminist, you're admitting to being a lesbian. Or feminists are strident—or—I would have thought that, by now, those words wouldn't be used.

[01:05:38.03] I mean, there was someone—I think there was a joke years ago that said, What do you call an aggressive woman? And the answer is, a bitch. What do you call an

aggressive man? And it was some nice term. I don't know.

[01:06:02.92] KATIE LARSON: CEO, maybe?

[01:06:04.23] LINDA STEIN: Striving, or something very nice. But the aggressive woman was a bitch. And look, I grew up in the time of Bella Abzug, whom I respected a great deal. But she got so much flack because she was a little bit assertive. Or abrasive. That was the word that was used against her.

[01:06:31.62] I also feel that men are struggling now, and I do want to raise that issue—that women are making progress. Now, when I say making progress, I may have said before—I don't remember—that there are probably twice as many women at the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art than there were 20 years ago. Twice as many. But that probably went from four percent to eight percent.

[01:07:09.95] And that's what we have to keep in mind. That, yes, women are accomplishing things and making some headway. But it's minuscule. And in your world, Katie—I'm sure in academia it's still a slog for women to get through the sexism. So I'm very happy for it being eight percent, if that is the figure, um, or if Louise Bourgeois's art gets $1 million in auction.

[01:07:54.38] But I remember that a Frank Stella doing the same kind of work would get $10 million. I think the statistics are 10 to 1 at that level also. So yes, we could say, But she's getting $1 million. But were she male, it would have been $10 million. You know? So, uh, um, where should we go from there?

[01:08:25.14] KATIE LARSON: Well, I guess my closing question, if you want to answer it—and it can be short and sweet, however you want to—would be, what advice do you have for this younger generation of feminist artists today? Or feminists, period.

[01:08:41.40] LINDA STEIN: I would say don't hide. So much of my life was hiding, and it really affects a person. It takes away from the quality of life. So whatever it is that you feel is your authentic self, let it hang out. Take the chance. Be courageous.

[01:09:19.51] Support yourself. Be the upstander to yourself. Talk to yourself, left shoulder to right shoulder, as I did playing tennis with Roy Lichtenstein. Or be the parent, if you want to call it—or I like to use the word upstander—for yourself. And say, This is who I am.

[01:09:45.25] I don't have to hide it. I'm good enough. I'm not perfect. Nobody's perfect, but I'm good enough. And I don't have to make believe I'm somebody else.

[01:10:06.21] KATIE LARSON: Thank you. That's really wonderful. Any last thing that you want to mention, Linda, before we finish up here today?

[01:10:16.32] LINDA STEIN: I think—I think that's it. I think you were a terrific interviewer. I enjoyed meeting you, and I do hope we can keep in touch.

[01:10:25.55] KATIE LARSON: Oh, we will, for sure. Okay. I'm going to go ahead and stop.

[01:10:28.95] LINDA STEIN: Right.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]