



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Camille Feinberg,
2000 June 27

Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

Contact Information

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

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Camille Feinberg on June 27, 2000. The interview took place in Paul Karlstrom's office at Huntington Library, and was conducted by Paul Karlstrom for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Paul Karlstrom has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. 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

PAUL KARLSTROM: Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, an interview with Camille Feinberg, or Camille Foss at the time we're going to be discussing, which is, I guess, back in the '60s, and Camille, I'm sure, has a multi-faceted history and careers and so forth, but what we're talking about here is her career as an artist/model, and that's what we will be focusing on. Are you also an artist?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes, I am.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay, good. Well that's important to know as well. Anyway, this interview is being conducted June 27th, the year 2000. The interviewer is Paul Karlstrom, and it's being conducted in the Archives West Coast Regional Center, in my office at the Huntington Library. And, Camille, thank you for coming. I mean this is really—we just did this on short notice; we just did it, and this is great.

Camille and I have been going through sketch books and loose sketches from the John Altoon papers which are here at the Archives, dozens, I guess hundreds of drawings and many of them, certainly not all, but many of them dealing with nude females of various ages often cavorting, if you want to call it that, with, well either nude males or, in some cases, half-animal males. It's all very marvelous and interesting, and so as we were going through, we didn't have the benefit of taping then, but it seemed to me that you were remembering things from working/modeling for John Altoon in particular, but then other experiences came to mind, and that's what I would like to talk about. Why don't you tell me how you started modeling and what your motives were? Why did you do it?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well I started simply because it paid more money than a lot of jobs that I could get while I was working myself through school and I was going to PCC [Pasadena City College] taking drawing classes, and I just happened to notice that they had models, and so I found out who was the models' agent and I called him up and I started working that way. And it was a great job because you worked any time you felt like it, or [not if you] didn't feel like it, and you got paid depending on the situation, you know, six, eight, ten, 20, \$25 an hour—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —depending on where you—

PAUL KARLSTROM: At that time?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —drove around at, you know, where you had to drive. When I worked at Claremont College, for instance, I would get paid a lot of money to go that far. Driving wasn't as bad as it is now, by any means as I remember, so I really just drove all over the city, and then I got to know a lot of these artists. I worked at UCLA a lot. That's where I met Richard Diebenkorn and I was—

PAUL KARLSTROM: This was in the late '60s?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: In the late '60s, yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Probably about what year, do you think?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: '67 would be for Diebenkorn.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But you started—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I didn't do it that long because in '71, I moved to New York, so I probably did it for three or four years 'cause I did it while I was going to PCC, then I did it at Chouinard's, and I think I even did it when I was going to CalArts as well.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And this is all within—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Anything to avoid, you know, a boring, tedious job.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And so this was all, though, within—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: The late '60s.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, a three-year period.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Three- or four-year period, I would say.

PAUL KARLSTROM: When did you go to New York?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: '71.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I finally moved to New York.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, you started at Pasadena City College where you were an art student. Is that right?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I was an art student there, but I didn't model at PCC That's just where I got the models—I think I worked at Cal State [Los Angeles] was maybe my first job, but I worked at UCLA a lot and the old Pasadena [Art] Museum, you know, that wonderful, lovely museum, and then the new one, the Norton Simon when it opened up, they had classes there at the beginning.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: There I worked for Altoon at the very beginning. I think it must have stopped—but when I moved to New York, I just kind of shelved all this and I moved in to Soho in New York, so there was so much going on there at that point, '71, you know, every aspect. I quickly got absorbed into the performance theater working with Richard Foreman there in New York for years and doing art work and all the great stuff that you do in New York, but what an education. Anyway, that's another tape, but—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well what about—I think you said you were maybe 20, 21 years old. That makes sense.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Maybe 20.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Maybe 20, yeah—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes, 20.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —when you started, and you described yourself as, well, shy, a bit shy, and—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I was very shy.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —and yet you managed somehow to screw up the courage to take your clothes off for these classes for all these other students and then these teachers.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well do you remember like your first time?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: You know I do. It was for a group of kids that were my age and maybe a little younger. We were college kids and I can't remember if it was at Cal State or maybe Walnut College. I think it could have been a college out in Walnut, and I just remember that I really had—I thought of it as a performance almost. I said, "I have to act like I've been doing this forever, but yet I've got to go out this first time." You have to walk out in the middle of—get on a platform and just disrobe, and usually that means that if you have a closet to change your clothes in, that's what you get, or you just sort of do it off in the corner somewhere. So usually they would have a little closet or maybe you'd go in an office, somebody's office and disrobe. I was extremely nervous, I remember, being the first time, but I just always had this thing that I wanted—same performing on stage. I wanted to get over my shyness more than anything. I just felt I had an awful lot going in my mind, but no way because I was shy, I couldn't get it out. I'd be too afraid, so it was really kind of that kind of situation.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Was that part of your motivation, I mean beyond the fact that it was pretty good-paying work? But did you think of it at that time as a means to sort of confront your personal self-consciousness or shyness?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I think I did 'cause I remember that I'm going to do this.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, "This is going to help me."

CAMILLE FEINBERG: And also, of course, I grew up in an artistic family and I was aware of the different artists, and so I was delighted when I would be able to work, you know, which happened very quickly. I began to work at UCLA and all over the city and worked for all these people that I'd heard about, and then the LA art scene was a lot smaller, and it was exciting. It was exciting, and I had no problem getting work. At that point, there weren't that many younger artists, from what I know, so—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Younger models you mean?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Younger models.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah. That's what you said earlier.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's interesting. Why do you suppose?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: That's what I heard and that's what my agent told me. And also, it was very—I like to do different things, so if you wanted me to move around and do 30-second poses or 10-second poses or five-second poses, I was more than happy to do it and I was more than happy to—I remember, I think it was for David Bungay, at one point, we did painting with food and he had me over to his place and we swam around in his pool for the classes and anything fun we could think of, he would think of, we would do; I would do, and then my other friend, Susan, we would do it sometimes together, but—so it could be a lot of fun.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Now you keep mentioning Susan so far off tape before we started. What's her full name?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well then it was Susan Brown.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Susan Brown.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Now she's Susan Benay, yeah, but she worked for your friend—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sam Clayberger.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —Sam Clayberger.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I know it is—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: And Zorthian, too.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: But her and I—I got her into modeling. We were classmates and that's why I mention her so much because we laugh and have a good time about all this every once in a while.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you consciously think of modeling, nude modeling, as a kind of liberation? I mean did you think of it in that way at all, that this is something not everybody does, like an affirmation of yourself?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: You know, I actually don't think so. I don't think I was—felt any—

PAUL KARLSTROM: It wasn't, "Oh, look at me; look at me"?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: No, I don't think so at all.

PAUL KARLSTROM: How did you feel about your body?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Honest, I was—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you like it?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —pretty happy with it, yeah, yeah. I mean I—yeah, I think I was. I know I was in pretty good, I looked pretty good and I know that I was a good model because I would hear teachers tell me that, "Oh, the students did great drawings," and I think it was probably because I would think of it as if I was moving quickly, I would try to do interesting counterbalance poses and things being an artist that would be fun to draw at the same time because I was a student then, too, so I know that feeling about it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You know, that's really an interesting point, and my experience doing interviews in this series, artists and models, the models who—women who are also artists, or even art students, and I've interviewed some like younger women, models of Sam Clayberger's as a matter of fact, one of them, and having been on the other side seems to make quite a difference. They seem to even think about it differently, and the role—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: That's interesting.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —of the model, the function, the purpose, what you want to try to achieve to be good, so it's like a reciprocation. Anyway, you did then—your earlier posing was really art classes, life-drawing classes at schools?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes. That's how I started out with this agent—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —and then there would be, you know, if I was asked to work privately for somebody, you know I would. If I wanted to, I would do it, and that's how I ended up working for Diebenkorn down in Santa Monica when he had—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Ocean Park?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —Ocean Park Studio down there right off the beach.

PAUL KARLSTROM: The famous address.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Very famous, and he was great to work for. And then, of course, Richard Feynman, and Jirayr [Zorthian] introduced me to him, worked out of his home, also worked for the actor. Just reminded me, I completely forgot about it, Lee Van Cleef—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, really?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —from *The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly*. I worked for him for quite a while out in the [San Fernando] Valley. He had a guest house or a garage or something set up as a studio, so I worked for him quite a bit.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Was he pretty skilled?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Real serious. Well he was not say skilled as others, but he was very serious about it, very serious.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Who knows, maybe he was—studied art.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Could be before he was an actor.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Maybe he wanted to be an artist.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: He had a great face. I mean he was very, he was very interesting.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That must have been interesting for you.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, he was the only actor, I think, I ever worked for, but—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Let me sort of split the, or try to split the—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, split off from—

PAUL KARLSTROM: —our discussion in two parts, and I really am very interested in hearing about the specific stories about these artists, but is it true that there was a different atmosphere between your professional,—it was all professional—but the art school/classroom type situation and these private where you were working just one-on-one with—you were engaged by the artists to come to their studios or wherever they were. Did you distinguish between these or was it just a matter of venues; they were just in different places? Did you distinguish between these? Were they different experiences for you at all? This classroom and the—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —private sessions.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well let me—yes, for me, because I was so aware of the artists and the art world. It would be exciting to work for these artists, and just because you would be in that environment in itself. I mean it's a very intimate place. You're in somebody's studio, not that they were very grand studios at all, not like they have now. They weren't at all, but you kind of always—it was always a nice feeling. There'd be a lot of respect for some of these artists. I did anyway, and it would be fun and you never know what was going to happen. So it was very different from just working for a lot of college students at a college or whatever, although you would get to always meet and talk with the artists, the teachers all the time, too, so—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you feel that there was somehow more of a relationship between you and the artist when it was one-on-one that it moved it into a kind of different situation perhaps even with some potential for exploring aspects of that relationship? We were talking a little bit about that earlier.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah. Well there—

PAUL KARLSTROM: I mean did you feel a little more vulnerable, I don't want to say on guard—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Being in that environment?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, but that you were aware that there were other possibilities, especially if you liked one another.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well I mean a studio can be a very erotically charged environment. I think it goes with it, plus the whole history of artists and models is—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —goes along with it which I was always aware of. I mean modeling can also be extremely tedious and boring, which it is, and there's—and you have all kinds of artists who really are—do want to spend that time working, but, of course, you always have situations where people do get attracted to each other and I certainly was attracted to a couple of these artists and—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well which ones?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —they would be attracted to me, too. Well I think I was attracted to Altoon to a—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —certain—in a certain regard. I mean he was also kind of scary because his personality was very strong and—

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's what you were saying earlier, sort of wild—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —his reputation, as I remember him that way. I mean maybe other people might not think of him that way, but for me, because his reputation preceded him, I'd heard stories about him like suddenly taking his clothes off at Chouinard's and running through MacArthur Park and being arrested by the police or crazy stories about his borrowing somebody's car and then forgetting where he parked it and the person wants their car back and it's like he couldn't remember where it was and just sort of had this—not just I guess then I—I'm trying to remember. We would hear stories, but I can't remember who I heard some of these stories from, that he was maybe a little bit crazy, and I don't really know if that's true, but that didn't bother me one bit. I mean—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes, he, you know, was under a therapist's care. I mean he had a lot of problems.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well that made him only more interesting—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well that's what I was going to ask you.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —I mean for somebody like me because I have a very wide—I did then, I don't really anymore. I'm much hipper to it, but then I had a—I liked a wide tolerance for certain types of behavior. If you had an interesting mind, for instance, and he was an artist, I would find that attractive.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Now I wasn't attracted to somebody who was particularly wild in a sense of getting drunk and doing crazy things like that. I would be sort of—it would be a different type of thing. I really don't know how to explain it. So it was an attraction to Altoon in that regard, but at the same time, he was—I remember him as being a very forceful personality. He demonstrated what was on his mind and he was attracted to me. There was

no doubt about that and I remember I worked with him quite a bit at the, I think it was the new Norton Simon and also the old—and afterwards, he would like go around, walk around and stare, and just sort of stare, and he's sort of like having a lot of eye contact and stuff like that, and then a lot of times, we would talk after classes and got into—frankly, he's just sort of trying to cajole me and he wanted to have an affair, but—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well did you find him—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —it was very—he was very nice about it. In a lot of ways, he told me how much he loved his wife bad and so I knew completely what was going on and I had, you know, so it was really—

PAUL KARLSTROM: So he probably had a bit of a reputation 'cause I mean he's a ladies' man and—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: He had a bit—yeah, absolutely, yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you find this kind of compelling, though? I mean how did you respond?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well, I don't—if he hadn't been married, I would have felt very different about it, but always never wanted to have affairs with married men.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, it's complicated.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: It's too complicated and I would never want to—to me, it's just not exciting. And you have to remember, I was a lot younger than Altoon was. He was already in his forties and I was like 20, so he's not—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Appropriate.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I mean my husband is younger than me, so—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Way to go.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: "Way to go," yes, and it seems to be a pattern of mine, but he was very interesting, but I was also—it's kind of like, "Gee, do I really want to get immersed in this kind of stuff," and he was a little—his temperament was a little bit, I'd say, off-putting in a sense that you could sort of tell that—it ended up, after a lot of these sort of talks and cajoling and groping and all this kind of stuff after these classes, is that he ended up not liking me at all because there was—he wanted to meet me and it was all set up and then I didn't show up for this, so—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Assignment.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Assignment, I guess you could call it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well you said you were going to go?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I said I was, yes, and I think I was mostly—part of me was curious, and then the other part of me was like well if I just say yes, then I don't have to show up. I mean—

PAUL KARLSTROM: So he thought you were a flake?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: It was kind of like it's a good way to get out of it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: He thought you were a flake then?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I think he was really mad from what Zorthian said, very annoyed about it. You could ask Zorthian. Zorthian might remember. I don't know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Do you think it was an ego—almost certainly—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Probably.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —and—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I could just see Zorthian like hang—'cause this is all supposed to take place in Zorthian's studio, you see.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, you mean up at the ranch.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: And I could just see Zorthian; yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: At the ranch?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Up at the ranch in Altadena.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, and so you were supposed to meet Altoon at Zorthian's.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: And you know Zorthian was going to be out there in the bushes. I said that's all I need. This is not what I need. Zorthian would probably want to come in.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No question, at least to watch.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Are we still on tape?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, but he'd be drawing probably.

PAUL KARLSTROM: How interesting.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, I can only imagine now that I—I hadn't thought about it before, but I can only imagine what would have happened if I had gone along with that because he was a very happy guy. It was like a game, I think. It was like a little bit of conquest or perhaps it relates to their work. Both of them do erotic work.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: So I'm sure they cultivated these feelings or they easily—if you're thinking about these sort of things, you will more easily cultivate whatever interest in somebody else or—you know what I'm talking about?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, sure. So you didn't go up to Zorthian's—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I did not.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —and Altoon was unhappy.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Very.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Was that it in terms of you modeling for him?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: And then he died shortly—he died.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So he might have called down and have you model again. I think that's really interesting because what, of course, happened there was this professional relationship moved right over the line into, let's say, a "social" relationship.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, it could have been, except that he was very happily married, and so—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —he wanted everything not to be secret, secretive.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, and you probably, apparently, didn't find that satisfactory. But let me ask you this: what about the idea of the studio as being a separate world, that it's like a stage where certain things are acted out, certainly a relationship and so much more complicated because it involves creativity and different roles, but what about that sort of "time-out" place where you can perhaps indulge, oh, interests or experiments or behavior that might lead to self-discovery that you wouldn't outside? In other words, there's a kind of freedom perhaps within the studio situation. Does that sound right to you at all? Do you think of—is it like two worlds?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well, there is a certain—I mean there is—it is like—yeah, it is very separate. I mean it is much more—I can't—I'm groping around for the right word, but—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Maybe that a certain permission is—and I don't want to put words in your—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: There's an awful lot of play; there's an awful lot of play between these artists themselves and then when your relationship, when you're working with them, and you're always aware of how you influence their working in a sense. Are they enjoying it? Are they doing good drawings? Do they seem involved and want to work? That would always, that would be—you always have that type of thing. It's not a power relationship. That's more into the social aspects where you have to deal with extracurricular stuff, but it's—I also find it very

satisfying when—but artists seemed very involved and they were happy with their drawings or if you see—like now sometimes I'd see them up on the walls in museums and, "Oh, they must have thought a lot of that drawing" or somebody did, that it's not just—it's in a book, out of all the thousands of drawings that someone did, well that one is in a book or somebody thought that was one good enough to be up on the wall of a museum. It's kind of nice.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So that could be for you as well, part of the attraction or appeal, even the motivation for, aside from the money—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well, yeah, money's probably a small part of it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —you know, continuing along and I gather that's the case, that this notion perhaps of what's sometimes called the muse, that you are an agent that can contribute by your presence, your body, your self, to a successful work of art.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, I think—yeah, I think that's true. I think models really don't get enough credit for the work that they do in that regard 'cause when you're asked specifically to work with somebody, it's not like somebody walked off the street. They're already into you to a certain regard.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah. That is an interesting part.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: They are. There's something about you that they find interesting.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And between—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: They've already seen you work, usually.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And between men and women—in your case, male artist/female model—but that is part of that attraction and rapport connection, it can be sexual—that's what you've described.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well there is always that. I mean it is even if there's not an acting out of it so much.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, and so you were aware—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I mean you're without your [clothes]—just the situation.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, whether or not you respond, and—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So you were aware of this, presumably, and you described a sort of, quite interesting, kind of having to run around the studio. In other words, part of the job description, it sounds to me, in some cases with these guys, and it didn't seem to bother you all that much, but it was like being a bit chased around and you just dealt with it. Is that—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I think I do have a pretty good sense of humor about it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's interesting.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: It is like that. I mean sometimes you would have to literally run. You run around and make jokes or you try to sort of repel—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Come on,—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —this vibe about—I mean how would you like it if

— it's like having somebody run around and trying to grab you. It's almost like a cartoon. If you can imagine this scene being drawn by a cartoonist—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Like Altoon.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —the mouse running around the studio and Felix the Cat running after him trying to grab him. It almost had that—it was funny to me in that sense that—

PAUL KARLSTROM: It was entertaining.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: It was very entertaining and then I could go and tell a good story to a friend of mine, my girlfriend, who also would have these stories constantly. We still have great laughs about it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Let's, if we may now, just pause and turn this over, and I know that you have to go in a moment, but—

[END OF TRACK AAA_feinbe00_3737_r]

PAUL KARLSTROM: Continuing this interview with Camille Feinberg now, and on the other side of the tape, we were ending up—we sort of cut it off, but what I thought was an interesting moment, your rather refreshing and humorous account, at least with Altoon, and you may tell other stories like with perhaps Feynman. But it was very evident to you that you had this particular—you were attractive, sought after, desired in one way or another by these, in some cases, very well-known artists, or at least a couple of them, and so this is something you had to, as a young model, cope with and apparently pretty successfully in a way that, as you tell it, seems entertaining, at least as you remember it, it's pretty entertaining. Let me ask you this; I hesitate to use the word "power," but I think in one form, this is what we're describing. You had what they wanted and that is desire, and part of it, of course—it doesn't have to even separate that from the process, the practice, their art practice, the fact that they're image-making and you are the model, but there's this other perhaps kind of energizing presence. I call it the presence of Eros, Eros in the studio, sort of a trouble-causer in a way, a mischief-maker. Did you then or in retrospect—is it possible for you to look at it as a kind of power exchange that you were very much a human presence with a kind of power through your body, through yourself, in relationship to these artists who supposedly were in charge? Sounds to me like they were losing it a little bit or they were trying to gain their own ultimate power by catching you. This is really interesting when you think about it in terms of the creation of art, image-making, capturing an image and infusing it with life. Did you, at the time, think about it in those terms at all?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I don't think I thought about it in the long term. I really think I just thought about I was there pretty short term. I would be there and maybe they would do some good drawings because I could have gotten a lot more work from them, if I had tried, easily enough and I guess it's part of being a hippie in the '60s and being young and being involved in my life outside of modeling. I mean that was a small part of it to a certain degree.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you see this—sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt you, but did you see any connection between this activity of yours and what was now described as more than a social revolution, a sexual revolution, a liberation in society?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you connect these at all in your mind?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, well yes, because, see, that was the '60s.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: That was the first era before AIDS when everyone was—it was the free-sex era, let's put it [at] that. And I don't know if you're aware of this, but at that time, there was an awful lot of swinging going on—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —and parties, especially here in Pasadena with the JPL [Jet Propulsion Laboratory] crowd.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, yeah, I've heard about that.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes, those kind of things, and I never went to any of those because I always had an easy-out for all this stuff which is that I was already living with somebody and I was able to keep my life completely separate from modeling. It really gave me a good out a lot of the time.

PAUL KARLSTROM: How did your boyfriend, I guess would be the term, would feel about that?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: It's the '60s.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, be cool.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I mean everybody do their own thing and nobody questions anything and that's really the way it was which is a bad thing because as a model, you are vulnerable. I mean you are in the presence of these artists and they are very dynamic and—

PAUL KARLSTROM: And lustful sometimes.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, and lots of times, you're in closed quarters with them, but I never had any problems.

And really the stuff that came up is just simply this natural sexual attraction that takes place and maybe you're there; you're naked; you're young, and, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What do you expect?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: What do you expect from the male artist, right? So it's that kind of thing. But I always just looked at it as kind of amusing and, like I say, basically people were pretty nice about things. If you didn't want to be involved with them and if they did really, you know, you never had to work for them again.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Just tell them off or whatever.

PAUL KARLSTROM: This is a little pre-high-feminism, and so this may—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: But still—

PAUL KARLSTROM: —be anachronistic, not quite fitting into the time, but there are women who view even a situation like this as a potential for empowerment. If you can take charge of the situation and actually there's power in your body, in your nudity, in your sexual attractiveness. And whether it's conscious or unconscious, that this could play a role. Let's put it this way, like who's in charge, who's managing that situation.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well I'm sure that you—yes, absolutely, because people do get attracted to you. I think if I had been looking for someone or had met someone, let's say, who I found so incredibly attractive, more attractive than anyone else, it certainly would have been a big plus, I think.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It might have changed that whole studio—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, but then I would know what I was in for, with the next model. I mean it's kind if you know—you're kind of—I couldn't—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Alton, of course, is so interesting as a character and I'm sure you have lots of stories. Who else was especially memorable maybe in those terms? You mentioned, well Zorthian, Jirayr Zorthian, whom I've interviewed and we have his papers here [AAA, WCRC], and then you also mentioned Richard Feynman. That comes, of course, as a little bit of surprise to some people know him mainly as a famous, very famous physicist.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Very brilliant man.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, and described one time as the second smartest man in the world, behind Einstein.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I mean I was really, I have to say, in awe of him because Jirayr Zorthian introduced us or originally got me the position working for him. He was very, very attractive. I don't know, he was older than me, again. He was probably in his forties at that time, but I really think I found him the most attractive of all of them and his personality was a lot of fun, too. I think he's known for that, but he really was extremely—

PAUL KARLSTROM: He was probably funny.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: He was funny, but he had this wonderful kind of smile and liveliness in his eyes and I always think of him as smiling and almost mischievous. I mean that would be a good work, I think—thinking, thinking, thinking. And I remember the first time I went down to his studio, which was in Altadena. I think he lived on Santa Anita. He had a really lovely Mediterranean villa and he had a downstairs studio and I remember there was a wet bar down there, too, so there was liquor there, but I don't think we ever drank anything. And then—but that's where his studio was. We worked down there, and he had been working with Zorthian, so he was kind of drawing like Zorthian. He was learning that beautiful line, the line following through, completed the drawing. I mean it was really very, would you say, a lot of work would go into it to obtain that level of skill, but he was very—and then some of his drawings would be very like kind of amateurish, but I mean I knew who he was. And the first time, like I started to say, I went down there and he had—it was also his place where he worked and studied, so he had a huge, not huge, but very big bulletin board like this, chalkboard, and full of equations. He was working on an equation down there in his studio, and I said, "Well, tell me, tell me about quantum physics and he just laughed at me, got the biggest kick out of that, just laughed like it was the funniest thing that here I would be a model or this young woman, blond probably, and who would come down and ask him to explain quantum physics and he probably just—it was just a big joke, I mean just a laugh and, of course, he didn't do it or anything, but I would love to have had that, a quick explanation in a nutshell of quantum physics. I was always interested in science, astronomy in particular. It was like a little preoccupation when I was a kid. And his son, he had a son who was five years old or something then and his son was already reading all these astronomy books that I had read and he was like five years old. I don't know what happened to him. But anyway, Feynman was, at one point, he was—I don't think it was the first day. I worked for him for quite a while,

50—

PAUL KARLSTROM: About how long, do you think?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: You know, I really can't remember, six months or something like that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Almost weekly?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Like on a weekly thing, but at one point, he played the drums for me, the bongo drums, which was great. He wanted to entertain me.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That shows he was getting interested.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: He wanted to entertain me. I know. It was like, "Sure," you know, "play your drums." It was like—I loved it. And he was so into it. That's what I mean about Feynman. He was really into it. He loved playing the bongos and he would play the bongos for me. So that's amusing to think about now. And then, of course, having to run around. One time he wanted to kiss me. You know, you'd have these—but they were awkward situations. A lot of this stuff is awkward because you're in an artificial situation. You're the model who's come there. You're taking your clothes off for somebody, and then they don't know how to approach you in any way with any finesse, so I mean it makes it pretty funny. And literally, Feynman would be, he just started sort of—I had to run away from him, running around, and like, "No, no, no," and he'd grab me and try to kiss you, but it was so silly. It was so silly and funny because there was no finesse to it. I mean we hadn't been engaged in anything that would be seductive at all. It was just sort of—

PAUL KARLSTROM: There was no foreplay.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: No foreplay whatsoever.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No prelude.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: But I don't know—I'm sure they felt extremely awkward, too. I mean but they must have. I mean how do you approach a young—I mean how do you approach a naked woman?

PAUL KARLSTROM: How do you approach a naked woman, that's right. I think I said —, "What can you say about a naked woman in a studio" is the way I started my Eros in the Studio essay. What strikes me so interesting about this, and it touches on power, but in a very light, sort of humorous way. As a young woman who had the nerve to ask Richard Feynman to explain Quantum physics and he laughed, and here you were, no doubt, in awe of—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I was a little embarrassed.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —his brilliance, though, and yet it is true that he seemed really devoted, dedicated to being an artist. He exhibited and everything and I read something about this, and it's all thanks to Zorthian. But at any rate, here you have these impressive, accomplished men, older, should be dignified. You could look up to them, and here, you, as a young woman, a youngster, as a matter of fact, easily make fools out of them and, you know, this must have occurred to you as pretty amusing that you have that kind of power just by being an attractive, young woman and nude in their presence. Now—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I mean it's true because I think I mentioned earlier is that you're right, I mean I have tremendous respect for these artists and their work and I like their work. And you're seeing them at really maybe their very best. They're creating something. I mean, and they're creating their reputations, but they're thinking and they're creating, and at the same time, they are acting very awkward and silly and vulnerable. I mean they're vulnerable, too, because I know things about them that they've totally forgotten because I'm sure I was the model. They might remember me, but I doubt it, but I remember these things and I talk with other people who have modeled and worked for these people and you do, you almost get to—you know a completely different side of them where they're acting silly and awkward and kind of childish and maybe they don't have the finesse they might have with their wives or their other girlfriends, and so it is kind of amusing to think about. I mean I just have like such a great time thinking about this morning with my friend 'cause she actually did have a sexual encounter with Feynman, and I said, "Oh, what was it like?" and she said, "Oh, you know, it was sort of like—." We just started laughing and she said, "Well it wasn't much." And she said, "He probably thought he was like discharging some protons," and we were laughing like crazy. It struck as the funniest—she's always very scientific about it, but we just—we both knew exactly what that means in the context of the studio working and knowing somebody like him, who I have tremendous respect for.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I mean he figured out the Challenger thing, the O-ring. I mean the man is a genius. Why

couldn't he live for 200 years and come up with more great stuff.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So you said that his wife was in the house at the—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: His wife was in the house upstairs; not his wife, his kids—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —so I'm sure that I—

PAUL KARLSTROM: And so when this episode took place with your friend, presumably—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I imagine they were upstairs then, too. You know, he met this wife on—he'd been married a couple times. I think it was his second wife. He told me she was an au-pair girl he met on the beach in France. I thought that was the most wonderful thing. He just met this lovely woman and he just immediately fell in love with her and he brought her back and married her and they started up a life together. I thought that was a very charming thing that he did that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: This is all—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: So I have good—you get to know a little bit, little insight into the man.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So what the model gets out of it, judging from what you say, is really quite a bit more than, well, let's say the feeling that you're contributing, that the model is contributing to a work of art, that it's a kind of passive thing, but still making—participating, making a contribution.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, definitely.

PAUL KARLSTROM: There's that, of course, but what you described is actually—it's interesting, and that is this special window onto another human being. And in some cases, pretty famous, interesting folk, that is a kind of insight that very few people would have because they're not in that kind of special situation. Do you enjoy that?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: To some degree, yes. I'm sure if you talk—every model that you talk to is going to have stories, similar or whatever, because that is a special situation, I think. You are with people who are highly creative and intelligent many of the times, and at the same time, I guess it's a—I hadn't thought about it, but it is a really interesting environment because it is a situation where people can act out such different types of behavior in one situation. I mean where else could you get to do that kind of thing? And I suppose I'm kind of a—I could have made a lot more out of it than I did, now that I think about it. To me, it was basically a job and I had a whole different life and I liked being involved with all the different artists and working for them and everything.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Let me ask you this, and I'm thinking—I realize there are other experiences, yeah. I realize there are other experiences that you had besides Altoon and Feynman, and at least those two we know about as bringing, well, kind of an erotic charge—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes, yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —to the situation which isn't all that surprising if you think about it in the way you've described it. But apparently, it didn't work that way for you. In my experience talking with models, women, is that no matter what the artist may bring in that respect to the studio, it doesn't necessarily transfer, and very few of them talk about being turned on, aroused sexually by the fact that they're nude, an object of desire—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, I think that's true.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —possibly turning on these guys, that the models, women, don't necessarily go there. They don't—it's not the same experience in that respect. Is that right?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: It might be very different if you started a relationship outside of the studio and brought it into the studio. I'm sure there would be work and a lot more play and work and it would be a completely dif—probably really interesting relationship with—and a lot of modeling is very, very boring, even painful. I mean, you know, depending—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, long poses.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —on the long poses and stuff, so that kind of thing. That's on your mind, too. It's like when is this pose going to end? I don't care if he is John Altoon. Just get it over with, you know, but John, he liked short poses and things, but—

[Audio break.]

PAUL KARLSTROM: All right, we're picking up. There's been a break in tape, in fact, a rather long one, like a couple hours or so—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Right, a lunch break.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —but we're back again with Camille to finish up, and we've been talking about, well, a lot of things, but probably most about Altoon, John Altoon. And you had one observation that you just made, I guess about how you think—how you feel in retrospect about that experience and those sessions, and I guess it's the less sort of happy, less pleasant sign of—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What do you mean?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I was thinking about it and there is that aspect to it because he was such a forceful or dynamic personality, not predictable, but at the same time, he could be aggressive and sort of unrelenting to a certain degree. And, you know, if you're talking about when you're in a situation in a studio like this working for an artist, there has to be this balance where you don't have any problems of—situations that get out of control or anything like that. Not that there was anything with Altoon, but he could just—I just remember him as being very, very forceful which is, you know, worrisome, I guess it would be, but he never did anything terrible.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Especially after you didn't show up—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes. After that, I think that—But maybe that was it. Like I said, I just said I would do it just to like get off my case for a while. And that finally—I didn't care that he was mad at me because I knew what I was doing, so—I didn't want to be involved in that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You sound pretty in control in a sense. You had a real sense, it sounds to me, as if you knew what this was and what this wasn't, this experience and these sessions and what you were doing.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I think you have to. I mean you have to think about that aspect of it when you're modeling for—in any situation. I mean I've had weird things happen to me in a classroom situation at a school.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really? Like what?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well just, you know, professors who you'd never imagine would kind of come on to you or try to touch you a little bit or something.

PAUL KARLSTROM: During the posing?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: No, no, afterwards.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, all right. No, no, not during the posing.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: You know, you're talking in their office or something like that. So I mean this is, I guess, women have that in any work situation, but maybe particularly in this type. But I never—it never really bothered me too much. I mean I just sort of—what with everything else that was going on it probably wasn't that unusual in some degree. I think of it in the context of the '60s. And it was a time, even though it was a very sexually open time, it was also a time where people were laid back and if you didn't feel like doing cer—oh, that was okay. You don't have to explain anything.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Everything was okay.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Everybody was laid back. It's maybe different now, I think. It's not like that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What about Jirayr Zorthian? Did you pose for Zorthian before you posed for Altoon or do you have any idea?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: No. I think Altoon was first, yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And did Altoon introduce you to Zorthian?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I don't think so.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But you say that Zorthian knew Altoon, that they obviously—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: They knew each other obviously because—yeah, they must have at some point. They knew about each other because Altoon had arranged this assignation thing up there in his studio which I would love to talk to Zorthian about that just to . . . it might be an amusing story for me just to find out what went on and if Altoon went ballistic or what.

PAUL KARLSTROM: God, I love this.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I think that would be great. Maybe that could happen, right?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, we'll have to do it [visit Zorthian's ranch]. I don't see why not.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So Zorthian discovered you somehow and then—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Then I went—through him, I met Richard Feynman because Zorthian was kind of—the way Zorthian put it here was that he was very connected to Pasadena society and he wanted to introduce me to Richard and other people, too, just on a social level. And I wasn't really interested, I guess, in a certain degree. I think I was so involved in my own outside life, and now I think gee, maybe it would have been kind of interesting, but—

PAUL KARLSTROM: You mean all those JPL people?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, well, not really. I guess not. I don't know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I've heard interesting stories about that. Well so was there anything unusual about experiences of Zorthian or was it pretty straightforward? I mean you just posed for these, you said, among other things, big drawings—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —with animals and—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, it sounded too good to be true. I didn't have any major affairs with anyone.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No problems with Jerry [Zorthian], really, all business? Straightforward?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: No. Jerry was constantly cajoling, you know. "Couldn't I just see a little bit of this? I'd like to see this pink thing."

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did he really say that?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Don't use my name, please.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did he really say that?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes. He would say stuff like that. Susan could tell you amazing stories about him.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And so how did you—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I'm not going to go into it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well not if they're her stories. I guess she should tell them, but—so it was like with Zorthian always wanting more. Did you get that impression?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: He always—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Like "Oh darling, oh, darling"?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes. He was very sweet and kind of cute. He's not real tall, as I remember.

PAUL KARLSTROM: [Inaudible], tall, he's about this height.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: He's tiny, but he was—

PAUL KARLSTROM: But very strong.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Right. I mean he was working this place up there and he had a lot of *joie-de-vivre*, I guess

you'd say. He's very full of life and he was very serious. He worked constantly. I think I was up there every week, I mean for quite a while, for a series of drawings.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Wow!

CAMILLE FEINBERG: And the atmosphere was pleasant. I remember loving that ranch up there and his kids and his wife. It was sort of charming. She had this wonderful stone house. I don't know if he has it still. Anyway, so—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, probably they're in exactly the same place, I think.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: And he would—we'd walk around and he'd show me his toilet seat art and stuff like that. I don't know if it's still there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So he really is a welcome—well I think he does this, welcomes the models into his family.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: For him, it's expanding his sphere of influence.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: In a way, I think he's very happy in lots of ways with his wife then and very proud of his work, and Dabney, very—he loved her very much, and his children. I mean I remember that, and he enjoyed showing off what he'd done like this workout and whatever. One time—

PAUL KARLSTROM: He's still like that. Excuse me.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, no, one time he—apparently, I don't know if you know this, but he had gotten a Playmate of the Year. Did you know that?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, really?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes. He had taken some photographs of a beautiful, young woman who eventually became Playmate of the Year, so he thought maybe I could do that, but he took these photographs and I'm absolutely not the *Playboy* type because I just don't look great in—I never did photographs and I don't like photographs. I would never work for anybody doing photographs 'cause I didn't like the idea of having photographs of myself as a model.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: No. I only wanted to do live stuff [sic]. I don't like anything that was going to be permanent. I don't like—I don't know why, but especially photographs, but I love to talk about it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But you don't mind the drawings or paintings or—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: No, not at all.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, well there is a big difference, isn't there?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: There is. For me there is. And so—but he thought he could take photographs of me and, boy, I mean I even have one of them, and I'm sitting on a big stack of hay, and I mean it's a nice photograph, but I'm not—I think you have to—posing for *Playboy* is a whole different thing.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, you have to—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: You got to project and I'm not like that. I'm definitely an artist model, so—

[END OF TRACK AAA_feinbe00_3738_r]

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay, we're now continuing this supposedly one-hour interview that now is going to go a little bit longer because Camille Feinberg has interesting things to say. And so this is the same interview on the 27th of June, the year 2000, artists and models. This is Tape 2, Side A, and the interviewer is still Paul Karlstrom, taking place in his office, my office, at the Huntington. We were talking about one of my favorite subjects, one of my favorite little people, and that's Jirayr Zorthian who's practically an institution around here. It's interesting that you posed for him for what sounds like a pretty ambitious significant series—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, they were large.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —these great, big drawings, you said. One of the reasons it's interesting is that part of our topic anyway, Eros in the Studio, we're looking at that part of the situation, and Zorthian certainly has identified

with that and his images are really very eroticized. He doesn't talk about them that way so much. He thinks that it's just beautiful nudity, but people who look at them feel this definite charge and focus, this sort of obsession, and he sort of features body parts and they become portraits, in many cases, body parts rather than the whole person, certainly, the face. Anyway, that's an aside. And you were talking about the experience of being up there on the ranch and how you were sort of included, I gather, in the family, not just strictly an assignment, a business thing.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: No, he was very nice and Dabney would make lunch and we had lunch and I didn't spend much time with Dabney at all. He was really—we really worked in the studio a lot. It's a very separate part of his work. And it was interesting what you're saying about people looking at his drawings as body parts because I remember he was doing full bodies. I mean he was doing full-figure stuff and very realistic, as I remember.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well I didn't mean to say that he actually does body parts.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, the different type of work.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What I mean is that the focus is clearly on certain—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well everyone was nude.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, and his focus is certainly the Jennifer series, which is, I won't say it's notorious, but it's —

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, I haven't seen that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —certainly pretty well known, but perhaps he wasn't that focused in that way at that time. That was the late '60s right?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes. That would have been the late '60s, too. I mean maybe it was '67 or—I think it was '67/68/69. I know it was before Altoon died, at least five years, but—yeah, Zorthian is a character. He's sort of like a satyr or something. He's always sort of turned on to some extent—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —but very playful about him.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, yeah, very pagan, "Oh, darling, darling."

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, very pagan. That's exactly the right thing.

PAUL KARLSTROM: "You're so beautiful—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: You could see him with the glass of wine.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —darling. Come give me—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —just a little kiss, darling."

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Exactly, that kind of thing.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I've seen him and nothing's changed, nothing's changed.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: You know it's true, isn't it? And I like—I mean I thought that the—I liked the work that he did.

PAUL KARLSTROM: He's a very skilled craftsman, yeah.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, very skilled.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Quite good. Do you remember—well describe that series with the animals. Now is that just you or did you say your friend, Susan [Brown, now Benay] was posing at the same time?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: She might have been with food. I think it would be us. I think I was with the animals and I think Susan might have been with food like at a banquet. I'll have to ask her the next time I speak with her, but I remember there was a zebra in one of the drawings. I think he did more than just one, too.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sounds like Mel Ramos, actually.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: They were a little bit more naturalistic males, but—

PAUL KARLSTROM: What do you think the conjunction of women and food, women and animals, meant? Did you think about that at the time? Or does it mean anything?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well I think food—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did he talk about it?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —banquet and, you know, it's very lusty and sensuous, the type of experience, food and drink and all that, the allusions.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But he didn't talk about it to you?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well, I was with the animals.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Susan was with the food.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well what's with the animals?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I don't know. He liked animals, I guess. I love animals. I don't know. Maybe he had—gosh.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I don't know. I'm not suggesting anything. I just—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I don't want to suggest something either. Maybe I repressed it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did he or Altoon, for that matter, I can't help but ask this question because I'm looking at the Altoons, those drawings that we were going through, lots of them earlier, at how highly erotic they are, sexual, and almost obsessively so, it seems to me, but obviously, this was a major thing on his mind.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I think those two are definitely high-octane when it—and that time, too, I mean think of it, I mean coming out of the '50s into this—

PAUL KARLSTROM: I was actually there.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, you were there, but I mean you're coming out of the '50s and they're married. But I mean all of a sudden, it's like free love everywhere, and I mean it was everywhere.

PAUL KARLSTROM: There was always available young women, I know.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, I suppose it probably was like that to a certain extent, and they were on the inside track, I mean in a certain regard, because here they were employing women, getting them in their studios for the intention of doing great art, and I never thought of it quite this way before, but it's a whole—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well I mean it's a great—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: And it definitely was like that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It's not a scam. I mean I would never say that, but it certainly is a lovely fringe benefit. Let's put it that way for some, some men, and for Sam, for instance, Sam Clayberger, whose work we've been talking about and for whom your friend, Susan, posed. You know, he's very up front about it.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: What a lovely way to make a living, isn't it?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah. He just says, "Hey, I'm so lucky," and—but a balance is achieved.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well, yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I mean it's not just—that's a fringe benefit. It's a sidebar. What about—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: They're serious artists. I mean—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sure. And what about—so my question is this, both of them, for instance, sexuality, at least underlying, in the background if not right up in front in their art, so what about either them, or Feynman for that

matter, did they ever ask for explicitly erotic poses?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes. I don't remember Feynman asking, but Jirayr Zorthian of course.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah. That would be rather routine.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: "Well would you like to put some grapes—?"

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Now you're bringing back these memories.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No. Did he really say that?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I think he did say some—yes, I think he did.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's the food one, not the—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well we had food there, too, but—

PAUL KARLSTROM: And so how did you respond to that? Was that still something that was—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Just laughed.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Just laughed or say no, you know, "just say no."

PAUL KARLSTROM: Just make a joke out of it.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Pretty much. I mean that's basic—he really did have to—I mean nowadays, I mean like you mentioned earlier, this was a little bit pre-feminist, so you had to, you sort of had to think about that stuff a little bit and balance it out and not let it upset you. I mean I'm sure like my friend that I had lunch with just never could do this in a million years, never, and you never would imagine that she could either. But for some reason, I guess I—'cause I grew up in an artistic environment, an awareness of art. I think that it really wasn't anything—not unusual, not outlandish.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right. Not inappropriate behavior for some people.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: No, but I mean it certainly—you're right. I mean there's a tremendous amount of power things. I'm sure some people had that experience. Sometimes you could have little, creepy experiences—

PAUL KARLSTROM: I've heard of—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —with people, but I mean I've gotten up and walked out of places and—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —said "screw it" and just leave, sure.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Like what?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well, I remember there's a couple times that I just didn't like the vibe; I didn't like the artist. It wasn't a famous artist. It could have just been some guy who wanted to draw, but I worked mostly for a lot of people who I had met them in the context of universities or through friends, so I didn't really have that, but I would also—we worked for, every once in a while, for people I didn't know and might be—I think I had to get up and leave once because somebody kept pestering me. You never can tell. I mean there's that aspect to it. At that time, I suppose you always have that problem.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well it sounds to me as if the main objection, though, was that, let's put it this way, you were more patient with some of these others whom you knew and liked.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, yeah. I mean it's just—

PAUL KARLSTROM: So it becomes a different thing. And I guess it sounds to me as if it's, in a sense, your choice. That was important to you—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Always.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —that you, in effect—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, absolutely.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —controlled. You didn't want to be uncomfortable and you didn't feel you needed to put up with certain things. On the other hand, if it was entertaining you, why not.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I guess it was sort of entertaining.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Being chased by one is not the same as being chased—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Exactly, and if you liked them it's kind of funny. And then they'd settle down and work, so it wouldn't really be a problem for a while. They were always working and then the—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Then all of a sudden, they—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: They just, you know, maybe say something or whatever, wanted—like Zorthian, wants you to go out and do things with him or meet more people.

PAUL KARLSTROM: He wanted you to go out and do things with him?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well, I mean I could go to parties with him and things like that which I really wasn't interested in because of the scene at that time.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you ever think of how Dabney might have viewed this sort of succession of—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I always wondered about that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —attractive, young women that—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Always wondered about that, not just in his case, but like with Feynman. I mean his wife and children are upstairs and you know that they're not—I mean they must be interesting women to even let this sort of take a chance, right, that nothing's going on. And that would be a power—that's an interesting relationship, power relationship right there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It is indeed. I actually thought less about that, although I know some stories about that and it's—sometimes it isn't really that easy for the wife.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I would think so.

PAUL KARLSTROM: They have to just put up with it.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I don't know what it's like to be married to an artist, you know, and have them go through that. I never married an artist.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You knew better.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I went out with a lot of artists, yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I gather that that sort of covers Jirayr. You said there was an exhibition. There was something special about his series of works.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah. There was an exhibition at the time. It was '60s, I think, or the early '70s, must have been before I went to New York, a big show someplace. I'm sure Jirayr remembers it, a big gallery, yeah. I remember I saw it. I think I went to the opening 'cause there was a lot of people there and I remember saying, "Oh, my gosh." I was thinking, "Geez, pretty recognizable." At the time, you know, people would recognize me which was a little—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you like that?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well I don't know. It was sort of embarrassing 'cause you're nude, but I don't know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And people have really good imaginations, you know, what they do. They go immediately

way beyond the image that's presented and their imaginations indeed take over, and so they could see in their minds just exactly what you were doing before and afterwards or what they think.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: But see, I never thought about that at all. I think that's—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well it is true, you know. People—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I guess, you know, you're probably right, but, to me, I think of modeling as really boring in a lot of ways, like just sitting there hour after hour and hoping they're playing good music or saying something interesting or the people are interesting.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right. I think most people don't know what's involved. It may not be that they're bringing any judgment to it, but they really don't understand the hard work it is and how difficult it is to hold—especially some poses—for 20 minutes or half-hour or whatever.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, and over and over again, but you're right, I'm sure most people think that there's a lot of hanky panky going on—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sure, sure, always following women—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —in the studio.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Moving on a bit here. Probably the most famous artist you posed for, and I gather it was just at U.C.[L.A.]—no, you posed in Ocean Park.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, Diebenkorn, yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, Richard Diebenkorn. What about that? What are your memories about that, about him and—I would imagine that he was really pretty straightforward.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Very, and whenever I think of him, I think of very gentlemanly. And it was him . . . Bill Theo Brown [William Theophilus Brown] was there a lot.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, yeah, I know him.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: And I think James Brooks.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's really interesting.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: The three of them.

PAUL KARLSTROM: A Bay Area figurative group come down here.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, because I always think of Bill Theo Brown in particular as Bay Area, right, but—

PAUL KARLSTROM: James Weeks.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: James Weeks, that's who it was.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: That's who it was, James Weeks. I knew that wasn't right, yes, and it was the three of them and it was in Ocean Park. I remember I got a ticket. The Santa Monica freeway had just opened and I got a ticket for going too slow on the Santa Monica freeway. I wasn't used to it. But, yeah, I went down there for quite a few months. If I remember, I might have a diary some place of—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —just my dates, not all the goings-on. Too bad for me. I'd probably shoot myself.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I'll write the introduction.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: On New York, if I could add that. That would be great.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That would be fabulous, yeah.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: But maybe not that great. It would be interesting. I knew a lot of people and—no, it was just a very—I remember it as a very small studio, your basic small storefront, and not much in it. There was like a little model stand, I think, or a chair or something, and the usual old piece of cloth that they probably got somewhere, and the three of them, they were very hard workers and they would talk and joke a little bit. There was one funny thing I remember he said—'cause it was the '60s and everyone was taking drugs, and Diebenkorn said, "Oh, it's a good thing we don't take drugs," you know. "It's a good thing we're older because we would have been drinking and taking drugs if we were younger now." They were fun that way, and they just did a lot, a lot of drawings, and those drawings now when I see them, like in this book and stuff, it's really nice.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It is very interesting because in the Bay Area, we have some photographs in the Archives from the William Theophilus Brown papers.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, really?

PAUL KARLSTROM: We've had those for years, which reminds me I should go get some more from him. His partner is Paul Wonner.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, really?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, and they're a long-time couple.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, I didn't know that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And it may have been they were living in Malibu at that time 'cause they were down here, must have been, it seemed.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah. He was there a lot.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But see, here you are [looking at Diebenkorn drawing book]. Is that from one of those—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, that's one of those sessions. Yeah, definitely, that's from one of those sessions, 1967.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And you said you're sort of surprised. You look at the—you first showed it to me, you covered it up—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, yeah. I said, "There's something wrong with that leg." It's like I didn't do—you can see it, too. See how he sort of arranged things, see—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, yeah.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —like the leg probably came down more because I didn't—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, so that he could show more, right?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, that's what I think, now that I look at it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Taking liberties—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I think he did; he took his artistic liberties there at that, but it's—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, you know, there—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I wish I could get my hands on this one.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah. Well it's available, presumably at L.A. Louvre.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Eighteen thousand, I think. It was \$18,000 when I asked about it. I said well maybe I could—even if I paid off \$100 a month, I couldn't get this for the rest of my life, so I said I guess I won't get it, unless I come into some money.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But what about those sessions, how do you remember them? Because this is a real tradition with that group and it comes out of, well it's not exclusive to you, but there is that Bay Area figurative drawing tradition which they certainly were major important exponents of. I don't know if you would, at the time, been very much aware of that.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, I was, yeah, I was, because like I said, I come from an artistic family and I was going to

school, so I was very aware of Diebenkorn and, you know, his reputation; less of Bill Theo Brown, but I had—I think Weeks was also teaching at UCLA.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, that must be right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah. I don't have anything, but there might be—I'm sure that, you know—anyway, it was very straightforward, to tell you the truth. He was straight in modeling. Obviously, I was very flattered that he liked me and had me come back down all the time and—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, I mean that's right. You said you went—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —I thought that was very nice.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —quite a few times, right?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I went quite a few times, yeah. I don't remember how long it was, whether it was two months or four months or what, but I remember—let's see if I can find another one of me in here. There I am.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's James Weeks and—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —you know, this whole group.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: That's the Bay Area . . . ?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah. This is Tom Albright's book. That's a good section on them, and that tradition continues. And you made a comment earlier that is real interesting. During those few years that you were posing here, and I guess that really was your career. Is that right? Or did you—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I was going to school then. I was a student.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, but I mean in terms of your modeling career, that was pretty much it. You said you didn't then do [it] in New York, right?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: No. You know what? When I went to Rutgers University in New Jersey, I was in the art department and they did ask me if—the Drawing Club asked me if I would do some modeling.

PAUL KARLSTROM: 'Cause they knew you had done it in LA.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: And actually no, I did work for one of the teachers there, but I found the East Coast, New Jersey, to be so provincial. It was a total drag. These were kids mostly coming—it seemed to me like they were all a bunch of really uptight, Catholic, young kids. One kid actually had to get up and leave and he complained to the teacher that he just couldn't stand—he thought it was terrible that there was a nude model up there, and it was much more provincial, so I didn't enjoy it. And by that time, I think I was a little bit older anyway. I just stopped. I didn't have to work. I was married to one of the professors then, so—

PAUL KARLSTROM: So you found it much more open in California?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Much more, much more.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I'm not surprised.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Much more relaxed. I always kept feeling that nobody thought anything about it at all, basically, like it was just like nothing, but I guess in a way it was 'cause people were into nude sunbathing. That was the least things that were going on at that time, but out in New Jersey it was a whole different thing. And I quickly got sort of involved in theater and the arts, and I had a studio in Hoboken and quickly got into theater.

PAUL KARLSTROM: How long were you in New York?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Eighteen years. I worked with Richard Foreman. I don't know if you've ever heard of him, but he had a MacArthur grant and he still puts on his shows, very, very avant-garde stuff, really, really good, very proud by association such as it is with him, and I worked in about five of his plays in the mid-'70s through—and I did a Whitney thing. Once he did a performance at the Whitney and—talk about my modeling, I had to sit

there in front of everybody at the Whitney and kind of slowly take all my clothes off.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Slowly.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Very slowly, yeah. That was the only thing I had to do was like—and he would be talking about theater, whatever.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So you had to make it—you had to time—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: There was another element.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So you had to time it so that it would last exactly as long as his talk?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well, I don't remember that. I think if I could just keep going such as it is, but it's just do everything very, very slowly. And I had already performed with him in a number of plays and I was taking my clothes off for him, too. That was a whole different thing, though, taking them off in the theater. Talk about a wild, erotic environment—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —the theater. It really is amazing, but I don't know, more real, I think, in a way. People really get involved.

PAUL KARLSTROM: More real than what? Than the—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well, you really get involved. You're having real relationships with people, but when you're working with somebody night after night after night in a very stimulating environment performing for audiences, it's very exciting and people become very close. All the actors, I don't know how many there was, maybe 10, 12, 15 of us in each play, everyone was dressing in this just one, big room and—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —stuff like that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Same thing with dancers.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Like ballet and so on.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: After a while, you're not even looking. Actually, a lot of the guys are gay and—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —it's really nothing.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But not all. There are some straight ones.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: No, no, not all. No, there was a lot of—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, that's funny.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, a lot of conviviality and going out and drinking afterwards in bars and—

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's interesting. Then you characterize that arena of activity which involved nudity. Let's just say that that's the common denominator, and then the studio situation being an artist/model is really quite different, and I gather you feel the one [that] is potentially more charged is the theater situation or that world, that life. And I think I can see it because again, the posing business is, in many ways, passive.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Static.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It's so static; it's over time, and the activity itself isn't directly presenting to an audience for a response, whereas the theater is very much that. Is that right?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: And very shocking. You have people coming in to a theater who every night somebody would be like—well Richard's stuff is very avant-garde, very dream-like, and very informed by French philosophy at that time. It was called ontological hysteric theater. He's in the *New York Times* all the time. Anyway, so, you know, this wonderful, dream-like environment, but then weird, crazy things happening, and people; you just

have all kinds of reactions. And it would be very shocking 'cause things were happening in a much more filmic pace where scenes were happening very quickly sometimes, and then you'd have longer scenes, and then you'd have the strange sounds. It's just sort of a whole other aspect of—and he always employed—would get all his actresses at some point to take off their clothes. And his main actors would be Kate Manheim who's Ralph Manheim's daughter, the famous translator.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That was his main—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: That's his wife.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, his wife.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: They're still married, and Kate was his main actress for many years.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Wow! Now that shows you something, though, that they're still married. Now that's—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Very close, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, within an ambiance like that that you've described, all kinds of opportunity, all kinds of stimulation, I suppose, that those two—it would be interesting to interview them and study just what went into building that obviously very strong relationship.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well Richard never did anything. I mean he did everything—he would be the opposite. His whole thing is to keep distance, to only experience the world by distance, by distancing yourself. He would say, one of his famous things, "Only by being a tourist can you really experience the world," right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well it's like voyeurism. I mean it's a very similar thing. Some people think that historians are voyeurs. They're looking at other people's lives and stories. Well I suppose that's true.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Boy, look at this. See, we've almost used this one up.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, yeah. We're using up our time.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But what I wanted to ask just—I'm sure that you have—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, yeah, we have—

PAUL KARLSTROM: —interesting stories, lots of interesting stories, but is there anything more about Diebenkorn? Because people are going to be interested in—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Of course, and I wish I had more interesting things to say about him in a certain, but he is a very straightforward, I mean very, very—really just wanted to work constantly. We never had an outside relationship other than working. He was very nice.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, I'm not surprised at all.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: He was, in many ways, a very shy man.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I knew him a bit.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: He was very quiet-spoken and reserved, but not like this. He was more like—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Not a bit like Alton or—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: No, to serve—

PAUL KARLSTROM: But if you look through this little collection of drawings; in fact, I've noticed this and it surprised me in the very beginning with Diebenkorn is that they're pretty—a lot of the poses are pretty erotic. It's like looking up dresses and so forth. You can calculate in a strategic way, one has to think, and it sort of surprises me because knowing a little bit about Diebenkorn as a person and knowing him and his reserve, I think

is the term—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: That would be it, yeah, gentlemanly, reserved.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And so I first have to ask you if, you know, again in any of these sessions if you ever felt, maybe not pressured, but an invitation to do like open poses and so forth, this kind of thing where you felt there was an erotic interest in you.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: The only time I really felt—

[END OF TRACK AAA_feinbe_3739_r]

PAUL KARLSTROM: Once again, we haven't been able to quite finish, and so we're now on Tape 2, Side B, in this interview. And you were beginning to tell an anecdote from your posing in Ocean Park Studio for Diebenkorn. And was it for the group in this case or just for—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, it was; no, it was. In fact, all three of them were there, I think, either all the time. I remember the three of them, so I think probably the three of them were there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: And I don't—well, no, I don't remember any pressure whatsoever to eroticize my poses which I'm sure I would have felt, you know, been keenly aware of, but I did one time, and I think it just naturally came into it and maybe they were just being clever or something, but is that I worked with another female model one time for him and the other two, and that, naturally, would—because we were together, I didn't know this person, I was feeling slightly uncomfortable about it, but hey, you know, just jump into it. It doesn't have to—it's sort of my uptightness, I guess, but—so we were just all intertwined and this and that, and I remember that having occurred, but faintly erotic feeling to it because just the nature of it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I think that was kind of—yeah, that kind of thing, and that could be one of them. I don't know, but it very well could be. What's the date?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Just think, that could be you.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Does it have a date on that?

PAUL KARLSTROM: I don't know.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: No.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Some type of ink-and-wash ballpoint—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: It could be; it could be the two of us, but then again, maybe he did it on a regular basis.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, I mean they did [it] in garters(?) and so forth. All I'm saying is that—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, that's a nice one. This is almost kind of Matisse.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, yeah, I mean this is fabulous.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: They're all nice. That's a good . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: But what is interesting is that, for me at least, well not just for me, the L.A. Louvre knows this full well and anybody else who looks at them, a number of these drawings of women, and from these various sessions, are quite erotic.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: That's probably why they're still for sale.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, and I'm just trying to figure out how that then came about. In other words, there was some method, something that led to this.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well they always could say, "Well could you change that pose" or "Do this or that." I remember that would be, I don't think this is selective memory, but they would like things adjusted a certain way would be more interesting for them, so I'm sure there was, especially with the two of us working there, some adjustments made and God knows what we ended up like, but was basically like two women together. They didn't ask us to do specifically erotic poses, I mean particularly that group.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: If Bill Theo Brown is gay, he'd addressed it in that anyway maybe.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well who knows.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: But then there's always that element. I think there's always that element.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well I have a theory—when you read my little essay, you're going to see some of the things that I see as possibilities in that regard. But it's, I think, very often there's desire to possess the object through an image, to somehow get access, intimacy, and it may be in that intimacy provides an extra boost to the—and it will to that act of creativity if you're making—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Imagination. It is imagination.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So I think at least that's possible.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well I think just the fact that—this is something we haven't talked about, but I definitely, as a model, there's no way not to feel like an object.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Absolutely, for the most part. I mean that situation, you can't help it, and, of course, maybe that isn't—if you just thought about it that way, you're a naked vessel there sitting where somebody else is drawing pleasure or something. I guess you could find that offensive, but that's only one element of it. I think it would be very different, let's say, if you were the artist's lover, also you were being chronicled like the way Picasso or any of these people would do their wives, although they don't [necessarily] do their wives nude. I don't know if Diebenkorn did a lot a nudes of his wife or not, but—

PAUL KARLSTROM: I don't think. I think—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: It's a different—

PAUL KARLSTROM: —it's not unusual. I just don't know Phyllis Diebenkorn. She certainly posed, but whether she posed in the nude—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: But I don't think I ever saw her nude. So I think that that's part of the contract is the fact that you will take your clothes off. It's a different type of relationship than you would have like maybe with your wife or something because he would have to say, "You take your clothes off for me and I'm going to show this to the whole world." Well maybe you're intruding on their relationship, whereas when you have a contractual relationship with the model, that's—

PAUL KARLSTROM: It's pretty complicated business—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: It is, kind of.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —because I mentioned that I just interviewed Leta Ramos, Mel Ramos's wife—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, that's right. That's a good example.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —who has posed. I don't think she does anymore, although she says now it would be more for body parts, literally, like hands and so forth, elbows, as he constructs these composites, is what they really are. They tend to be very seldom . . . truly one person.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, really? So it's—

PAUL KARLSTROM: He takes photographs, and now he manipulates them on a computer, so they're a kind of fiction, but anyway, that's—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —another story. But in her case, it was like once she had agreed to do this, this was just understood, I mean she liked it because—I'm going to mention this too in my chapter. She then gained control because she was needed. She became part of this process. She was also right there; she was available. "Hey, come on, take your clothes off. I need such and such." She also felt, as did Judy Dater about her husband, Jack Welpott, and this is all on tape, so I'm not telling stories out of school, frankly, it was a way [for her] to monitor the studio.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Debate.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Isn't it interesting that they felt that was necessary? Eros in the Studio.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, I can definitely say that. I'm glad my husband's into computers.

PAUL KARLSTROM: There you go. Nowadays, though, oh, that—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: He's not on the Internet, though, doing that kind of stuff. He does MP 3s. Well, I mean there is a wonderful thing about working with artists, and I always thought there is that chemistry; there is that vibe that goes on between you and the artist, and you are, you know, you're part of the creation. You know, that's it, you are part of it, and models do make a lot of it happen. And I think like there's a tradition of the muse. You're sort of encouraging and you're being a good model and you're creating an environment that has a lot of potential for explosive behavior, but I bet you've never even heard of any really awful things going on. I would imagine things are pretty sedate and much more so than you would say an evening down at a club or something.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right, right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: There's a certain—you know, the type of person that you're dealing with and these are creative and smart people, for the most part, so it's nice. I mean I remember it basically as being something I enjoyed doing.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, right, and in fairness, we're talking, for the most part, about one slice of an experience, one aspect of it, and certainly not the whole thing. It happens to be kind of a denied part of it which is why we're doing these interviews.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, it's not talked about much.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It isn't because it's—did you ever read *Spending* by—oh, God, now I've just dropped—Mary Gordon? And it's exactly about this, but it's reversing it—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Really.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —and it's a woman artist with a very wealthy male muse and [he] basically supports her in any way, and also, provides her with everything else she needs. She's single, divorced, and anyway, it's a very interesting story. I'm reading it right now and it's so exactly in this realm.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, no, I've never heard of it. I'll have to take a look at that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But it's—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I don't know, maybe I like it the other way. I don't know if I would like to be able to have that kind of control over—

PAUL KARLSTROM: You mean to be what, be the artist you mean?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well, no, I like being the artist.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: And I like drawing, but I don't think I—I don't know. There is a certain—it's interesting, having the relationship reversed like that, being the sexually powerful person. I think it's—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well isn't that how you feel, though? I mean what have we been talking about? It seems in many respects, the model or the woman is the sexually powerful one.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: You deny that, you know, so that's how you get your control by denying it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's where the power is.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Exactly.

PAUL KARLSTROM: This is where the power is.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I mean in that realm, that's where the power lies, for the most part, and so, to me, it's an

exchange; it's a negotiation, and—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: It is. It's a negotiation all the way through the entire session.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right, yeah.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: It really is, unless it's a strictly, totally—you know, you have somebody like a Diebenkorn who's a complete gentleman and very serious besides.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well he told me once—God, this is what I was going to say. This was a long time ago and I saw him at LA County [Museum of Art] at an opening and I can't say that I knew Richard Diebenkorn extremely well. I didn't, but when I was in graduate school at UCLA working in the Grunwald Center, he sat in the print room to [look at] some drawings, he would bring his students in. This was about '65.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, that could have been . . .

PAUL KARLSTROM: I think that's about when he started at UCLA, came down from Stanford. But anyway, he would bring his students in, drawing students, and I would bring out these solander boxes with Matisse drawings and they particularly were looking for Rembrandt—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Really, how nice.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —and completely devoted to the craft involved in drawing, to drawing itself, as actually perhaps even an end in itself. It wasn't just something preliminary—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, no.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —to drawing like a painting.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: That's right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And it could be fully realized and that, of course, was fabulous, especially in retrospect. Yeah, I'm the one that brought the Matisses out to show Richard Diebenkorn, and so I knew him a little bit. When I started this job, I got in touch with him with a certain amount of trepidation. I thought that, "Wow! I can't believe this, that I'm getting in touch on a business relationship with Richard Diebenkorn—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —through the Smithsonian." And he was very gracious, but pretty elusive. It was very hard to actually get to him, but he was always encouraging. And so eventually, I did visit with him in his home in Santa Monica Canyon. But at some other point, he and his wife Phyllis were at L.A. County and I had started like an earlier phase of this, interviewing models and artists, the whole artist and model thing. There was a chance for an exhibition and I was gathering information. He was a man of very few words as you probably remember.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And I just said, "Boy, this is really exciting. I wanted you to know about it and I really—I would be so pleased if sometime I could just talk with you about the subject and about your own fabulous working with models and figure drawings." He sort of smiled. He got this, how to describe it, almost an amused look on his face and said, "Well," he says, "there's a lot to say about that subject." And then Phyllis, his wife, was sort of nodding. And so to this day, of course I'll never know what he meant.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: What a shame.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Isn't that too bad?

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yes. God, he just like really—

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's one of the reasons that I was so interested in talking with—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Well, it wasn't—

PAUL KARLSTROM: I mean I just—I don't know what he meant. And I also didn't expect that it meant he was really running around chasing people around the studio.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I'm sure.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Not at all.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I can't imagine he would have done that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But there was something where it seemed to me that this was especially a good source of some kind of energy or pleasure for him and it was an important part and that it wasn't simply having been the basis somebody to look at—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —something to look at and then draw.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah. Well I don't know his personal history, but I'm sure that—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Who else did you—God, I mean it's really interesting in that short time, the people—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: And working in studios, though—well I told you about Lee—did I tell you about Lee Van Cleef? I think I just mentioned him.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, yeah, you did. That was interesting.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I don't think very many people know at all that he was an artist.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: He was a great guy, too, and he was very serious about his work and very generous as I remember. He would actually give me more money and stuff. I guess he felt sorry for me, my terrible, old Volkswagen and living the hippie life and all that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: God, I think you had a lot of fun.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I did have fun, and I mean I feel very lucky because I sort of hit the LA scene and then going to New York and being involved with all these people in New York, too. Who else did I work for? There were other artists, and to tell you the truth, I don't even remember their names, but—

PAUL KARLSTROM: There have probably been quite a few.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, but I mean working a lot with them constantly, going back for the classes and private stuff all the time, but those are—the ones we talked about today are basically the most vivid ones and probably they're the most well-known.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Last question because we're doing very well, and I appreciate your coming back and allowing us to sort of wrap this up, but again, I don't think we talked about this, although you did earlier note the sort of declining position of drawing and then, of course, the need for models at all, you know, life drawing as an exercise. In just a few years as you were—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, yeah. Well I remember that. When I went to Chouinard, that was a basic core curriculum, life drawing, and we spent like six hours a day doing it forever. And then that [Chouinard] actually became Cal Arts at the very beginning.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right, that's right, famously—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: We had that wild time—

PAUL KARLSTROM: —notoriously.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —out of Villa Cabrini which I was there, too, at Villa Cabrini, and what happened there is that I remember they didn't have models. There was no interest at all in figurative drawing, and, in fact, that was considered like very old-fashioned and already it was turning into a conceptual model, probably not unlike what we have today at, say, UCLA. I don't know what they do over there, but I just somehow feel that that had something to do, like with these artists in particular, had to do with the tradition of the model and the artist. If you always can think of Picasso, he's the most famous, and Matisse and their models, or Man Ray, and I think they belonged more to that tradition—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —which is making relationships. I mean it is absolutely a part of their work. Now I think you have less of it. I'm trying to think—

PAUL KARLSTROM: It's all cerebral and intellectual, I guess.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Although people work on their own bodies now.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: You've gone from the other, the gazing at the other, to working on your own body, exposing your own body in ways that you would never imagine exposing—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I mean just exposing the parts. Artists do it themselves now.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, I know.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Their art is their bodies, so—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Which is extremely, some people think, narcissistic and, well, just self-focused. This leads to the final/final question—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Oh, yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —'cause we touched on it earlier a bit and it had to do with, I suppose, differences that you might have observed or have thoughts about between men and women artists and models where the model is objectified or eroticized and becomes an emblem, it seems, for the erotic, for sexuality, and how it seems that, for the most part, whether you're a man or woman even, that these qualities reside in female form, and much less so—you made this observation earlier—than in men. And so male nudes don't carry the same, apparently, in our society, don't carry exactly the same—except for gay . . .

CAMILLE FEINBERG: I was just going to say. If you know that there's a relationship—an artist—you will just feel that way automatically. If an artist is gay and they're drawing or painting another male, you will automatically assume that there is some relationship there, that it is sexually charged. Even the friendships, even back in Bloomsbury, I mean they just had a show there [Boone Gallery, Huntington Library].

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right, right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: But there's a wonderful thing, I think, about nude drawing or being a model is that it really is an intimate form of relating to another human being, whereas now, other media and everything, I'm not sure it's always portrayed in an intimate way. I mean I haven't really thought about it or analyzed it much.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Too much about selling, for one thing.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah. It's all about—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Like an advertising or even fashion industry stuff.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: And the people have to look a certain way. I mean you have to be—

PAUL KARLSTROM: It doesn't seem to be about people.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah, it's a look, and everyone has to be very perfect and, you know. With modeling, this is really about real people. Obviously, you look at us and everybody looks very real. People aren't glossed up.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So it's very humanistic. I mean it's—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: It's very. It's real human tradition. It's humanistic. That's exactly it, but actually relating to another human being as they are themselves. People say, "Oh, I wouldn't want to look like that." The woman I mentioned about I was at the museum with the Diebenkorn drawing. I was the only one in the gallery at the L.A. County Museum about, I don't know if it was five years ago when they had the big show and that family came in —

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —and looking at my drawing of me—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Said it was real good.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —and said, "Boy, he looks like he hated women. Look at the way—," and this is a beautiful drawing, and you just—because they wanted to see a slick, probably totally realistic, hairs and all, you know, every hair in place or something.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Every hair in place, right.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: And they had no idea of art.

PAUL KARLSTROM: None at all.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: No. I didn't look glossy enough for them, I suppose. Is that a good place to stop?

PAUL KARLSTROM: I think it is, unless there's something else for you to add. I mean I think this has been a great ride.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Yeah. It's been interesting for me.

PAUL KARLSTROM: We covered a lot of interesting ground anyway. There it is, one model's story.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: One model's story and I never expected—

PAUL KARLSTROM: There's only part of the story of the person, but—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: Absolutely, but I never expected it to be—I was a little apprehensive at first about talking about—

PAUL KARLSTROM: But I'm glad—

CAMILLE FEINBERG: —intimate things to someone that I don't know yet.

PAUL KARLSTROM: —that apparently you don't feel that way anymore.

CAMILLE FEINBERG: No. You made me feel very relaxed.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well thank you.

[END OF TRACK AAA_feinbe00_3740_r.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]