



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Jane Koegel, 2000
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Jane Koegel on May 22, 2000. The interview took place in San Francisco, CA, and was conducted by Paul Karlstrom for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

PAUL KARLSTROM: Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, an interview with Jane Koegel.

PAUL KARLSTROM: 22nd of May, the year 2000. The—this is another brief interview in a series on Artists and Models. It's a theme interview. Jane is, among other things, a model, the subject of a book that recently came out, photographs by her partner, Dennis Letbetter, San Francisco, published a series of photographs that we'll talk about, but published actually by Jack Stauffacher of Greenwood Press. And that's, in part, the occasion for this interview. Talking about your experience, Jane.

The interviewer for The Archives is Paul Karlstrom, and the interview is being conducted at my home, breakfast room actually, in San Francisco.

Let's—what I would like to do today, we've talked a little bit about what these interviews are, but the main thing, the main thing we hope to gather are experiences of artists and models. Because so much has been done from the artists' point of view and [written] about the artists, and the models in some ways seem almost incidental. And, [they are treated] sort of like still lifes, if you will, you know, an arrangement of forms that are then photographed. I think most of your work is with photography, is that right?

JANE KOEGEL: My modeling?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, hm-hmm.

JANE KOEGEL: No, most of it's been—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Most has been painting?

JANE KOEGEL: Drawers and painters. But I say most of it because it takes a lot longer for somebody who's drawing and painting to create their work. I mean a photo's so instant. And even with a big camera like Dennis works with, 8 by 10, you know, maybe it takes 10 minutes to arrange and the model(s) may have to hold their pose a bit longer for the exposure, but it's fast.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

JANE KOEGEL: So—

PAUL KARLSTROM: So, is that, in your experience, the big difference? It's a matter of duration of time given to a pose, between photography, I mean?

JANE KOEGEL: The biggest difference and the most marvelous thing about posing for somebody who's not a photographer is that they have to do all of the rendering. I mean, a photographer, the camera picks up every flaw in your body and every scar. I mean, if it's a straight photo made by an 8 by 10-camera, it pretty much shows you as you exist, and it's marvelous to show up at a—people are sketching with sunburns and scrapes and they draw your outline in whatever coloring and you come out looking however they create you. That's—it's a marvelous gift not to be represented exactly accurately.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, that's an interesting point. I was going to save this question for a little bit later but it goes right to the heart of it. Dennis, in responding to an essay that I wrote called Eros in the Studio, and this is the direction I hope to take this, you know, further investigation of that subject, which acknowledges the possibility of an erotic component in the studio situation. At any rate, Dennis found the essay interesting and wrote me a wonderful letter which I'm so pleased with. But he was saying that he hoped I would be able to carry this kind of direction, this investigation, further and more into the area of dealing with photography and how—and one of the things that he pointed out was pretty much what you've said. That's it's so unforgiving and it's difficult to represent in a way that allows for interpretation. I mean, there is some, obviously poses and settings and all that determine—but what -- can you expand—have you ever talked with Dennis about this yourself and do you know what he might be driving at in that remark?

JANE KOEGEL: You'll have to ask him for that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You haven't talked -- okay, here's another question.

JANE KOEGEL: I would hesitate to say what Dennis thinks.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, what about—no, I understand that, but raising that issue as he did suggests that there -- and as you just said, suggests a more limited opportunity for expression in photography. So, that's not his opinion when I asked you how you feel.

JANE KOEGEL: Well, no, I'm not saying that. I'm simply saying from the model's point of view.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I see.

JANE KOEGEL: I'm—I actually, I think probably I like painting much better than photography.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Hm-hmm.

JANE KOEGEL: But I'm—yeah, I'm strictly speaking for the model's point of view.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sure. Well, that's, of course, all you can do, and it has to do something perhaps inherent in the medium. I guess another one of the questions, and I'm sort of guessing what Dennis meant as well even though he wrote this letter to me and he was specifically focused in a way on how much you see in terms of nudity in all the body details and so forth. In painting sometimes, like Matisse, it's very summary, it's your basic forms and it's interpretive line and so forth. And is that part of what you find perhaps more pleasing in painting and drawing over photography? The ability to delete, to leave things out, perhaps?

JANE KOEGEL: I don't know how to answer that. I can adore a beautiful photograph, you know, that's 8 by 10 and clear. I like photographs that are grainy and—I mean, not every photograph shows every detail.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's true.

JANE KOEGEL: So, I mean, I don't make a distinction like that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Hm-hmm, okay.

JANE KOEGEL: I would never make a generalization. I mean, something might be a smudge. I don't like it because it's a smudge or doesn't show, I mean—

PAUL KARLSTROM: But, there, as you've said earlier, you find photography less forgiving.

JANE KOEGEL: When I'm being photographed, sure. I mean, there is my face, there's my body, there's my flaws in the photo, sure. I mean, every photo of a person doesn't show everything.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

JANE KOEGEL: That's my experience. Certainly until an artist puts a line on a page, your body doesn't exist. I mean, they have to create you on the page whereas the photograph just there you are. So—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, let's talk about how you—do you consider yourself a professional model?

JANE KOEGEL: Of course not.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay.

JANE KOEGEL: Although I've modeled a lot and been told I'm an excellent model. So I'm very comfortable modeling but I'm certainly not a professional model by any means. I always used to do it for friends.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So you don't get paid?

JANE KOEGEL: Never. A few times, some friends, I've gone to some classes and posed for them, and once portraits, once full body; never nude, I've never been paid to pose nude.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So you really are that—

JANE KOEGEL: I've never been paid monetarily. Although, sometimes it amuses me because I used to have this kind of group of friends every Friday morning we would get together and have coffee and rolls and then we would—I would pose and they would draw; and one woman, it was mostly women, brought me a beautiful blue silk kimono. Another would sometimes come with an armful of quince branches, which I adore. I mean, they would bring me gifts. I used to kind of think this is funny. Some women screw for jewels, and I strip for flowers or

something.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You like—sort of like that? I mean the idea that there is an exchange?

JANE KOEGEL: They were nice gifts and yeah, it was thoughtful. I appreciate it, but certainly is not required. I mean, the fun was the meeting, and the coffee, and the talking, and hopefully as artists, who need to practice all the time, I'm not speaking of photographers, drawers, I mean, it's a constant, constant thing for them, helping them in that, in a pleasant way. I mean, for—sometimes it became too social. I mean, that's always a problem between an artist and a model whether you talk or not. I mean, I think it's better if the model doesn't talk. But you also don't want to like sit there for two hours with people you don't like. I mean, you kind of learn by having this other thing that's going on, this work to do together, you get to know them.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What about that social aspect? I mean, I think that this is one of the distinctions between say, art school models, professional models, he or she engaged to pose for classes for students basically or workshops. What you're describing in terms of your own experience is more personal, much more personal, as a matter of fact, because generally these are friends; isn't that right, you said?

JANE KOEGEL: Yes, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So you have a relationship that goes outside, definitely outside of that experience. That studio experience. So how the hell would you describe that? And I suppose I mean in terms of—well, not having posed professionally for an art school class, I guess it is difficult for you to say, but what would you imagine the difference to be? What would you—what do you feel may be special about posing for friends where there is sometimes probably even a kind of intimacy with your friends?

JANE KOEGEL: I don't understand the question.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sorry, okay. There's the art school situation.

JANE KOEGEL: Right, which I've never done.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, which you've never done. And I guess what I'm asking is how—what kind of an experience is it for you then as a non-professional posing for people who are personal friends, you are asked to pose—I don't know maybe we can talk about that, who are these people, how they come to you. But do you view it as—again, do you view it as a pleasurable thing? And can you describe sort of the interaction, I guess, the fact that you know these people?

JANE KOEGEL: All right. I don't know if I'm answering your question.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, well try. I'm not asking it well, I suppose.

JANE KOEGEL: Well, certainly when I pose for Dennis, I mean there's already rapport there. I know he's a photographer, he enjoys nudes. I enjoy nudes, I'm happy to pose for him. So, I mean, that's just an ongoing thing. It's like, okay let's take pictures or strip. Let's try something. Okay, so that's a little different than when I pose for the painters and drawers. The painters and drawers—I started posing for them because a friend who's an artist saw a nude photograph of me that Dennis had taken and this is Amy Trachtenberg who you know. And she said, "If I were to draw that's the body I'd want to draw," or "If I was gonna take up drawing again." Because in her past she's done a lot of figure drawing. So I said, "I'd be happy to pose for you." So we set up a time and she was going to come, and being the typical person that she is, when she showed up she had her mother with her and another girl who she knew who was an artist who was in a [sounds like] café. So suddenly I'm posing, stripping, for three people when I'd agreed to strip for her.

PAUL KARLSTROM: How did you feel about that?

JANE KOEGEL: I was a little taken aback because I'd never posed for an artist.

PAUL KARLSTROM: She didn't ask, she just—?

JANE KOEGEL: No, maybe once she called and asked about her mom and I said yes and then—but as it turns out when you're posing, I mean, it turned out to be quite fun to have more than one person there, because an artist has to concentrate to do their work and some are more focused than others, and they all have different styles and it's—they're placed in different positions in the room so that, you know, the angle that they're capturing the body at is different. And it's sort of fun after you hold a pose for awhile, if they don't mind—some artists are so—they don't want to show their work at all, right? I mean, they'll just hide it. But most don't mind if a model just comes around and sees what they're doing. So it's—posing can be uncomfortable. I mean, not for—photographs don't count. But when you pose for other folks. If you're holding it for any time, you draw certain energy from the people who are focused looking at you. You know, if somebody's just chatting and [sipping] coffee I get kind of

pissed off. Like, why am I aching here and you're not even working? But usually they're more, there's always somebody who's a bit focused and that gives me energy to keep posing.

So what happened with me, posing with these friends, different people would get invited and sometimes I wouldn't be consulted. But it turns out usually they were nice and what I found nice about posing is I don't talk very easily and I don't maybe get to know people easily. But when you come and you have something else that have—you have to do, and sometimes the artists are marvelous. They may be kind of similar to me. They're not that easy to get to know but it's marvelous to see the drawings that they create from our time together and it gives me a respect for the person outside of just the modeling for them. I mean friends may meet them, they don't know that aspect of them and I do and I—it's like if somebody's very good at something and not very good at something else, you cut them more slack in the other area.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Do you feel—I'm interested in this description of an enhanced relationship that the modeling experience seems to provide between you and the painter or the drawer. That it somehow then enhances your relationship. You learn more about one another, and again, this is what you were saying; and perhaps even then become more intimate as friends, if you will, understand one another a little bit in a different way; is this what you mean?

JANE KOEGEL: Well, it's my—it's been my way to meet certain people who I probably wouldn't have anything in common with. It doesn't really create a greater intimacy, it's just that's how we met.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Hm-hmm.

JANE KOEGEL: I mean, it's—it happens to be modeling. I'm sure if you have certain work rapport in a more creative setting, I don't mean just in an office setting, but, I mean, you collaborate with somebody writing or whatever, I mean, it's sometimes nice to have something to do together other than just to meet to—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, then what you're describing, of course, is what—something that is not always acknowledged in connection with models and with posing, nude posing, or any kind I suppose. But we're focusing on the nude sort of subject. And that is that it's a collaboration that both—obviously both artist and model have roles, there's no question. But I'm sensing that you feel there's an energy that's created in some of these situations where the model's role is not just passive. Not just being a landscape, and that the personal, the human part is that—

JANE KOEGEL: Well, I think part of the problem of posing for friends is there is that—there is a rapport. And the—at least the artists I've posed for they've all been very caring, good people who care a lot how I'm feeling, if I'm uncomfortable, and I'm sure it gets in the way of their art. I'm sure it's not good for them. I think—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Interesting.

JANE KOEGEL: — it's much better for an artist in a way to just have an object to not have to worry about if the model's cold, if the model's uncomfortable, if the model's gonna faint, which I have [done], fainted.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really?

JANE KOEGEL: Yes. It's very disconcerting for the artist. And I think it's much better for the model to be an object, which is why I think your whole topic's a little bit—I really think what the model has to think is not very important. I mean, of course, they have experiences and that's their life but to me a good model is somebody that's, in a way, like a still life. You can—the thing that's nice to pose for one artist is you can be all theirs. If they have a fantasy or a dream or a desire for whatever they want to create, they can direct you. Whereas if there's more people they never agree. So—but the problem is when they're your friends they might not tell you what they want. One artist I posed for the most and continuously maybe just three or four times a year because I'm busy. But it's funny, I didn't know this, but he told Dennis, you know, Dennis says, "Well, how is she as a model?" And he said, "Well, she's always taking these lovely poses, you know, like this, I don't know, asymmetrical and this, and I just want her seated or standing very, almost rigid, poses." And as model I think you have to like be a little off-center something or it's not pretty. But he wants something so different, so I appreciated hearing that in a roundabout way. I try to just be like a stiff Egyptian kind of statue.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Why do you suppose he didn't tell you that himself? I mean, that seems to be rather peculiar.

JANE KOEGEL: Well, there's—I don't know. I mean, that, I guess, when friends—when you pose for friends they hesitate to boss you around.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Hm-hmm.

JANE KOEGEL: As much as I say, "Tell me what you want. I'm happy to do it." And part of it sort of—they want something that's natural and so, I guess, naturally he wished I would fall into these things which are what he imagines in his paintings. I mean, he might use sketches he does of me that kind of evolve into paintings when I'm not there. I don't know. You'll have to ask the artist.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, well, you're right, of course. Did you then say to this artist—who is he anyway?

JANE KOEGEL: John Jehu. A San Francisco painter. Who I think is—does lovely work. But, no, I tell him all the time. It's like I'm completely at his disposal. I—there's no point in me being there if he's just working around me. I mean, I'm there for what he—for his paintings, for his work.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, you know, we could speculate a little bit about this I suppose. And I'm not sure, then comes down to individual experience and I suppose makes a big difference who the artist is, who the model is. We're getting to it I think a bit in acknowledging that there's a relationship involved and it affects the whole experience and in this case not in a negative way, but he's—his friendship with you and knowledge of you as a person seems that interestingly to—in time you found out what he preferred in the way you posed, that stood in the way of that. So he's dealing with you in a more complex way, I guess, is what I'm saying, and this suggests a relationship. You're not just a still life. You are a human being. You're a person, than somebody with whom there's a rapport and communication. Does that sound right to you that this affects it?

JANE KOEGEL: Well, I mean, we're two human beings. I mean, there's got to be some kind of—I'm sure, I mean, if you're Hitchcock right? You have in your mind exactly what you want and those actors are probably the most objects of anyone but there's very few people that are so—that dictate so clearly and have such a clear idea in their mind what they want.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Hm-hmm.

JANE KOEGEL: So, the artist I pose for whether they had a paid model or it was me, I'm sure it would be the same. They would, you know, not say, "Do this, do that." I mean, a lot of it's practice so they'll just draw what you giveth. If they think it's a boring pose or too hard of a pose they'll say change. So, but, of course, you're dealing with humans so it's—there's got to be certain rapport. It's just the way it is.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, it's, I think, one of the points is that this is what distinguishes live models, well humans, from other subjects like the apples of Cézanne for instance, and—it seems pretty much unavoidable. I guess what I'm—there's some subtlety here, believe it or not, because it has to do with degree and what difference does it make if you have a real connection say with friends, maybe with some people who admire you, sometimes it might be an erotic aspect to it, I don't know. Do you feel comfortable with that?

JANE KOEGEL: I've never posed where there was an erotic aspect to it. I've—I'm happy to strip for men and woman alike and once Mitzi Trachtenberg asked if her son who was about my age could join the group. And I know her son, David, is, you know, just, you know, not in the art context and I refused and I feel bad to this day. I shouldn't. I mean, his mom was there, his sister was there, maybe two sisters, sometimes his grandmother was there, but for me at the time I didn't feel comfortable. Now I wouldn't mind so much.

PAUL KARLSTROM: How old were you at that time?

JANE KOEGEL: I was old, '89, about ten years ago, I mean, 32. I wasn't—I don't know what it was.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, it would be interesting to try to figure that out because something has happened to change your feeling.

JANE KOEGEL: Well, I just know it's not important. I mean, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But you thought that it might be at the time. That he would feel uncomfortable or—

JANE KOEGEL: Oh, he wouldn't feel uncomfortable. I don't know, I just said no. But—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Because it was a boy, because it was male?

JANE KOEGEL: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay, well that's acknowledging then some kind of potential for that element to be introduced.

JANE KOEGEL: Yeah, I didn't feel as comfortable for him. For me it's—when I pose it's never an erotic experience unless it's in my fantasies. It's never because of something charged between the artist and me. They're always extremely respectful. And, I mean, for me it's sort of fun to take my clothes off and be—participate in

something, you know, that potentially has some value.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Would it bother you if you did sense some desire on the part of them? Let's talk about male, you know we're talking heterosexual situations here which is not the whole story. Would it bother you, would you feel that uncomfortable about posing? And I mean, respectful, somebody who really admired you, likes women, likes you in particular; would that affect your feeling about the posing?

JANE KOEGEL: I—see, I've never posed in that situation. For me, stripping is not—it's not a sexual thing. It's like I don't consider myself sexy. But people say I'm a good model. So when I strip I become something other, I become a model. And I wanted to be great model. I want to offer something that helps the artist do what they like to do. And so, I guess I can't even imagine being in the situation where—it just hasn't happened to me. I don't know how to answer your question.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, you're answering it.

JANE KOEGEL: I mean if somebody—for me, I don't take my clothes off unless it's a serious artist.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Hm-hmm.

JANE KOEGEL: And for me when I take my clothes off I'm a model.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Hm-hmm.

JANE KOEGEL: So I don't know how it would be to be a model in one capacity and—of course, it's marvelous to be desired, but in terms of the posing, I don't know. It's never happened.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, what about Dennis? I mean, you have a long history of posing for him. Surely there is inevitably, perhaps not in the situation of posing for him, you know, that becomes a piece of work together. But clearly you have a relationship, that alone relationship is long-standing.

JANE KOEGEL: Right. Now, see that's very different though because if you're posing for your lover, I mean, that—everything sort of cleared to strip for somebody who might, you know, desire you beyond their art. That's never happened. So—and also when I pose for Dennis and I've told this to other models that have posed for him too, I have kind of a flirtation with the lens. Like the big black eye. It's not with Dennis. It's like I'm posing for this one-eyed creature and that's what I give my all to. It's kind of a fantasy I'm posing for. It's—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Can you—that's very interesting. Can you describe that? What kind of—could you just describe it?

JANE KOEGEL: Well, it's like I'm not so aware of him as a person. It's—I'm playing to this black lens. And sometimes friends have posed for Dennis, I don't know if this helps them at all, but it's like, "Forget him. He's involved in all this technical thing. Just look at that lens and flirt with it."

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, you know, I know you can't speak for Dennis or actually for anybody else. Neither can I. But I happen to know that Dennis is a great appreciator of women. He likes women.

JANE KOEGEL: He does.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And so do others of us. It's kind of a normal thing, one sort of normal thing.

JANE KOEGEL: It's a nice thing.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And it's a nice thing, and—let's see who's still up there. For him it very well maybe, that aspect an interest in his art. But this is a factor, a sort of energy source and that in responding to you or to other models, factors in, to his creative experience. I'm suggesting that, but I guess I'm wondering if you've ever discussed this with him?

JANE KOEGEL: No.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No? That's interesting. So you actually don't talk very much about this phenomenon in which you participate with him but others as well? He has many other models I think, does a lot of—I believe he does quite a few.

JANE KOEGEL: I mean, through the years we've talked about, you know,—I think I'm a better model for other artists because I've heard what his frustrations are and his desires are, his problems are with the model. I think in many ways he wished he didn't have to have a rapport with the woman. It's marvelous for him if a woman strips and feels comfortable and he doesn't have to coddle her, tell her she looks gorgeous and relax and all this.

I mean, somebody's who's very comfortable posing is much easier for him to work with. I mean, an artist has a lot to deal with other than just the craziness of the model, you know. With a photographer it's very technical, I mean, you got to make sure the lighting is right, that you have film in the camera and it's much less technical for somebody who's drawing or painting.

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PAUL KARLSTROM: Continuing this interview with Jane Koegel. On 22, May 2000, and the topic is Artists and Models. We are sort of maneuvering and trying to get to your experience because this is really all about you. You're participating in the phenomenon that is interesting to a lot of people and can take different forms depending upon individuals. And you've described, I think, quite well what posing is for you and what it is not. I'd like to jump back, and I asked you earlier but we didn't get it on tape when you actually started posing and how you came to do that?

JANE KOEGEL: Well, I started dating Dennis when I was 16 and he was always a photographer. And so it was fairly natural at some point that he would—well, I guess he always took snapshots, but at some point, you know, he said, "Let's take some nudes. Is that okay?" And I said, "Sure." So that was probably when I was 16.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So how old is he?

JANE KOEGEL: He's three years older than me.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So he was 19?

JANE KOEGEL: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And you—did you meet here in San Francisco?

JANE KOEGEL: In Michigan.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, in Michigan?

JANE KOEGEL: Yeah, we were both born in Flint, Michigan. Raised there and lived there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And did you, well, obviously—or perhaps—you came here together? You've been in San Francisco a pretty long time?

JANE KOEGEL: We came out together at the end of 1977.

PAUL KARLSTROM: There for a number of years I gather, your posing was limited to working with him, being a model for him?

JANE KOEGEL: Yeah, I didn't start modeling for other folks until about 1987, I guess, 1988.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Let's talk about the Jane Book. That's something specific and maybe it's easier to move away from speculations and abstractions to something that's quite concrete. A series of photographs, well, I'd like you to talk about the series. But, I gather they were done about 15 years ago; is that right?

JANE KOEGEL: That's right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And if I have my story right, you had just moved into the house where you still are on Masonic.

JANE KOEGEL: Right. We can't remember if we'd just moved or we were moving in or exactly when, I don't know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It wasn't—

JANE KOEGEL: We'd just bought it, it was empty.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Empty is right. Can you describe that? How it came about? Well, what—I know you're not gonna tell me what you think he was after, but, you know, you obviously or presumably had some discussion about the series, what it would be.

JANE KOEGEL: You know, I don't remember that day really. I can assume that it was, you know, Dennis has this big view camera. We're moving into a house that's architecturally very interesting. It's empty and the idea was let's take a nude in every room. And so I said fine and then we did it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sort of documenting the new house with your presence?

JANE KOEGEL: Perhaps.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sort of taking possession, if you will, setting up residency.

JANE KOEGEL: You know, one woman who came to the show of the Jane photos was Russian. I'd never met her before, but she said something similar to what you're saying, which is interesting. She said in Russia they have a thing that they do when they buy a new house. They put a cat over the threshold first, and the cat, you know, it'll inspect all the rooms and walk around. And she didn't know why they did this, but it's sort of like that makes a house okay. I don't know if it gets rid of spirits or whatever. She wasn't sure, but she was raised by her grandmother and if she bought a new house she would do this. And those photos reminded her of the cat in every room. So—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, it seems to me as somebody who does look at pictures and tries to think about them, figure out what they mean even without benefit of knowing any artist statement or description, that this is very much an identification between you and through you, perhaps Dennis, and this place, this physical environment, this new environment. So there's like a—it could be seen as establishing a shared identity with where you live. Does that sound possible to you? Does that sound like a way to—

JANE KOEGEL: You know, for me it's simple. It's kind of like, fine, I'm happy to strip and do photographs. So, you can make it whatever it is, you know. I mean, it's—those pictures are a lot about the house, the lighting, and the shape of the walls and with the nude in them. I can't—I don't have more to say than that. That's your job.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, that's—then if you don't think about those things, you don't. I mean, if that isn't part of the experience, and there's many ways to look at works of art and they can carry different meanings. But we are—I'm getting a pretty good idea, again, of what all this is for you; and, maybe more importantly, what it is not. You said I wrote this essay, which you've read, called *Eros in the Studio*.

JANE KOEGEL: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And this is—so this is part of one of the focuses of this interview, further exploring that. We've pretty well determined that this is not a factor for you in your experience. The erotic—there is no eros in the studio, I gather, is that right?

JANE KOEGEL: If you're talking about has an artist ever made overtures to me in the studio—

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, I don't—

JANE KOEGEL: — or there's like some sexual electricity. See, to put it sexual, no, there's really not sexual electricity. There is possibly some electricity. I mean, there's certain kind of love rapport going on, you know. If you're stripping for somebody that's an act of generosity, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I agree.

JANE KOEGEL: And how they deal with that, I mean, there's something going on, but it's not erotic. I mean it's erotic the fact that you're nude, but it's not a charged situation in terms of sexually charged. I mean, there's in a certain way, a kind of a love going on, it's a little different than the sex thing. I mean, I kind of have a certain—this is over stating it, a certain love relationship, I guess, with the artist I pose for. But they're not necessarily men. But, I mean, definitely for the one I pose for the most, I quite adore him. And it's got to do simply with, I guess, what happens from the studio. Because outside I can't know him. I mean, he can draw a line that makes me so happy, but to talk to him outside, he doesn't make me happy. So, do you know what I mean? It's like, it's because—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah.

JANE KOEGEL: — of his art there's a—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, you have, if I may interrupt, it sounds like a then a different relationship, there's a different quality to your relationship in the studio as opposed to outside.

JANE KOEGEL: No, actually I adore him outside because of what's experienced inside. I mean, I completely adore him.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But it's based on—

JANE KOEGEL: What I know from the modeling experience, because for me that's largely who he is.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Interesting.

JANE KOEGEL: I mean, he has another full time job. Art is kind of his vice, his way to survive, which I guess for a lot of artists they have to do their work. He has to do his work. So it's very important to him. I'm honored to be a part of it. He—I mean, he doesn't have much money. He couldn't afford to pay a model. So, I mean, if somebody's rich and they can—

PAUL KARLSTROM: This is Jahu?

JANE KOEGEL: Hm-hmm. And they can buy themselves models. I'm not so interested in posing for them.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, it sounds to me, and you'll have to forgive me for trying to read between lines and stuff, but that's my job as an interviewer.

JANE KOEGEL: That's all right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But the—it seems to me that you mention a sort of act of generosity when you're posing, when you're stripping as you say, and being a model.

JANE KOEGEL: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And I would think that it also follows then that there is a different kind of intimacy. It's an intimate—an intimacy that is established with the artists, a certain kind of intimacy. And I don't mean sexual. But I mean emotional perhaps, is what I'm hearing you say in terms of Jahu, and discovering him as a person through that experience. You become—you know one another in a different way. Is that right?

JANE KOEGEL: Yes. But I don't think it's because I'm modeling for him. I mean, it happens to be I'm modeling. But, I mean, these are how rapports are established in many different ways. You know, to me I don't think the modeling so much is important, it's just the way that I have to connect with him.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

JANE KOEGEL: I mean, if you don't model and you do something else, you connect with people in a different way. But it's the same, you see what I'm saying? It's not the fact that I'm nude and I'm taking off my clothes for him, but it creates something that other people don't experience in different ways. I mean, maybe somebody else learns about this person in a different way. This is the way I learn about him. I mean, this is what I have to give. People appreciate it, so I give it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Hm-hmm.

JANE KOEGEL: You know, if I were an artist, maybe, you know, behind the canvas or behind the camera, you know, it reverses. But I don't really think it's so important the—

[cut in tape]

PAUL KARLSTROM: Let me give you a chance to comment—this [interview] is not about the essay I wrote. But on the other hand, I expressed [certain experiences, as did] these models that I interviewed and so forth. And this particular artist, whose models I wrote about more than his work—actually it wasn't too much about his drawings. But more or less say it was like an introduction to a portfolio of his drawings, his erotic drawings, self-described. And whether or not they were erotic, of course depends upon one's response to them, their drawings is what they are. But for him, he chose them as that. And the models understood them as well. This is clearly an example of eros in the studio, not your experience. But I was just wondering if, you know, what your response was to some of the things that were written in there and maybe not what the models had to say, but is there anything in their experiences as described or in the way this was written that you could relate to from your own experience? Or do you feel that your experience is really quite different?

JANE KOEGEL: It was interesting to me how the fact that the woman that had posed for your friend, the artist, had not—well, that they'd had a, you know, maybe—I don't know about his later models, but some of the earlier models maybe they had just gotten married and hadn't had a lot of sexual relationships with people, which is definitely my experience. So I think part of the posing perhaps for them, and even Ann said this yesterday too, about, it was kind of participating in a Bohemian kind of a lifestyle and that has an appeal. And that's certainly true with my posing. I mean, it's sort of like you're in a long relationship and this is kind of fun thing to do that makes you feel like it's kind of exciting. It's sort of, you're not supposed to be doing it. There's a fun with that. A studio that John Jahu has that I like going to because I feel like a real model. You know, it's like here's an artist and his space and it's kind of like an Atelier, you know, in some funny building with weird things going on outside, and it's—that's kind of exciting. I mean, it's in a certain way I guess a little erotic, but the eroticism is not between the artist and model. It's all in the model's head.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Hm-hmm.

JANE KOEGEL: You know. And—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sort of a fantasy realm—

JANE KOEGEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: — that you can go into but that's sure safe enough because you're with people you know; is that right? I mean—

JANE KOEGEL: Well, fantasies are always safe aren't they? I mean this is—I mean, certainly when I'm posing I'm in a situation I feel safe in, you know. Nobody's ever made me feel not safe.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Let's—can you describe any of these fantasies? Are they specific things, are they like recurring things, what form might they take?

JANE KOEGEL: Well, the thing is when you're posing, for—this is not a photographer again, this is a drawer. When you start to pose you might take what—you know, something to warm up positions that are very fast and a lot of movement and have the artist loosen up, and then as the session goes on you get into longer poses typically. And what happens when you get into longer poses, you're often—you try to get something that you know you can hold for 10 minutes, or 20 minutes or 30 minutes. But sometimes you don't always know, it's not always comfortable. And if the artist is engaged or you're trying to be a good model and you try to hold it. So sometimes you're stuck in a very uncomfortable position, kind of in a forced, I mean, you're forced to be there because of this implicit agreement with the artist and—but your brain is very free, so it can travel. I'm not gonna explain the fantasies themselves. They may be interesting but it's nothing that I would say on tape here.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, really? Well, I mean are they of a sexual nature or something else?

JANE KOEGEL: Oh, yeah, no, no, right now when I use the word fantasy, it's sexual, yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay, this is very interesting because you described -- it's very clear to me—and it'll be clear to anybody listening to this or reading the transcript that's made—that this activity of posing for you is not— you didn't say it wasn't erotic, but you describe eroticism in terms other than sexual. And you said that you'd not been approached, certainly never approached by the artist, by an artist, in that way, in a sexual way. So let's just devoid that in your experience.

JANE KOEGEL: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I gather this is something that you would not welcome and so—and even in Eros in the Studio, it is true that there were overtures that this artist made, I mean, it's right there in print.

JANE KOEGEL: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And every one of the models mentioned these but it wasn't strong enough to be a factor in making them—well, as a matter of fact, in one case she did finally not pose because she felt uncomfortable with that. But in most cases this wasn't an overriding consideration. I guess what I would ask you, given the lack of this element in the posing of the sexual, of the erotic, it sounds to me as if any of that that comes into the session is—

JANE KOEGEL: For me, yes. It's always amazing.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Always in your head but it is the experience and somehow triggers these fantasies. Why is that? Do you know?

JANE KOEGEL: Well, you're not at work per se. You're not at the office. You're there in the nude. You're not able to move. You have to hold still, and I mean, you can be quite bored if you don't occupy your mind somehow and sometimes it goes to fantasy.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Hm-hmm.

JANE KOEGEL: And I guess for me, part of the fact that I—it's kind of like a, it's a bondage without the ropes. You're kind of forced to be in certain positions.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Now that's interesting.

JANE KOEGEL: So, that maybe triggers something that wouldn't be if you were just sitting around moving at will. You're not supposed to move if you're a model.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's an interesting point. Very interesting. And the fact that you used the term bondage without ropes, because that suggests a power relationship. Somebody who's submissive and then the other one is whatever the term is. I don't want to use bondage terms, and I'm not suggesting that it's anything like that, but you used that term and it does suggest that you're under the control to a degree, of—or think of yourself that way perhaps. Even if it's just because you're sitting there for such a long time. The artist, and I'd like to ask you, does this idea of shifting power relationship in terms of control; does that come in at all for you in these sessions? Do you think at all in those terms that—is that a factor?

JANE KOEGEL: No.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Not at all?

JANE KOEGEL: No.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It's a very short answer to a very long question.

JANE KOEGEL: Because the question doesn't make sense to me. And I think it's a nonsensical question in a way.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Which is your right to think. There are a lot of people who don't think that's the case.

JANE KOEGEL: Okay, for me, I mean, go in with an idea of what you want to do. I'm the one there to hold poses. The artist knows they're there to draw. It's a very neutrally agreed on thing. What does that mean who's in power? Nobody's in power. It's like consensual, whatever happens is consensual. It's not a power thing. I mean, to me if it's a power thing, you're paying people who have no choice but to pose for money. Maybe that's a power thing. But since you're kind of focused on the erotic side, or the sexual side, I mean, it's like—I'll talk in these terms which are not really how I think of modeling but it's completely consensual. If you're with a lover, completely consensual, everything goes. So is one thing more—one position more powerful than another? It doesn't matter, I mean, it's consensual, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I understand, and it's, I suppose, in a way I would be speaking in terms of metaphor and it's a metaphorical equivalence to the way most relationships operate, consensual or not. There's a shifting of power relationship. This is complicated to get into but this is typical of human relations and it's not a bad thing necessarily. It's who directs, who's in charge I suppose and that can happen in the studio. Again, none of these things seem to be your experience.

JANE KOEGEL: I wish the artist would—if there's something they want.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

JANE KOEGEL: I want to know because I want to give them absolutely what they want.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And it's, in a way you're looking at it as the model at the service of—you know.

JANE KOEGEL: Absolutely. I mean, the model is object. To me that's what it should be. I mean, they can't draw this beautiful personality. I mean, they're drawing the body, right? And, so, absolutely, I want to be at their service.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And that's not necessarily a power thing because it's consensual. You're giving up, sort of, control. You want—you see your role in a very specific way.

JANE KOEGEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And which is generous, use the term generosity. I think that that's—I suggest that that's not always exactly the case. That this can be more complicated than that. There's also, for instance, I've interviewed Nathan Oliveira on—some years ago, on this subject and I think many men would see this kind of situation a bit differently from how you experience it. I think it's perfectly okay and normal. But Nathan says—I'll just throw this out to you to comment on it—that he never [seldom] paints directly from the nude model. He chooses models who are attractive to him, he's attracted to them. You know, which is fine, this is the way we go through life and the world, we often, for one reason or another, are attracted. And sometimes it is their essence, their being, their personality at any rate. He says his method is to draw from the model but that he can't paint from them because he has to create a distance and that is a removal actually from this attraction. Anyway, that's what Nathan says and I'm just interested in what you might think about that because it goes a little bit different, I think, from what you're describing in the studio situation.

JANE KOEGEL: You know, with the artist experience and how they have to work, I can't comment on it. I mean, I have people that draw me and then they go home and paint me. I don't know why that is. I have had women say that, "You look too beautiful. I can't draw you. It's a distraction." I mean, certain things are distractions. So, I

mean, maybe that's sexual attraction or they know you too well. Different things. Artists have their own problems and they're very complex and I have the highest respect for somebody who keeps at that and works at it. And—but I can't comment on it. I see the struggles with artists I pose for. I used to think, you know, if you can draw a figure, you can draw a figure from now on. You can't. They come, they go, it's a constant struggle, constant work.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, what Nate said and what others have said—and in a number of the Bay Area figurative artists among them—to me, and in print and so forth, is that there is a kind of energy that is created which is a response to the model and sometimes it has to do with desire. I'm not making this up, this is what Nate said.

JANE KOEGEL: Well, of course.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And it's that energy that they view as attached to eroticism. It's an erotic kind of thing, sensual kind of thing. But it provides a charge and is creative energy that then they sort of channel.

JANE KOEGEL: Right, and I'm not even saying that might—that may exist in—when I model for people. It may be there but it's not—it's nothing that's acknowledged or that gets in the way. I mean, maybe just what makes it more pleasant or makes it work. But it's never been—I mean my artists like me.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I'm sure they do.

JANE KOEGEL: So, I mean whatever it is. But, yeah, nothing what I'm saying needs to go against what you're saying.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, no and if it did, it doesn't matter. Because you're only speaking from different sets of information and experience. You're the model, I'm not.

JANE KOEGEL: No, I know, but, I mean, I certainly acknowledge that that's—I mean if I were an artist I wouldn't pose somebody that I thought was unattractive to photograph or to paint, you know what I mean? I'd want people that make me swoon.

PAUL KARLSTROM: See, I view this personally as a very positive human interaction and exchange that happens to be in the studio, with art being the result, sometimes pretty good. And let me ask you to sort of wrap up here, unless, you know, there's something else that comes to mind in connection with this. I'd like you to reiterate, I'd like to make sure that I really understand—that we understand—what it is about the posing that is attractive and enjoyable to you and why do you continue doing it? Can you sort of restate that just to make sure we've got it clear? From your point of view. What does it bring—what do you get out of it, what does it bring to you?

JANE KOEGEL: For me it's a contrast to the, you know, the boring voyeur life in the office. It's a touch of—all right, now that I'm using your terms. But it is a some shared intimacy that's kind of outside of regular life. With somebody I like, somebody's who's trying to do something which I respect and that I can help be a part of.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So, in a way it's the opportunity to enter, for a period of time, really a different world. Is that correct?

JANE KOEGEL: Yes, absolutely.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And that's not to suggest it's an escapism but it is for you, special and different and familiar now?

JANE KOEGEL: Yes, absolutely.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And it's something that you can turn to presumably, let's say it's life enriching; is that right? Too bad I used the words. Is there anything else that you want to comment on about this, about—well, you know, beyond just what we've said?

JANE KOEGEL: One thing, I posed for a sculpture before, a sculptor friend, and that was very bizarre for me because it was -- it wasn't really for his sculpture, but it was just to help him with the anatomy, help him work it out. And because sculptors work in 3-D he had to peer all around me, so that was—I mean, this was an older gay friend, but still I kind of felt a little bit invaded, because he's peeking here and there. So that was a different experience again than the people that just work from one angle, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But generally you don't mind being scrutinized do you? You feel that that's what it's about.

JANE KOEGEL: Well, it was interesting, I don't mind being scrutinized but I'm used to it kind of being from one point of view. Sometimes I've been surprised before taking poses for groups and they don't seem at all erotic or I'm not that exposed and from certain positions, I was like, "Wow! That's what you saw." You know, I was kind of

surprised, but that works when you have bigger groups where they're more surrounding. I certainly don't mind being looked at, it's flattering.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Do you think of yourself in any way as an exhibitionist? Do you think that's part of this?

JANE KOEGEL: Sure. Yeah, I don't mind being looked at. I enjoy it, so I guess I'm an exhibitionist in a certain way.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay, well thank you. That's an hour of interview and it wasn't all that hard, was it?

JANE KOEGEL: No.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Thank you, Jane.

JANE KOEGEL: You're welcome.

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