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Oral history interview with Ruth Duckworth,  
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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Ruth Duckworth on April 27, 2001. The interview took place at Smithsonian Productions, National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., and was conducted by Kenneth R. Trapp for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Ruth Duckworth and Kenneth R. Trapp have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

## Interview

MR. TRAPP: This is Kenneth R. Trapp. I'm interviewing Ruth Duckworth at the Smithsonian Productions, National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., on Friday, April 27, 2001.

Welcome, Ruth, to this interview session. In our hours ahead of us, what I would like to do is to talk to you about your life; specifically, how you came to be an artist working in porcelain and clay. So let's begin with the beginning. I understand you were born in Hamburg, Germany, in 1919.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: Could you tell us something about your early life, your childhood? And let's start there and lead up to the time that you left Germany.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Okay. My mother was very ill when she was expecting me, and as a result, I was born very small and very weak. And the doctor said, "Put her in a room and close the door. She's got to be kept totally quiet so she can grow," which was a recipe for the opposite, really.

MR. TRAPP: So you were alone, without human contact, essentially?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes. Yes. Basically.

MR. TRAPP: For how long?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Oh, at least three months.

MR. TRAPP: And then you were one of how many siblings?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I was the youngest of five.

MR. TRAPP: And the others?

MS. DUCKWORTH: And it is very relevant that the oldest was a brother and then there were four girls. There were four girls, and I was the fourth girl, and my mother was very unhappy. Too many girls.

MR. TRAPP: Too many girls.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: I've read that you grew up in a middle-class German family in Hamburg.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, my father was a lawyer.

MR. TRAPP: He was a lawyer. Was your mother a homemaker?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: And tell me about your education.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, my education was, I went to the same school as my other sisters, except they were all very intellectual, very good, very bright, and I wasn't. So I got this constantly from home and school, like, you know, "Why don't you try? You could be ..." And the doctor said, "Don't bother Ruth, she can't do it, it's not her fault," which is because while my mother was so sick, she had the Spanish flu, and that is where almost

all pregnant women died of. And the nurse said, "I'm leaving, she's going to die anyhow." And so my grandfather took over and fed her with quantities of red wine. And the doctor said, "You mustn't do that, she has a baby in there." And he said, "I want to save her life. She's got four children already." And so the doctor thought because of this that my mental capacities were affected.

MR. TRAPP: Are any of your siblings still alive?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Two sisters are still alive.

MR. TRAPP: Two sisters. And where are they?

MS. DUCKWORTH: They live in Wales.

MR. TRAPP: In Wales.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: How many of you left Germany? Did the whole family?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, we all left Germany.

MR. TRAPP: You all did?

MS. DUCKWORTH: We each went separately. My father, mother, two sisters [Ilse and Renate] and I went to England. My brother, Hans, went to Celebres and my sister, Margot, went to Kenya.

MR. TRAPP: Let's go back to your early childhood and your education.

MS. DUCKWORTH: So I went to school, and I disliked school. I wasn't good at it. And so I was very good at art and I was good at sports and I was good at physical activity, and for the rest, I was very bad.

MR. TRAPP: Were you a weak child?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I was very small. I mean, that has something to do with my liking to do larger pieces, because I was the oldest in my class and the second smallest, and I thought it was a real disgrace, you see.

MR. TRAPP: Well, I think you just hit something that is very significant, and that is, you relate your body size to the kind of art that you do.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes. Yes, I do.

MR. TRAPP: And I find that significant. I've noticed in looking at your art for many years, it ranges from small pieces to very large wall pieces and sculptures. So as we think about --

[An interruption causes them to take a break from the interview.]

MR. TRAPP: So you are the youngest of five?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Of five.

MR. TRAPP: And in school, what were your favorite subjects?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, it was art. And the teacher realized that I was quite gifted and said, "I don't want to interfere with you," and she more or less just didn't teach me much. Her idea was, "Leave her alone and then I won't ruin anything."

MR. TRAPP: So how did you find your way, as a young woman, to art? Was the route circuitous?

MS. DUCKWORTH: This was partly because I was also sick quite often and I would be in bed and I would draw. And, you know, I started drawing quite a lot when I was maybe 10 years old.

MR. TRAPP: Do you have any of those drawings left?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. I have one very old self-portrait I did when I drew myself. I thought, "What do artists draw? I don't know what to draw." And I look as though I'm crying, because I was so angry with myself. [Laughs.]

MR. TRAPP: In your household, did you speak English too as well as German?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, we spoke German.

MR. TRAPP: So when you left school, how old were you?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I left school at 16 because of Hitler. No, I could not have gone to an art school in Germany because that would have been -- I'm 50 percent Jewish, and that wasn't allowed.

MR. TRAPP: And what 50 percent is that; on your mother or your father's side?

MS. DUCKWORTH: My father. But no, we all decided to leave. We were very lucky. My father is a lawyer, but he was born in Manchester, in England. His parents had a cotton business in England and he was born there, and so he had friends, lawyer friends who wrote and said, "Come to London. We will write you a letter. And they ought to give you British nationality because you were born here." So he went to London and came back three days later, and we were all British by birth.

MR. TRAPP: Oh, you were.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: So your father was born in Manchester, he is a lawyer in Hamburg, and then in 1936 -- is that correct? -- you left Germany and moved to England.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, I moved in '36. That was before this happened with the British nationality, but that happened, like, two years later.

MR. TRAPP: And I think it's important that we should state that you were born Ruth Windmüller?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Windmüller, yes.

MR. TRAPP: All right. And your father, he was the one who was Jewish.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: Which was enough for the Germans to declare you Jewish.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Oh, yes.

MR. TRAPP: All right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: You have technical terms for that. "Ich bin Jewish zweiten Grades" is the correct term.

MR. TRAPP: You were Jewish?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Second-degree Jewish.

MR. TRAPP: Jewish.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: Yes.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I didn't know I was Jewish till about a year before that, till my sister next to me told me that I was Jewish. And I said, "I'm not Jewish!"

MR. TRAPP: Were you raised Jewish?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. We went to an evangelical school. But that had nothing to do with it. It had to do with, you know, your blood, nothing to do with your religion at all.

MR. TRAPP: Exactly. That's Judaism by identity as an ethnic group --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: -- or Judaism by religion. So you really were an assimilated German.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, absolutely.

MR. TRAPP: All right.

And then tell us about the move from Germany. You've gone through school, you've found your interest in art.

MS. DUCKWORTH: My one sister had married an Englishman a year before I left, and she was living in Liverpool. So I went to Liverpool. I went on a boat. I was the rawest 17-year old you ever met. I mean, very naive and very unprepared for the world. So I went on my trip to Liverpool. And then I decided -- no, we all decided I wanted to go to the art school, but I was also supposed to help my sister with her baby and the household. So I had this interview, which was interesting, at the art school with Mr. Huggle [?]. And he said --

MR. TRAPP: And what art school was this?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Liverpool School of Art.

MR. TRAPP: Liverpool School of Art.

MS. DUCKWORTH: And he said, "What do you want to do? Do you want to do drawing or painting or sculpture?" And I said, "I want to do all three." And he said, "Oh, you can't do all three." I said, "Michelangelo did all three." [Laughs.] And so they said, "Oh, she's a nut," you know. And what he should have said is, "Do drawing the first year, this the second, that the third." But then he said, "Well, you do your own timetable." And so I did all three all the time, and no teacher felt I was their student. So the only one that had really good input on me was the drawing teacher, who was very good.

MR. TRAPP: Well, what kind of guidance did you have?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I had no guidance whatsoever.

MR. TRAPP: Already I sense a pattern at work here. You're born and you're put into a room. You have to survive. You're ignored. You go to art school in Liverpool, you're essentially ignored. So did you --

MS. DUCKWORTH: I'm an outsider, that's what I am.

MR. TRAPP: You're an outsider. Do you find strength in that?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, you know, I've acclimatized to it, but in a sense, I still feel I am an outsider because something -- two or three years ago -- we have the Art Institute in Chicago, and I was friendly with one of the curators, and she tried to get the curator of sculpture to come to my studio. And he said, "She's clay." That's all he said. "She's clay."

MR. TRAPP: What would it make for you to feel like an insider?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, if museums didn't have this hang-up about craft and art. I mean, I'm an insider in a sense that I've made a name. You know, I've got a name, so in a way I am, but I feel socially in Chicago that -- you know, I have this painter friend, Martyl, who -- well, I was 46 before I came to America, and so, you know, all my relationships since then that I've got, and I have friends, it lacks the early part of life to have any -- there's no continuity, really.

MR. TRAPP: Let's go back to your move to Liverpool.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: You are now enrolled in the Liverpool School of Art.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: And you mentioned this teacher, Huggle [?]?

MS. DUCKWORTH: That was the principal.

MR. TRAPP: The principal. What was life like there?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, you know, it took me a while to get over the shock of immigration.

MR. TRAPP: And you didn't speak English.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, we spoke some English. My father spoke English well, and my mother did, and then he had some English friends, and I took three years or four years of English in school. So I spoke English,

but it wasn't adequate to daily living. You know, I had to get used to -- it was too fast for me. But I spoke English.

MR. TRAPP: What were some of the components of this culture shock, moving from Germany to England, that you most remember?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I felt it wasn't voluntary; that I had to do this but I didn't want to do this. That I felt, you know, that I liked being where I was and I had friends there. But I knew that I couldn't live there, you know. There was no future there at all.

MR. TRAPP: How long were you in Liverpool?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Four years. And I went to that school for four years.

MR. TRAPP: And that was from 1936 to 1940?

MS. DUCKWORTH: So the war came in '39.

MR. TRAPP: And then where did you move from Liverpool?

MS. DUCKWORTH: From Liverpool, so I left the school. I couldn't do an art teacher's diploma because I didn't have a British school certificate because, having disliked school, I refused to go to school when I arrived at 17 to do a British school certificate, whereas my older sister did that. I didn't. And so I couldn't become an art teacher. I basically couldn't become anything. I didn't have a school certificate.

MR. TRAPP: Did the British look at you, as a German-born citizen -- you're now British. Were you seen with suspicion?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, I was seen with suspicion. For instance, the principal of the art school called me one day and said, "You ought to change your name. It's no good. You are Windmüller. You ought to call yourself "Miss Miller. You know the world." And I said, "No, I don't want to do that."

MR. TRAPP: All right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I lived with my sister, but because she had three small children, she left Liverpool and moved to Wales. And so then I lived for a while in the house of the German parson, and that put me under big suspicion because they thought he was a spy. And so then they interned him and then they interviewed me twice about, you know, my relationship with him and why was I living in his house. He was the only person who offered me a roof over my head, you know.

MR. TRAPP: At the Liverpool School of Art, what did you learn?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I learned quite a lot. The trouble, for instance, with the sculpture teacher was he was so old fashioned that if you mentioned Epstein, for instance, you were, "Oh, God," you know. He liked Peter Pans blowing the pipe. That was his taste. The only thing is, he did teach me -- for instance, in the very first lesson, we had all these plaster casts, you know, the nose of Moses and the mouth of Moses, and this is how I was trained, to copy these things. That was my training.

MR. TRAPP: Did you go to museums to study collections?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, I went to museums, but I really had a sculpture education, not a ceramic education.

MR. TRAPP: Which, I think, is significant for what happens later when you turn to clay.

MS. DUCKWORTH: It comes through. Yes. Yes, it does.

MR. TRAPP: And then you were in Liverpool studying art.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, then the war broke out.

MR. TRAPP: The war broke out. And in 1940, where did you move?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I moved to Manchester because I met a friend, I met a girl at the art school who was from Vienna, and she had meanwhile gone to this hostel that was run by the Society of Friends that was outside Manchester in a place called Cheaele Hume. And they allowed me to live in this hostel although I wasn't strictly a refugee anymore. I had a British passport. And I had a job with her, and we gave puppet shows in schools in

Manchester.

MR. TRAPP: What prompted you to move to Manchester?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, because I needed a job. I needed to earn my living. And she said, "If you come here and do this job, you know, there's a job for you." And so that's what I did. And there was this --

MR. TRAPP: And that job was making puppets?

MS. DUCKWORTH: -- another Viennese man there, and it was his puppet show, really. And it was "Kasperli and the Dragon," a real classical story, and for two or three years I went around the schools. And we gave a morning performance. And no car, no, we carried everything. We carried the whole stage in a shoulder bag and suitcases, and morning performance. Afternoon performance, no. It was quite tough, but I earned my living.

MR. TRAPP: So you're 21. You're living in Manchester, and you're making your living by putting on puppet shows.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: And you're carving the puppets, part of the --

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, that came later. Towards the end, I carved some puppets for him. Now, that was the very first man who truly cheated me out of the money he owed me. I mean, I carved a whole set of puppets for him and he never paid me.

MR. TRAPP: Oh.

MS. DUCKWORTH: [Laughs.] Well, you have to start somewhere. That was where I started, you see.

MR. TRAPP: Right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, then I said to myself, "I'm a refugee. I should beat Hitler. I should help to beat Hitler. I should do something for the war effort." And I talked myself into this. And so I left the puppet show and I went to training center, together with my Viennese friend Hilda, and then I worked in two different munitions factories.

MR. TRAPP: Were these in Manchester?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, the first one was in Manchester. And it was quite interesting. We did really quite skilled work there. It was a toolmaking factory. And then they closed down our department, and then the labor exchange sent me to this factory that was two hours away. And it was a huge factory, and my job was to polish the dies in which the bullets were cast. And we sat at these long benches. And supposedly you had to be trained, but in the beginning I could do this, no trouble at all. Towards the end of my life there, I ruined every tool I touched, absolutely ruined it.

MR. TRAPP: Really?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes. Not intentionally. I was a total emotional wreck after a year at this place.

MR. TRAPP: Was it because of the nature of the work?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, one reason was they had a huge banner in this place, and it said, "Every tool more is a German less." Well, that was a problem.

MR. TRAPP: Yes.

MS. DUCKWORTH: And then I was dealing with the bullet shape, and we had to cast the inside of the dies and then they were enlarged on a wall drawing, so I was always seeing this bullet shape, you see. And I couldn't sleep anymore because I could see dead heaps of people, and they were growing bigger and bigger. And so, after not sleeping much for months, I had a nervous breakdown.

MR. TRAPP: And when you had this breakdown, how long did it last? Did you go into --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, for three months I cried, and I didn't know why I was crying.

MR. TRAPP: Were you hospitalized?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No.

MR. TRAPP: One thing that I'd like to ask you. Wasn't Manchester one of the industrial cities that was heavily bombed?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, it was. Pretty heavily, fairly heavily bombed.

MR. TRAPP: So, how did that affect you? I mean, you're in a city that's being bombed. You're working in a munitions factory.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I was totally fatalistic about it. I said, "If it hits me, it hits me." You know?

MR. TRAPP: Well, what about the people around you? Weren't they equally fatalistic?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, then after that, I moved to London. And then you were really in the war zone. I mean, London was more bombed than Manchester.

MR. TRAPP: So when did you move to London?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I moved to London when I got out of the factory in about 1942.

MR. TRAPP: So you were in Manchester for how long?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I must have -- '43. I was in Manchester about four years, I think, three or four years. And this was a quite nice place. This was this place that was run by the Quakers, this hostel I stayed in in Manchester.

MR. TRAPP: So what prompted the move to London?

MS. DUCKWORTH: That was because the other two people that I met in this factory and I together moved to London --

MR. TRAPP: Could we have the names?

MS. DUCKWORTH: -- because we all managed to get out of this -- out of this factory you could only get with a medical certificate.

MR. TRAPP: All right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: And that's what we got. Selma had already got it before, and then I got it.

MR. TRAPP: Who was your Viennese friend?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Hilda. Hilda Rujder

MR. TRAPP: And then who were the other two friends you moved to ...

MS. DUCKWORTH: The Benjamins. They now live in LA. They lived up there. He was a --

MR. TRAPP: So you moved to London with the Benjamins.

MS. DUCKWORTH: With the Benjamins. We shared a house. They bought a house and I had two rooms in the house. I had a bedroom and a small studio sort of thing.

MR. TRAPP: What are their names?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Benjamin. Alfred Benjamin. Alfred and Selma Benjamin.

MR. TRAPP: All right. So we're in London.

MS. DUCKWORTH: We're in London now, outside London, in Putney, yes.

MR. TRAPP: Tell me about your life.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, then one night the ceiling came down in my bedroom with the bombing, you know. The British government gave people huge metal tables so the children, the family could have that in the kitchen and sleep under the table, and that was against the bombs, you know, whereas I always stayed in my bedroom. And so the ceiling came down in the far end but not over my bed. But that was the closest I got.



MR. TRAPP: So how long are you in London?

MS. DUCKWORTH: In London I was for a long time, from '43 to '64.

MR. TRAPP: So we are looking at, what, almost 20 years?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: Let's look at those two decades, and tell me what life was like and in the context of how you discovered yourself as an artist and to your finding your direction before you moved to the United States.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, you know, after this nervous breakdown, for a while I did nothing much but walk. I walked on the commons and I walked on cemeteries. I wasn't really capable of working, but that happened slowly. And so then my mother said "I want you to see this doctor on Harley Street." And so I went to see this doctor; it's Dr. Shaw [?]. And he said, "I think you need psychoanalysis, and I will send you to a friend of mine." This was a very famous woman psychoanalyst. And then she talked to me and she said, "You definitely need a deep analysis, and you haven't got any money. I will send you to the London Clinic of Psychoanalysis."

And so then I saw somebody at the London Clinic and they said, "You need a deep analysis and you haven't got any money, we'll put you on the waiting list." And so I was on the waiting list for two years. And then I thought, "Well, forget about them." And then I had a postcard one day and it said, "See me at 3:00 on Wednesday" or whatever. And I thought, "Should I go or shouldn't I go?" I couldn't make up my mind. So then I was curious about it and I went. And I got hooked in the first session. I mean, I didn't choose this doctor, that was given to me.

MR. TRAPP: Right, chosen for you.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah, chosen for me by the clinic. But in the other sense, I was incredibly lucky because I got five sessions a week for 5 shillings in the beginning. And then when he put it up slightly, to 1 pound, I paid 1 pound a week for five sessions of psychoanalysis, which is, you know, because I was a clinic patient.

MR. TRAPP: How long were you in psychoanalysis?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I was then about 3-1/2 years like that. And then he went away, my doctor went away, which was a shock. He went to Brazil to teach doctors to become psychoanalysts. He was away for five years. And meanwhile, I got married. And then my marriage happened to get into trouble fairly quickly. And when he came back from Brazil, I went to see him just to talk about my problems, and he said, "I think what you're saying is that you want to finish your psychoanalysis, so think about it." So I thought about it, and I said, "Well, he's right." And then I went back for four years twice a week, and I paid for it this time -- I mean, three times a week. I learned how to earn money in the meantime.

MR. TRAPP: Let's go back. So it was in Manchester that you had your nervous breakdown.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: Then you moved to London.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: And that move was in 1940.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: And you're in London.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I don't know whether it was '40 -- no, it was later than 1940. I think it was more like '42.

MR. TRAPP: I'm sorry. Yes. I'm incorrect.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: And it's in London that you begin the psychoanalysis.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: Do you know the year that that began?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, no, I'm not totally sure what year that began.

MR. TRAPP: Let's say you moved to London, you think, '42 or '43? Then it was two years --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, it was about 1944 or something like that.

MR. TRAPP: Was it during the war?

MS. DUCKWORTH: It was during the war. Right near the end of the war.

MR. TRAPP: Right near the end of the war.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. Well, it was probably just at the end of the war because this doctor was in the army. He was an army doctor. He always wore his big army greatcoat. So it must have been right at the end of the war that I started.

MR. TRAPP: And how long did this last?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, the first section was 3-1/2 years, and the later was four. So I would say I had seven years of psychoanalysis.

MR. TRAPP: But there was that interruption, wasn't there, five years.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: With the interruption, you've already started the psychoanalysis --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah, it was very interesting. I'd started doing ceramics -- no. I had this room in the house of the Benjamins where I worked. I made sculptures.

MR. TRAPP: Were they artists?

MS. DUCKWORTH: He was a medical photographer, but very interested in art and painting on his own sort of thing. So they were very interesting.

MR. TRAPP: So you're living with the Benjamins in London and you have a studio.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: And this is where you began ceramics?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, it's a little studio, like the size of this room sort of thing. But it's somewhere to work.

MR. TRAPP: Well, a studio is a studio.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. Yeah. Quite.

MR. TRAPP: A workspace.

MS. DUCKWORTH: And I had an exhibition of sculpture in London. That was the very earliest exhibition I had. And it was really in the Appolinaire Gallery, I think it was. And there were some stone carvings. I did stone carvings. Somewhere I've missed out. I went two years to a school where I did stone carvings.

MR. TRAPP: As I think about your life and your artistic career, I have a question to ask you. Today many people have a sense that I will -- my formal education will take me from point A to point B, then I leave and I go -

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, you can't do that about my life.

MR. TRAPP: Right. Exactly. That's what I'm gathering. Do you feel that you ever really had a formal education?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, I never did, really, because -- no. The amazing thing is that I got this -- when I left England, it was because I was offered a job at the University of Chicago. And in those days, they didn't bother whether I had a formal education. I had a name. I was an artist, you know, and that's why they wanted me. Nowadays you couldn't do that.

MR. TRAPP: Let's back up and pick up your life again, beginning with the second phase of psychoanalysis. You had mentioned that you had married. Was this between analysis?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, that was in between the analysis.

MR. TRAPP: All right. So you married. And your husband's name, was it Aidron?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Aidron. A-i-d-r-o-n. And we met in a place called the Anglo-French Art Center. We were both working there. And I was doing -- I spent about two years of my life doing nothing but stone carvings.

MR. TRAPP: And stone carvings, were these the tombstone carvings?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, these were partly tombstone carvings, but I did the tombstones three days a week, and my other carvings the rest of the week. So I had my own and then I had the tombstones.

MR. TRAPP: When you say "stone," what does that mean? Does that encompass marble and granite and fieldstone?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Oh, hoptonwood stone, the sort of stones that Henry Moore would use, really. And I started this -- well, I can't think where one of the schools fits in. I went to Kennington School of Art for two years and I did stone carvings. I learned there how to stone carve. And I did life modeling. And I had a teacher who would come along when I was doing my life modeling. I did a half life-size figure and I thought it was wonderful, and he came along and he said, "Miss Windmüller, did you ever look at the model?" That's how I got on with this guy, you see. [Laughs.] That's all he said. And then I was carving my first stone carving, and I used somebody else's carving that was big and I made a smaller one of my own out of it. And he came along. "Miss Windmüller, be careful. You may damage yourself." You know, because I was bashing so hard. So I got absolutely almost no help from him except I, you know, had the studio.

MR. TRAPP: Were you seen as something of an oddity, a woman in sculpture?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, I was seen as I was behaving like a man the way I was carving, but sure I should know I was a woman, you see.

MR. TRAPP: And you were, what, in your late 20s by this time?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, I was, like, in my late 20s, 30.

MR. TRAPP: Let's go back. You married your husband in 1948.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: Tell us something about him. Was he an artist?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, he had been in the army for 10 years, because he was 18 when the war broke out, and the army said, "Well, you are very good material for officer's training, so he went through an officer's training, and then he was teaching cadets. And he was also, because he loved art, in his spare time working at the Anglo-French Art Center. And then he decided he hated the army, really. He didn't want to spend the rest of his life there. He left the army, and because of his 10-year army service, he got a free education from the British government. And so he had three years at Kingston School of Art, then two years at the Royal College. He, in fact, got a much more sound art, you know, school experience than I ever had.

MR. TRAPP: What kind of artist was he?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, the trouble was, he wanted to be a sculptor but I was a sculptor, and so then he decided that -- he decided, not I -- that maybe he should do something other than sculpture so there wouldn't be a conflict, and he went into chair design. And then he always resented my being a sculptor because that's really what he wanted to be, you know. It wasn't ever that I tried to prevent him. So what happened basically in our marriage, that we were very competitive. I mean, I was always doing better than he was doing, and that was really very, very unacceptable.

MR. TRAPP: Is that what you meant when you said earlier that your marriage ran into trouble early?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, no, it was much more complicated than that. We spent-- I got a commission carving 14 Stations of the Cross for a Roman Catholic church. And so this was a time when we got to know each other. And I said, "If you want to help me with this, you know" -- and he'd done some stone carving at the Anglo-French Art Center, and so we shared this commission. And I did, like, eight stones and he did four. And for four months, we spent all day carving and making love, and he cooked one day and I cooked the next day. And it

was absolutely wonderful. And then I thought, "Well, we might as well get married and it will go on like this." But the day we got married, that was the end of it. It changed so radically. I mean, his character changed so radically. I'd become his mother, and his mother was somebody, all he did was argue with her. He had a temperament that was very difficult and very aggressive, and basically, when that happened, I didn't know how to deal with that.

MR. TRAPP: You were married how many years, 18?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I was married 16 years.

MR. TRAPP: Sixteen.

MS. DUCKWORTH: That was really too long. We shouldn't have stuck it out that long. I mean, I once went to somebody at the Council of Industrial Design in London, and I said, "Can you explain to me why Aidron is not more successful with his designing work?" He said, "Don't you know?" I said, "No, I don't know." He said, "It's because of his temper. People don't want to get involved with him because they don't know when he's going to come down like a ton of bricks on them."

MR. TRAPP: Tell me about your education in London, where you studied.

MS. DUCKWORTH: What, the art schools?

MR. TRAPP: Yes.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I studied at Kennington School of Art for two years, and that's all I did in London, really.

MR. TRAPP: Did you have any mentors, any teachers who really exerted a guiding influence in your artistic life?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, I didn't. No. I had a friend -- well, you've heard of Lucie Rie.

MR. TRAPP: Oh, yes.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Okay. Lucie Rie -- I met Lucie Rie because we had a common friend. And also, when my father came over -- well, when we all left Germany, I went to Liverpool, my sister Ilsa went to Bath to become a nurse, my sister Margaret went to Kenya to be a nanny to some people, and she was trained as a land manager, and my brother went to the Dutch East Indies. So that's how we went.

MR. TRAPP: And your brother was Hans?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes. And what made me go onto the side trip? Can't remember.

MR. TRAPP: Well, let's go back. You were in London, talking about your education. And you mentioned Lucie Rie.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes. So my father went and lived in Albion Street because an aunt of his -- I mean a sister of his was living in somebody's house on Albion Street, and Albion Mews was one minute away. And so somebody introduced him to Lucie Rie. And he wrote to me and said, "I met this really charming Viennese woman, you must meet her. And that's how I first met Lucie Rie, through somebody who was nothing to do with art at all.

MR. TRAPP: So, what I'm gathering is that your education is rather spotty.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Very spotty.

MR. TRAPP: With attendance in classes here and there. Kennington, what other schools in London?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, that's the only school in London I went to.

MR. TRAPP: All right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: When I was still in Liverpool, I applied for a scholarship at the Royal College of Art. I wanted to do sculpture there.

MR. TRAPP: It seems like your direction is about the hardest way to learn your art and your craft.

MS. DUCKWORTH: [Laughs.] Well anyhow, I went to London and I had to pass an exam there, and partly

verbal, you know, making things, and then they accepted me, but I didn't get a scholarship and I didn't have any money, and so that was that one.

MR. TRAPP: That seems to be another common theme. [Laughs.]

MS. DUCKWORTH: I know, because then when I was -- which school was I at? I applied for the end of -- oh, I was still in Liverpool. I applied for a three-year scholarship in Edinburgh at the College of Art for sculpture. And it was between two girls, and we both went up on an interview. And first she went in to the committee, and she was in there for 20 minutes. And then she came out, and she said, "You must let me have this! You must let me have this!" So I went in, and oh, the questions they asked me. How German was I? About my German relatives. We didn't talk a word about art. So, I mean, she got the scholarship. Then they wrote to me and said could I manage on half the money. I said of course I can manage on half the money, and I never heard from them again.

MR. TRAPP: Let's go back to London --

MS. DUCKWORTH: [Laughs.]

MR. TRAPP: -- because, I mean, this is an intriguing journey.

MS. DUCKWORTH: This is an obstacle course I'm talking about.

MR. TRAPP: It is. But it becomes more intriguing if we think of it as a journey, as your "way to clay."

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: When did you actually start working in clay?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I started all by myself. You know, I started that when I was a schoolchild in Germany. I went to a brick factory and I bought some clay. And I don't know what made me do that, because I was only, like, 14. And I would sit at home and make things, and I'd take them back to the brick factory somewhere and they would fire them. And that's how I started clay.

MR. TRAPP: With your sculpture in London, how long did it take for you to begin to gain some kind of recognition in art circles?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I didn't get any.

MR. TRAPP: You didn't?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. I did stone carving for 10 years, and I never sold a single piece.

MR. TRAPP: So you're really not thinking of yourself as an artist in the American sense on a career course, are you? You are making your living.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I'm trying to survive. I was designing my life. I was finding -- you know, muddling through.

MR. TRAPP: Designing your life, muddling through, but still very much in need of being an artist.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, absolutely. I mean, when I was at Liverpool School of Art and they said, "What do you want to be?" I said, "I want to be an artist." And they had never heard anybody say that.

MR. TRAPP: What did that mean to you, "I want to be an artist"?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I was reading about Rembrandt and Dürer and Michelangelo. I wanted to be an artist.

MR. TRAPP: Did you think you had the talent to be an artist? I mean, to want to be an artist and to be an artist are two different things.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I was very ambitious. This is what I wanted to do. I can't tell you -- I didn't even come from an artistic family, except for my brother, who was very keen on art and would do oil paintings up in his room. And then he said, "If you want to be an artist" -- when I was about 17 or 18 -- "If you want to be an artist, be one. I will always look after you."

MR. TRAPP: I did read in one of the publications about your art and an interview with you, you did discuss your finding the letters between Theo and Vincent Van Gogh and how that had --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes. That is very much like the relationship I had with my brother. Any problems I had, I would write to my brother and he would write back. And then he was dead.

MR. TRAPP: Your brother?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes. It's a longer story, it's a bad story. But when he became English, when we all became English, he kept his German nationality. And then he went to the Dutch East Indies and the war broke out and they interned him because of his German background. He still had a German passport. He also had a British one. And then they evacuated Celebes because Japanese U-boats were attacking it, and he was on a ship that was sunk.

MR. TRAPP: How old was he?

MS. DUCKWORTH: He was about 28 or something. He was very bright, very brilliant and loved life, but he was the first one to go. And he was the one who said, "I will always look after you."

MR. TRAPP: Do you feel like he is still with you?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I think about him quite a lot.

MR. TRAPP: Yes. So he's there.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I think how old would he now be, you know?

MR. TRAPP: It sounds as though you have this wonderfully romantic idea of what it's like to be an artist: "I want to be an artist."

MS. DUCKWORTH: Of course I didn't know what it meant.

MR. TRAPP: You didn't know, but you stayed with it and you pursued it and you pursued it.

Let's get back to your life in London and your art.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Now, when I went to my psychoanalyst, I have to tell you, what is there but pots by Hans Coper and Lucie Rie in his room. He was collecting their work.

MR. TRAPP: Did you know Lucie Rie at that time?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah, I already knew her. But that was pretty amazing, you know, to find that there.

MR. TRAPP: Tell me what happens to you in the '50s.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Lucie Rie was very instrumental, in a sense, in my direction towards clay.

MR. TRAPP: In what sense?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I had started handbuilding. I decided I like handbuilding. Well, I love doing it. And so I went to Lucie Rie and I said, "Can you tell me about some glazes?" And she said, "What do you know about glazes?" And I said, "Nothing," because I thought it was like asking for a cheesecake recipe, you see. And so she said, "I think you should go to school."

MR. TRAPP: But you had no money.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I had very little money. So I went to -- she chose my school for me, Hammersmith School of Art, which was really very unsuitable. And I stayed one year there. By this time, Aidron and I -- I had a little money. We bought a house with too many rooms, and we let out rooms. That was the money I had. And so I went to Hammersmith School of Art, and that's where I started being trained in ceramics.

MR. TRAPP: Could you tell us -- let me ask you several questions. Did you attend this school on a full-time basis, number one?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. I was married, so I attended again, went three --

MR. TRAPP: Oh, I was thinking you were married, but was it close enough to you commute to?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes. Yes.

MR. TRAPP: What I meant by full-time, of course not evenings, but --

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, all I did was three days a week again.

MR. TRAPP: Three days a week.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Which is pretty half-hearted, but it's what I did. [Laughs.]

MR. TRAPP: Half-hearted.

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, I mean it would have gone very badly down with my husband if I had done it five days a week.

MR. TRAPP: Tell me about the curriculum. What was that like?

MS. DUCKWORTH: It was interesting because they had two teachers there, and the one teacher, who was Mr. Brown, didn't like me very much. And I don't know why he didn't like me. And he would say unpleasant things, like -- he would always keep the best work in his room. You would never get it; he would get it. And so one time I took my best work out of the kiln before he looked. And anytime something was missing, he would say, "Oh, Miss Windmüller probably has it somewhere," or remarks like that. Then I asked him, "Can you give me a glaze recipe?" I mean, this is an art school. And he said, "Don't you know that in the Middle Ages, if somebody gave away a glaze recipe, they had their tongue torn out?" And that was all he said.

MR. TRAPP: So you're there to do what?

MS. DUCKWORTH: To learn about ceramics.

MR. TRAPP: To learn about ceramics, but --

MS. DUCKWORTH: There was no structure there.

MR. TRAPP: You were sent there because of Lucie Rie's comment, "Do you know something about glazes."

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: "No." So you go to Hammersmith to learn something about ceramics, and you're told that, no --

MS. DUCKWORTH: But the other teacher was much nicer, and he gave me --

MR. TRAPP: All right. And what was his name?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Can't remember.

MR. TRAPP: [Laughs.]

MS. DUCKWORTH: You know, I remember the nasty one, and I can't remember the nice one. He was quite helpful, and I started making, you know, throwing. I learned how to throw bowls. That's how I started, you know, probably like everybody else starts.

MR. TRAPP: And what year is this?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I did only one year there.

MR. TRAPP: What year is this?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Oh, I'd have to look at my biography to find out.

MR. TRAPP: All right. But is it in the '50s?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Nineteen fifty-six, about.

MR. TRAPP: All right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: So then this was a very Bernard Leach school, very Bernard Leach. Every piece you made had a bottom, a middle and a lip. And if it didn't have that ... . So then I decided this wasn't my school. And I went and changed to the Central School of Arts and Crafts. It's now called something else. And so then I went for two years to do ceramics, and that was a much more serious place at the Central School of Arts and Crafts.

MR. TRAPP: And what was its curriculum like?

MS. DUCKWORTH: They had a three-year curriculum where you could then get a, you know, degree.

MR. TRAPP: Did you get the degree?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, no, I didn't. That's another story. [Laughs.] I never got a degree.

MR. TRAPP: Did you ever get a degree?

MS. DUCKWORTH: But they had this woman who was in charge, in a way, Dora Billington. That may mean nothing. She wrote one of the really early good books on ceramics. And she liked me very much.

MR. TRAPP: What was the title of the book? Do you know?

MS. DUCKWORTH: *Pottery*, [*The Technique of Pottery*] I think.

MR. TRAPP: Dora Billington?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Dora Billington.

MR. TRAPP: All right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: And she was an old dragon, in a way, but if she liked you, she was very nice. But then she died of a heart attack or something and they needed a -- well, it's more complicated. I was back at my three days a week thing, and it was Kenneth Clark, who was a British potter who is still alive, and there was another one --

MR. TRAPP: Kenneth Clark the potter?

MS. DUCKWORTH: The potter.

MR. TRAPP: And not the art historian.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah, not the art historian. And another one. And then there was [Nicholas] Vergette, who went to America before me.

MR. TRAPP: I have a question to ask you. With your schooling now, you're becoming more immersed in your interest in clay, and you're talking about the levels of seriousness of your education. I'm intrigued. Did you go to the museums in London to look at the collections?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Oh, yes. I did. And what happened after my first year at the Central is that they --

[BEGIN TAPE 1, SIDE 2]

[The material at the beginning of Side 2 is a duplicate of the last 18 paragraphs on Side 1, so the overlapping material is not re-transcribed.]

MS. DUCKWORTH: -- No, that was later. After two years I said, at the end of the second year, "Can I take my diploma now because I've had, you know, four years of art school before this?" And they said -- oh, no, I meant at the third year. And they said, "No, you're only part-time. You have to wait another year and a half," which was very unreasonable, I thought. Then Dora Billington retired and they offered me a job.

MR. TRAPP: As a teacher.

MS. DUCKWORTH: As a teacher.

MR. TRAPP: Teaching ceramics?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes. I taught ceramics then. I mean, I didn't have a degree, but they asked me to teach.

MR. TRAPP: I don't mean to insult you, but did you know enough to teach ceramics?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I knew quite a lot.

MR. TRAPP: Were you proficient in throwing and glaze?



MS. DUCKWORTH: I mean, for instance, Dora Billington would teach glaze theory. We had a structured course in glaze theory.

MR. TRAPP: What did your teaching comprise? I mean, was it slab building, coiling, was it throwing?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. This is how I taught when I became a teacher, but -- yeah, we started with coiling. This was fascinating. I did my first coiling piece, and a very big piece, you know, this size, and Dora Billington would come and say, "You're too slow!" -- which I think is totally irrelevant, how slow you are with this. I mean, I was making a very nice piece, but that's what she said. So we coiled first, and then we did slab building. And also, we had a special throwing teacher who did nothing but teach throwing. And then you had a glaze theory teacher. Dora Billington was the glaze theory teacher. She never realized when I really mentally dropped out of this glaze theory, which was, you know, fairly early on. She gave us three different recipe for casting slips. I went home. I made up all three casting slips to try them out.

MR. TRAPP: I have a few questions as we talk. You're teaching ceramics. Did this include porcelain, stoneware? I'm interested first of all in the breadth of the teaching, but also, was there any continuation of the ethos of the arts and crafts movement in Britain that came into the classroom at this time? Was there anything from the Bauhaus that came into the classroom?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, at the Central School, you had a special class for that. You had basic design, and that was Bauhaus. And that was taught by an excellent teacher. That was very good. Now he's quite famous. He's still alive. And I can't think of his name now.

MR. TRAPP: How long were you at this school?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, at least three years.

MR. TRAPP: So we're inching through the decade of the 1950s.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. Yeah. Well, but I started -- okay. I went to the Central School basically around 1950 it's in my biography, which you should have.

MR. TRAPP: All right. Yes.

MS. DUCKWORTH: But I taught till I left England, you know. They also had a bronze foundry in the basement, and I would make small things and I cast them myself in the basement. So I did some of my own bronze casting there. But if anybody was directing my career? No.

MR. TRAPP: Well, at this school, you're working in clay. Is what you're making -- it's a combination, isn't it, of sculpture and vessel-oriented pieces?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. Yeah. I like coiling, basically, the most, and I would coil quite difficult shapes.

MR. TRAPP: Well, tell me about the glazing. Did you learn enough about glazes to create --

MS. DUCKWORTH: [Laughs.] After I did this three casting slip thing, Dora Billington was so impressed that I would have gone to that trouble, you know, that she thought of me very highly and never noticed that not soon after that, I wasn't with her anymore. I mean, doing -- this is very honest, now -- doing glaze theory is largely mathematics, and mathematics is something I can't do at all. And so I would have other, you know, ways of testing. You know, my own ways. I would make one glaze and increase so much of the same material and so much of that one and try everything out by experiments. So when I talked to Lucie Rie one day about that, she said, "But that's the best way! That's the best way to teach glazes!" Made me feel rather better.

MR. TRAPP: I'm struck by the lack of color in your work, and I've read your comments about color.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: At this time, were you investigating color, or have you really always been interested in --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, in a way, you see, when I was at the school in Liverpool, I had also painting classes. I did oil painting for three years part-time. I was, you know, interested in color up to a point.

MR. TRAPP: Up to a point.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Up to a point. It never excited me as much as form did. I mean, if it was a choice between sculpture or painting, I knew it was -- I went to an exhibition at the Royal Academy in London. It was a very big exhibition and there was a huge room full of Indian sculpture, and then there was a room full of

miniature paintings and other hangings. And that's the day I decided sculpture is what I want. That very day.

MR. TRAPP: Back to my question about going to museums to see their collections, I'm intrigued by what you would have been looking at. I'm also intrigued about the art scene in London, the galleries.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, you know, when you teach, for instance, in London, that is very easy compared with teaching in Chicago, for instance. There's so many museums and they're all so fantastic that you tell them to go to this one, to go to the V and A [Victoria and Albert Museum], to go and see this. You know, you just tell them to go to museums.

MR. TRAPP: The reason I'm asking --

MS. DUCKWORTH: I would go to the British Museum almost every week while I was a student at the Central.

MR. TRAPP: And what did you go to see?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Oh --

MR. TRAPP: Everything?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. I --

MR. TRAPP: My question is really based upon, was there a particular collection that you went back to?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I loved the British Museum and I loved the -- what's the word? It starts with a "K." Cycladic.

MR. TRAPP: You know, I was thinking that right a way. The Cycladic sculptures.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I loved that more than anything.

MR. TRAPP: Yes. I would -- yes.

MS. DUCKWORTH: And so it was I could walk during my lunch hour, you know? It was that close.

MR. TRAPP: What about the Victoria and Albert?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, that was marvelous, too. They were all marvelous, really, except that the Victoria and Albert, everything the way they showed it was so close together you could hardly concentrate on seeing something.

MR. TRAPP: I'm also interested in what other artists were you associated with?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Henry Moore. My favorite at that time was Henry Moore.

MR. TRAPP: Was he a friend?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, no, but he was a very nice person. And in spite of being rather shy, I wrote to him, and he says, "Well, come and visit me." And I took a taxi and a couple of my stone carvings and I went out to, you know, the countryside where he lives. And I had tea with him and we talked. He was a very nice person.

Then the second time I went to see him was after I got married. And Aidron wanted to meet him, and so back we went to Henry Moore. And then I said that I am going to start ceramics. "Oh!" he said, "that's terrible! That's terrible! That's so boring. It's the same all the way around." And I could have given him a talk about that that is not what ceramics is, it's not the same all the way around. And I thought, well, I'm not going to instruct Henry Moore what's what.

MR. TRAPP: Well, I am interested in this. You're living at a time in Britain -- and the same thing, by the way, is happening in the U.S. -- where there is such a rigid hierarchy of art, of what's really accepted.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: And Moore's comment is reinforcing that. What is it about clay that appeals to you? You say that "I'm a sculptor." You've worked in various stones and in bronze. You are moving your way-- You are moving into clay. What attracted you about clay?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, when I went to see this Indian exhibition, it moved me.

MR. TRAPP: This is that Subcontinent India?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: Was it Gupta sculpture?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, some were five foot, some were -- it was, oh!, a huge exhibition.

MR. TRAPP: Were they clay?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, they were stone.

MR. TRAPP: All right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Most of it was stone. As a young person, I was a very depressed person as a young woman. And the things that --

MR. TRAPP: I did gather that.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. The things that helped me was the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke --

MR. TRAPP: Yes.

MS. DUCKWORTH: -- and art. And those were the only two things that really nourished me.

MR. TRAPP: Does poetry nourish you today?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, but it did then. And it still does when I read Rilke, which I read aloud to myself occasionally.

MR. TRAPP: In German?

MS. DUCKWORTH: In German.

MR. TRAPP: They're wonderful.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes. And you can't read really translate them because they're just -- no longer is the music in them when you translate them.

MR. TRAPP: You've mentioned this exhibition of Indian sculpture. Was that at the British Museum?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, it was at the Royal Academy on Piccadilly.

MR. TRAPP: Oh, that's right, Royal Academy, you did mention that.

Tell us about your increasing movement in sculpture toward clay.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, the funny thing is that I started with clay when I was 14, and that somehow I must have liked doing it. I mean, the physical contact with the clay. Something you can touch. I didn't really have much touch with human beings, but clay I could touch. I hadn't thought of it that way.

MR. TRAPP: I think we're on to something. Exactly. That tactile experience.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: In my opinion, there is a greater tactile experience with clay than any other material.

MS. DUCKWORTH: There is. Yes. Absolutely. I think that's what attracted me.

MR. TRAPP: And you find this from children who learn what it's like to work in mud and to make mud pies. It has that same visceral quality of working in dough.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: After you leave, what is it, the Central -- ?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Central School.

MR. TRAPP: Central School in London. You're there for how long? You said three years, I think?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, I think.

MR. TRAPP: What direction are you going in now?

MS. DUCKWORTH: What direction am I going in now?

MR. TRAPP: You're in London. You've left the school. Where is your life taking you?

MS. DUCKWORTH: My life is taking me -- I'm trying to think. Well, I left the school because they said I couldn't -- I left the school. I set up my own studio in Aidron and my house.

MR. TRAPP: Is this a ceramic studio?

MS. DUCKWORTH: It's a ceramic studio. This house that was in -- near Fullham -- I can't remember what this area was called -- this house had, like, enough rooms so we rented out three rooms. And then I had a room for myself to work in, and he had a room. And I did stone carvings, more stone carvings.

MR. TRAPP: How did you make your living?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I didn't. He had a scholarship and we let rooms. We lived on renting the rooms.

MR. TRAPP: Okay.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Now, the rooms each had a little cooker.

MR. TRAPP: And how long did that last.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, one day I went for a walk and I found an empty lot, and I went to a woman who had a nursery, and I said, "If you ever hear of an empty lot where one can build a house, let me know." And she said, "I know one right now." And then we borrowed money from both mothers and built a house. We didn't have much money.

MR. TRAPP: And do you know when that was?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, it's probably in my biography. [Laughs.]

MR. TRAPP: [Laughs.]

MS. DUCKWORTH: It was in 1960. We moved into this house in 1960, and I left in 1964. That's how I know that.

MR. TRAPP: Well, I'm trying to develop a chronology here. So by 1960, you are 41.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. And not at all successful at that stage.

MR. TRAPP: And how would you have defined success?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, how did my success -- never thought about that one. [Laughs.] I mean, "not at all successful" is going too far. That's not true. I had my first exhibition in clay with Henry Rothschild, and he had the store Primavera in London that -- I don't know how much you know about it -- was very influential. He supported Lucie Rie and Hans Coper and then me and lots of refugees.

MR. TRAPP: And this was when?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well --

MR. TRAPP: Again your biography?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, you should have my biography there. [Laughs.]

MR. TRAPP: [Laughs.]

MS. DUCKWORTH: I'm not good at figures.

MR. TRAPP: I have one, but it's not as useful as I would like.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, you will find it there; otherwise, I'll send you another one. You mean the exhibition at Primavera?

MR. TRAPP: Yes.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, that has to be, like, 1962 or something.

MR. TRAPP: And this is your first major exhibition?

MS. DUCKWORTH: That is very interesting because I made a lot of pieces that were -- Henry Rothschild hadn't seen pieces like this. And he said, "Well, they are nice, but they won't sell." And the man from the London County Council, was buying ceramics for schools, bought all of them, the "pieces that wouldn't sell."

MR. TRAPP: Do you know what happened to them?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, I know where they are. When Mrs. Thatcher came in, she cut off all the money for this art for the schools. And it's in a museum in the country. I can give you the name of the museum. I don't know it by heart. And the woman who is the curator said, "Please go to England and try and find out where some of your old pieces are." And so Thea [Burger] and I did this a year ago or two years ago, and this is one place we found. And there is this county museum, and the same man who came to our studio to buy the stuff. And I remember what he wore. I said, "You still have your green duffel coat." He said, "What?" [Chuckles.] And that's where the pieces are. And they're all sitting there for people who want to study them, but they're not on view. I mean, it's not only my pieces; there's a lot of nice pieces there doing nothing.

MR. TRAPP: Do you know how many?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Of mine? Oh, about seven or eight.

MR. TRAPP: Hm. So you have your first major exhibition in London at Primavera?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: And then soon after, oh, I would say, what, three years later, you're moving to the U.S.

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, no. I had, like, three exhibitions with Primavera. So I probably don't have my times quite right.

MR. TRAPP: All right. Did you show at any other galleries?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No.

MR. TRAPP: What was your relationship like with Primavera?

MS. DUCKWORTH: One of the reasons that I got out of the fine art and into ceramics is that I had a friend who sent me to some gallery woman in London when I was painting and drawing, and she said, yes, she would see me. But she really didn't want to see me, so she shouldn't have, because I was sitting there showing my work, and she was 100 percent of the time looking out of the window. And I thought, "I can't deal with this. I just can't deal with people like this. I will not deal with people like this. I'd rather be a big fish in a little pond than a tiny fish in a big pond." And that was a conscious decision, that I would rather be a big fish in a little pond.

MR. TRAPP: Besides going to --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Thea wouldn't like this.

MR. TRAPP: [Laughs.] Besides looking at collections in museums and your study and showing at Primavera, could you tell me something about the art scene that you experienced in London at this time?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: What was it like?

MS. DUCKWORTH: There was the Berkeley Gallery that had wonderful exhibitions. They had beautiful exhibitions of Hans Coper's and Lucie Rie's, beautiful. I mean, I meant Hans Coper early on, when he was making buttons for Lucie Rie. Really almost before he got into ceramics I knew him.

MR. TRAPP: Is your husband succeeding as an artist or designing --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Not at all. He has not ever succeeded at anything. He was a brilliant teacher. If he had been content to be a brilliant art teacher, he would have had a very good career. But he has this -- this is a long side story, but when we lived in -- it has something to do with me being in America. He taught, finally, at --

he left furniture design. He taught basic design at the Kingston School of Art, very good school. And we had the chairman of the department and his wife for dinner in our house. And the wife sat by the fireplace, and the men were talking, and then he says to his boss, "You're doing a lousy job, you know." Just like that. So he's out. The man is so mad at him, he writes a letter separate from the ordinary thing and says, "Keep your hands off this guy." And then I'm invited to teach in Chicago. And this happened while I was shopping, and I come back from shopping and Aidron says, "Oh, there was an inquiry whether you would teach in Chicago, and I said yes" -- says my husband, you see.

MR. TRAPP: Tell me how did that happen. How did Chicago --

MS. DUCKWORTH: That's how it happened.

MR. TRAPP: Pardon?

MS. DUCKWORTH: That's how it happened, through this phone call.

MR. TRAPP: But I mean how did Chicago find you?

MS. DUCKWORTH: They had a search committee and they came up with Bernard Leach. Well, of course that's a joke. Bernard wouldn't dream of doing that. Then they came up with Hans Coper, and Hans Coper wouldn't dream of that. And then they came up with me.

MR. TRAPP: I'm interested, why is the search committee going to England? Is this because of the language?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, they first decided on -- this was before they went to England. But when they came up with me. That's what I was told one day when I said, "How did you make your decision?" They said, "Well, we sent somebody to England to find out, how, you know, what you were really doing, what other people were doing" and so on.

MR. TRAPP: Well, eventually we'll get to Chicago because I'm intrigued.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Basically, it happened because Aidron could not get another job.

MR. TRAPP: Well, I'm thinking of what's happening at this time in the '50s in Southern California, Alfred and so forth.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Oh, yes. I'd get *Craft Horizons*. I read the *Craft Horizons*. I got all these magazines. No, I knew what was going on.

MR. TRAPP: So you're subscribing. You know what's going on, these magazines. Did you ever ask yourself, "Why did the University of Chicago contact me?"

MS. DUCKWORTH: I was the best. [Laughs.]

MR. TRAPP: [Laughs.] All right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I was the most suitable; let's say that.

MR. TRAPP: Well, let's move into Chicago. So you enjoyed some success in London showing at Primavera. You have established contact with Hans Coper, Leach, Lucie Rie, Henry Moore. And you're on your way.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Oh, there is a point -- when you mentioned Leach -- at one point, when I left the factory after my nervous breakdown --

MR. TRAPP: We're back to Manchester.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah, we are going back. I went to art school in Liverpool with somebody called Margaret Leach, who was not a relative of Leach, but she worked at the Leach factory, and ran it, in fact. She was the manageress there, and she was my friend. And she says, "Bernard needs somebody; maybe you should come for an interview." And I went on the train from London and had an interview with Bernard, who was charming and said, "We need somebody for wedging clay," period. Well, I don't just want to wedge clay. I would want to do everything else as well. So I said, "Well, no thank you." And the interesting thing is, how would I have turned out if I'd taken the job? You see? I think that's interesting.

MR. TRAPP: Well, we never know.

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, we never know.

MR. TRAPP: I mean, it's a fascinating exercise in speculation.

MS. DUCKWORTH: [Laughs.] I didn't take the job.

MR. TRAPP: All right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: But he was very charming. He showed me films on puppetry in Thailand and places. And, you know, I stayed for or three or four days. I knew him, let's say.

MR. TRAPP: Let's carry you now from London to Chicago.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: Again, I'm intrigued by the University of Chicago has a search committee and they're looking for someone to teach ceramics?

MS. DUCKWORTH: They had a crazy system. If you want to know --

MR. TRAPP: Yes, I do.

MS. DUCKWORTH: -- it was a crazy place. They had a crazy system. They had only one teacher, and that was always a foreign teacher. So this teacher would arrive brand new, not know the ropes --

MR. TRAPP: Arrive where? To what department?

MS. DUCKWORTH: The Midway Studio. The ceramic department. The Midway Studio is the Fine Art Department of the University of Chicago. Art history is that side of the Midway. So it's everything else, and there's the Midway Studio.

MR. TRAPP: Midway?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Midway Studio.

MR. TRAPP: All right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: And so then they had a Norwegian, and then they had a -- no, first a Japanese, then a Norwegian, and then me, and then the Japanese again. And so they would have one teacher who would have to learn the whole thing from scrap, and then he'd leave and they'd get -- you know, there was no continuity at all. It was quite stupid.

MR. TRAPP: Why was that?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Who knows? They were crazy. Didn't want to spend money on the department.

MR. TRAPP: Well, all right, that brings up another question. What kind of a commitment did the university have to the visual arts?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Very poor. I mean, the poorest of the poor.

MR. TRAPP: Well, did you know that before you got there?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, I didn't know that! Shortly after I arrived, I was invited by the president, because I was a new foreign teacher -- no? -- for dinner. Very nice. And he said, "What do you do here?" And I said, "I teach ceramics." And he said, "Hah?! Ceramics? You use your hands?" Now, this was mock horror, you see? But was only too true.

MR. TRAPP: Yes, you're in an academic institution.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Absolutely.

MR. TRAPP: Using your hands and not your brain.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes. It was not nice.

MR. TRAPP: The unfortunate thing with that statement is that, of course, there is always the presumption that the working artist is not using the brain. And we know that --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, I know.

MR. TRAPP: -- is more false than -- [laughs].

MS. DUCKWORTH: So as long as Hal Hayden [?], who -- Hal Hayden [?] is the man who wanted me and who got me --

MR. TRAPP: So you really knew nothing about the University of Chicago.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I didn't know anything. I got this telegram that said would I come and teach in the hours of so and so, and the money is so and so, please answer by return telegram. And that's what I knew about the University of Chicago.

MR. TRAPP: Did you have a contract?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, I had a contract when I got there.

MR. TRAPP: But you had no idea that you --

MS. DUCKWORTH: I had no idea about anything. Aidron wanted to leave the country.

MR. TRAPP: Did you? Did you want to leave England?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I thought I would go for one year and then come back.

MR. TRAPP: Now, you had never been to the U.S. before, had you?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. I just wanted to look around the U.S. and go home. We had this house that we just built, with a beautiful garden, and two dogs.

And so then there I'm at the U of C, and I arrive in September of '64, and they say, "You're going to have an exhibition in January of '65 at the Renaissance Society Gallery that was part of the U of C. So I work insanely. I mean, I work, I teach, and I work, and I have the show and I have 80 pieces in the show or something, and one quite big one. And that's how I made a name in this first show.

MR. TRAPP: And your husband moved with you.

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. He said "Get me a job at the U of C!" I should get him a job at the U of C, you see. I said, "I can't do that. I mean, I can maybe do it when I get over there." "Well, then I'm not going. I don't want to be the hanger-on of Ruth Duckworth." So he stays there and I come over. And my boss, Hal Hayden [?], finds him a job. And he comes in February of '65, and I pick him up at the station. And he says, "Well, I'm not going to live with you anymore." Then he shouldn't have come.

MR. TRAPP: So what happened?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, he lived in a hotel.

MR. TRAPP: For how long?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Till he left. Then a year later he found himself another job as head of sculpture at Syracuse University. Now, this is a terrific job. And what does he do in the middle of a faculty meeting? He tells the chairman he's doing a lousy job. And you have to be slightly mental to do the same thing twice.

MR. TRAPP: [Laughs.]

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, it's really true, isn't it?

MR. TRAPP: Yes. So I take it he didn't have that job for very long.

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. Well, then after that, he was out, you see. But he was there for almost three years.

MR. TRAPP: Well, there is some method to what might appear my madness of questioning. I'm interested in exploring the atmosphere at the University of Chicago, which is, of course, one of the premier universities in the United States --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.



MR. TRAPP: -- but it certainly, to my knowledge, wasn't known, or hasn't been known, for its visual arts.

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. If I were a serious graduate student, I would never advise anybody to go to the U of C.

MR. TRAPP: Well, tell us about your students.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, so I had, the students that-- I had three graduate students a year, and the others were undergraduates who would just stay for one quarter or two quarters. They didn't have to be art students. They could be in mathematics or anything else. Some of the mathematics students were my best students. And so I said I will take no more than 15 students a quarter because that's what you can accommodate in this room pleasantly. And so that's what I accepted. Then I taught twice as many hours as they said I needed to, because what they said I needed to was ridiculous.

MR. TRAPP: Tell me about your curriculum. What kind of curriculum did you design?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I designed -- what did I know about curriculums, with my career, you see. I had a very set stuff for the undergraduates. For half the time they had to handbuild and go through every stage of handbuilding. And I would give them subjects to do. And then they could start learning to throw. The graduate students came with quite a good foundation because they had already been through school and a graduate school somewhere else.

MR. TRAPP: Did any of them ever know more than you?

MS. DUCKWORTH: One. One guy, very unpleasant character. He felt he knew more than me. And he'd been with a Japanese potter and everything was very Japanese. And then he came to his graduate show. They had to have an exhibition for that and they had to really write something. And he had only, oh, four plates and one big thing. And I said, "That is not a graduate exhibition you're having. I can't give you an A for that. I know you're good, but I will give you a B. You didn't try." And he got totally furious.

MR. TRAPP: By the time you wind up in Chicago -- you're born in Germany, move to England -- have you traveled anywhere else?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah, I've traveled.

MR. TRAPP: I mean before Chicago.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Before Chicago. No, I didn't travel that much before Chicago. I mean, when I was in school -- I mean, I left straight after school. I had three or four friends and we would go on bicycling trips in Schleswig-Holstein and places. We would go to Switzerland a lot. I had bad lungs, and so I went to Arosa first, when I was six, with my nanny, and went there and lay on a thing and just tried to recover.

MR. TRAPP: Back to Chicago, it must have been a real cultural shock.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Ohh! Hell of a cultural shock.

MR. TRAPP: To move from London to Chicago.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I hated it in the beginning.

MR. TRAPP: Well, tell me what it was like.

MS. DUCKWORTH: What it was like? I felt like a foreigner, absolutely, you know. And then I had this -- [laughs] -- this is not really a suitable part of it -- I had this one student who was my assistant then. Somebody had said he could be, you know, your assistant.

[BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1]

MS. DUCKWORTH: And he would always say dumb things like, "Ahh, when your husband comes, it will be so nice," you know. [laughs] And there I had a husband who was writing me letters of, "Oh, I've cooked dinner for so and so and with a menu." I mean really upsetting stuff, intentionally upsetting stuff. He was irritating me. And the situation was not to make me settle down very well.

MR. TRAPP: Did you think, "My God, what have I done to myself? Why did I come here?"

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, it was actually quite interesting. So I had this exhibition at the Renaissance Society Gallery, and the chairman of geophysics bought a small piece of mine, and then said, "Come and visit us

and see how your piece looks together with my pre-Colombian collection." He had a very good collection. And so I went. He only asked me for coffee, not for dinner. [Laughs] And it looked very good together. And then he said, "We're having a new building built for geophysics, and we asked this Canadian potter to make a mural for us." And I said, "With me on the campus?" "Oh," he said, "would you like to do it?" I said, "Yes." This is why I live in Chicago, because I still had two dogs in London. I wrote to my mother and said, "Who will look after my dogs for one more year? I want to do this thing, and then I will be back." And she wrote back and said, "Don't worry about your dogs. We'll have them to put sleep."

MR. TRAPP: [Laughs.]

MS. DUCKWORTH: And her idea was that I ought to live in America, and the rich Americans would look after me. And she knew if she said that, I would go to London and pick up my dogs.

MR. TRAPP: And you did?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I did, yes.

MR. TRAPP: [Laughs.]

MS. DUCKWORTH: That's a true story.

MR. TRAPP: I'm interested in the cultural climate of Chicago. You've moved from --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I come from an art school like the Central School, which has seven teachers for 30 students, you know, which has everything.

MR. TRAPP: Well, tell me about the visual arts scene at the University of Chicago. Are there teachers, professors of painting, sculpture?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes. There's Max Kahn, who's still alive, as a painter. And then there was Nellie Barr, a sculptress. And there were not bad people there. Then they got, after Nellie Barr retired, they got Virginio Ferrari. I don't know whether you have heard of him.

MR. TRAPP: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

MS. DUCKWORTH: Okay.

MR. TRAPP: I went to the University of Illinois.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Oh. Okay.

MR. TRAPP: We were talking about the culture shock. So you've arrived in Chicago, and you find the transition to be difficult.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes. Well, it lasted maybe four or five months.

MR. TRAPP: That's rather short, in away.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I was too busy after that to --

MR. TRAPP: You were very busy, and you have your exhibition. How long were you at the University of Chicago?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Fourteen years. But then, you see -- well, I don't mind anymore anyhow, but -- so I was there seven years as a visiting artist, for which they don't pay me any pension because I was a visiting artist. Then I was offered head of ceramics at Iowa City University -- Iowa City -- no.

MR. TRAPP: University of Iowa.

MS. DUCKWORTH: University of Iowa. And my boss says, "Go there. See whether they'll get you a written contract, and bring it back." So I go for my interview there, and all the students say, "Oh, please come! We hate our teacher! Please come." So I get my written contract, and I give it to my boss, and he goes to the university and says, "We don't want to lose her." And then they paid me twice as much and made me an associate professor.

MR. TRAPP: Did you ever achieve full professorship?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Just about. Not really. What happened when Hal Hayden died is then the university

could really get going and do what they wanted with the Media Studio, but while Hal was alive and had tenure, they couldn't do it. And so they were just thrilled when he left. And they said, "Now we're going to change everything. Now we will make it so that it's important to know how to talk about a thing rather than to make it."

MR. TRAPP: Well, would you call the University of Chicago a nurturing environment?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No.

MR. TRAPP: Why did you stay?

MS. DUCKWORTH: For that long?

MR. TRAPP: Yes.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Because I was already there. Because I did this job for the geophysics building. I don't know why I stayed, because I knew -- do you know this artist -- he was a Chicago artist before he left for California -- Mitch Cole [?]?

MR. TRAPP: No.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, he's a friend of mine. He taught at the Bauhaus school, at IIT or something. Very lovely person. And I visited him in California, and he drove me around. And he says, "Ruth, let's buy you a piece of land here and you build a house." This is, like, 30 years ago.

MR. TRAPP: Was that southern California? Was he in southern California?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. He was in -- boy, I can't remember the name of the place. Not too far southern. Not far inland from San Francisco.

MR. TRAPP: Oh. So northern California. Sacramento?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, no, it wasn't Sacramento. It was a town --

MR. TRAPP: All right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: But anyhow, I was too timid. I didn't want to start all over and not know anybody again.

MR. TRAPP: Pardon the question. I didn't mean to be confrontational. What I had in mind was, if you were looking at the intellectual atmosphere, perhaps another university would have been much more conducive. The University of Iowa.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, it might have been, but what else that was there?

MR. TRAPP: But you've explained why.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: I mean, you've already made a major move by moving from London to Chicago.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I've made it twice already.

MR. TRAPP: You made it twice. And I do appreciate the trauma of moves.

MS. DUCKWORTH: It's a trauma.

MR. TRAPP: It is.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Some people transfer -- transplant quite well and some don't.

STAFF: You can break for lunch.

MR. TRAPP: Thank you.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Lunchtime! [Laughs.] We may not get through this. [Laughs.]

MR. TRAPP: Yes, I will. I hope it's going all right. I'm just dying with this ... .

STAFF: No, we're loving it.

SECOND STAFF: Yeah!

MS. DUCKWORTH: You're loving it?

SECOND STAFF: Yes.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I'm talking too much!

STAFF: No, no, no. You're doing a great job!

SECOND STAFF: No, no. Yes.

STAFF: You're doing a great job.

[Break in interview.]

MS. DUCKWORTH: I'm going to take two minutes to tell you one funny thing. When I was going to have the show in Japan, and Koyama wrote and said would I ask Leach to write a nice thing for my invitation, I said no.

MR. TRAPP: We'll get to that.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Oh. I thought that was out now.

MR. TRAPP: This is Kenneth Trapp. I'm interviewing Ruth Duckworth at the Smithsonian Productions, National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., on Friday, April the 27, 2001. This is the second half of our day session.

Ruth, we have now moved from London to Chicago, where you're teaching at the University of Chicago. What I'd like to do is to try to cover 35 years of your life in ceramics so that we have some idea of what you've been doing in the United States. Design sources, inspiration, that sort of thing.

You were telling us about the transition from London to Chicago and how you became an established artist. I'd like to go back to the University of Chicago and ask you a question. At one point in reading about you, you discussed or you mentioned the intellectual atmosphere at the university in regard to the visual arts. What was it like to be a visual artist at a well-known institution that itself isn't well known for visual arts?

MS. DUCKWORTH: You were a real stepchild, and you knew it, you know.

MR. TRAPP: All right. You're a stepchild and you know it.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: Was there ever a real commitment to the visual arts?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Not that I know of.

MR. TRAPP: But you made a life there. You made a rich life.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: And you still live in the Chicago area.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah, because there are very friendly people in Chicago that you can get to know. Not necessarily in the arts or not necessarily -- well, I know some intellectual people, I guess. I knew the chairman of geophysics and I was interested in what he was doing about plate tectonics and stuff, you know. But I don't think I'm really part of the intellectual life of Chicago.

MR. TRAPP: All right. I wanted to go back and pick up a thread that we had discussed a bit earlier. You arrive in Chicago in 1965.

MS. DUCKWORTH: 'Sixty-four.

MR. TRAPP: 'Sixty-four, which is a really volatile time in American history. I mean, culturally.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: Not just culturally, but already in Southern California and Northern California, there has been this whole movement in ceramics --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: -- that you're aware of.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I'm aware of.

MR. TRAPP: How do you think of yourself at this time as a woman working in ceramics in the United States, transplanted from England? You had mentioned several times that you saw yourself as an outsider.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I feel that, although I'm not the same, but the group of Hans Coper and Lucie Rie, I'm closer to them, for instance, than to what goes on in California. We are not a group. And people think the three of us are a group. We are not, because they would not approve of the things that I have done.

MR. TRAPP: I'm going to ask you a question that may seem rather strange. It's, I think, a typical American question. I do remember reading the small book on the Englishness of English art, and Americans have had the same question, what is American about American art. Did you ever see yourself as becoming an American artist, or when you moved here, did you see yourself as having a sensibility of a European artist simply transplanted to the U.S.? Or is that a stupid question?

MS. DUCKWORTH: My work changed, that is true.

MR. TRAPP: And how did it change?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Instead of coiling everything, I got much freer. I started slab work, and then bigger slab work, and then making things this size, which you didn't in -- you know.

MR. TRAPP: When did you actually start working in porcelain?

MS. DUCKWORTH: At the Central School.

MR. TRAPP: In London.

MS. DUCKWORTH: This lady, this woman, Dora Billington, the first time she saw me doing porcelain in this room downstairs, she said, "Ruth!" in a very stern voice. "When you work in porcelain, your hands have to be clean, your clothes have to be clean. You can't do it with dirty hands." Like a nanny, she was talking. But of course, it really didn't go in very well, because I do porcelain and stoneware in the same studio.

MR. TRAPP: Did you find any trouble being accepted as a woman in the visual arts?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Not very much, really. But there are these schools in America, these teachers like [Kenneth] Ferguson and -- what's the one from Minneapolis, Warren MacKenzie.

MR. TRAPP: Yes.

MS. DUCKWORTH: And they ran departments that were very women-unfriendly. I knew that because some of my students went there. And I've heard it. And they were really making life for women -- I mean, the one assistant I got, Jean Gordon, who married Martin Puryear, came from Kansas City. And Ferguson would come around and talk about her boyfriend and what he was doing instead of criticizing her work. She didn't exist.

MR. TRAPP: When you realized that, did you ever find yourself working differently with your female students?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, never.

MR. TRAPP: Could you tell us how you became established as an artist in Chicago, something of the transplant becoming more firmly rooted? When did you start to have gallery exhibitions? You told us about your show.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, in a way this very first exhibition that I had did --

MR. TRAPP: At the Renaissance Gallery?

MS. DUCKWORTH: -- did a lot of contacts for me, and I sold very well. I had worked so hard that by the time of the opening, I felt so nauseated I didn't even really want to go, because I'd been working and working, you know. But it paid off, if you like.

MR. TRAPP: Do you have any students that you remember who have become themselves leaders in

American ceramics?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. I mean, I had some students who still work in it, and some of my best students, they're not. I mean, I had George Lee, who suddenly decided -- you know on the first day whether they're going to be quite good or not. And I thought, "Oh, he's going to be good." And then he did some beautiful work, and then he decided, "Oh, my God, I'm Chinese." It suddenly became real to him, and he more or less dropped out of school, lived in Chinatown and gave classes, and then he set up as a lettering -- I mean, I was very friendly with him. And finally, all he needed as a studio was a little space like that and did beautiful lettering.

MR. TRAPP: But he dropped out of ceramics.

MS. DUCKWORTH: But he got out of ceramics. And then he died of AIDS. That's the only close friend I had that died of AIDS, which was very sad.

MR. TRAPP: He was one of your first students?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, he was towards the middle of my time there. I had Hardy Schlick, who is still in Chicago and teaches at the Art Center in Hyde Park, and would have been very good, but then he dropped out of -- he still teaches and -- and started into making clavichords. Some of my best students got out of ceramics. I can't -- you know, that's their life, that's up to them.

MR. TRAPP: In Chicago did you have a studio and a kiln only at the university, or did you have one at home too?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, no. When I got the commission for the mural, I had to find my own studio. And I found this area in Pilsen where a Polish landlord owned most of one block. And I took a studio and an apartment, and I was really his first tenant for a huge rehab thing. And he made the whole thing into an art colony. And I lived in Pilsen for quite a long time. I mean, before that, before I got the commission for the mural, I worked with my students in the university.

MR. TRAPP: What contact did you have with other American potters or ceramists and artists in general as your life in the United States became more settled?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I knew this man, and now I can't think of his name. He was a teacher of ceramics at Iowa City, and I should know his name.

MR. TRAPP: Is he still there?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. I'm trying -- [James] McKinnell. McKinnell and his wife, Nan McKinnell. And I knew them. I knew them when I arrived, for some reason. Because one of his students had been my assistant. I think that's why I knew them. I had assistants in England, as well.

MR. TRAPP: When you had students at the university, did you have expectations that they would leave your classroom and go out into the world and become ceramists or artists?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I had no special expectations. That was up to them.

MR. TRAPP: All right. The reason I ask is that I think more and more, universities feel some responsibility for at least trying to place students.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Oh, well I felt -- when I left teaching finally, I said thank God now I don't have to worry about what would become of my students. I mean, I worried what would become of them, but that doesn't mean that I directed them.

MR. TRAPP: But it wasn't an active program, let's say, where the students -- it wasn't an apprenticeship program as such, where you entered and then afterwards you go into industry or do that.

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. No. I tried to see whether I could find a teaching job or something, you know.

MR. TRAPP: Off-hand, do you know about how many students you had in your teaching career? Would you be willing to --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I could work it out. I mean, there were three quarters in a year, and I had 15 new students every quarter plus my graduate students. So that's 18 students three times a year. I mean, that's not all new students. The graduate students were the same for two years.

MR. TRAPP: So let's say, what, you might have 60 students a year, with graduate students?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah, that's about right.

MR. TRAPP: Over 14 years?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: Do you still stay in touch with any of those students?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I stay in touch with about half a dozen of them.

MR. TRAPP: So you had about between 800 and 850 students, let's say.

MS. DUCKWORTH: It doesn't seem that I had quite that many. You may have counted the graduate students twice because, you know, they were there for two years.

MR. TRAPP: All right. Well, that's a sizable number of students to have influenced.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. And Hardy Schlick, who was very good, who was a mathematics student, he left mathematics to do ceramics. He liked it better. There's another one who does these little ships that he builds. What's his name now? He was something else and took a class with me and decided, "Oh, that's better," and dropped out, and said, "You're the only teacher here at the university I ever got on with." And he has made quite a name for himself. I can't remember his name.

MR. TRAPP: Working in clay?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: Chris Unterseher?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No.

MR. TRAPP: John Rolloff.

MS. DUCKWORTH: No.

MR. TRAPP: All right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: If it comes to me, I'll let you know.

MR. TRAPP: How long did it take you to become established?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I never thought about it.

MR. TRAPP: Well, let me ask you a question. Did you have any career plans when you came? I mean --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, my career plan is to survive. That doesn't sound like a career plan.

MR. TRAPP: No, it does. And pardon me if I'm obtuse. Sometimes I feel like I'm a slow learner. But there is a thread I'm finding throughout this whole conversation. Let's go back to London. London. You get a call from the University of Chicago. Here's your chance for a job.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: You mentioned, "I moved to Chicago." I asked you, "Didn't you ever consider teaching elsewhere in the U.S., because there are so many universities?" You mentioned, "Well, no I didn't, because" --

MS. DUCKWORTH: I have been to a lot of the universities, because the way I got to know the United States is by giving workshops. And I would go and take the workshops to see the country, not to go to the same place twice. So I must have been to 60, 70 different universities giving workshops over the years.

MR. TRAPP: Do you still do that?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. I've now retired from that, about last year. I think I've worked enough.

MR. TRAPP: So you were working-- So were you teaching the full 12 months, or did you have time off?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, I had one semester off. I taught in Jerusalem one semester, one summer. I took a sabbatical. No, they didn't pay sabbaticals. You just could take a quarter off. You wouldn't be paid. And I

taught in Jerusalem at the art school there.

MR. TRAPP: Where else did you do this?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, that was basically -- I taught twice in Banth at the summer school in Canada.

MR. TRAPP: Tell me something about your travels. Because I'd asked you -- Once you arrive in the U.S. and you start to make a name for yourself and you're teaching these workshops and teaching outside the U.S., where were you traveling? And did these travels have any influence on the nature of your art?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, the first summer, before Aidron and I totally split up, we went on a 12,000-mile trip in the United States. Somebody drew us where we were to drive. I wasn't sure I was going to stay, and I wanted to see everything, you know, more or less. And we went to Yellowstone. The landscape made a big impact on me and I used that in a mural I made for somebody. I mean, I got a lot of my inspiration from landscape, from nature, basically. And then we went to nearly all the parks. We went to --

MR. TRAPP: Yosemite?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yosemite.

MR. TRAPP: Grand Canyon?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: So, 12,000 miles, you --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, you went down as far as Guatemala City. I had just learned to drive before we went on the trip. I mean, I learned on the trip.

MR. TRAPP: And how long did this trip take?

MS. DUCKWORTH: That took 12 weeks. It was far too much that we saw in the 12 weeks, but I wasn't sure I was going to stay.

MR. TRAPP: When did it dawn on you that you were going to stay?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, soon after that. [Laughs.]

MR. TRAPP: Soon after that?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: And you and your husband split?

MS. DUCKWORTH: We were practically already split, but we thought we would combine our resources to do this trip together so that that way, we could afford it. He just bought a big station wagon, and so, you know, we went in that.

MR. TRAPP: So you're still in Chicago. Where is he, in the meantime?

MS. DUCKWORTH: He is in Syracuse, and then, you know. --

MR. TRAPP: Oh, teaching at the university in Syracuse.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: Did he become a naturalized citizen?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: All right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: He did before me. I waited and waited. Maybe one shouldn't put this in there, but I became a citizen when Reagan stood for president, and I wanted to vote against him. And for that, I became a citizen. [Chuckles.]

MR. TRAPP: No, I think that's perfectly all right. [Laughs.]



MS. DUCKWORTH: [Laughs.] I mentioned this to somebody on my trip to the Antarctic, and this person I mentioned it to must have been a staunch Republican. He wouldn't talk to me after that.

MR. TRAPP: Could you --

MS. DUCKWORTH: I don't think I planned my -- then I belonged to one or two small galleries that went out of business, and then -- do you know who Alice Westphal is?

MR. TRAPP: Yes.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Okay. I became a great friend of Alice Westphal's. She was director of the Evanston Art Center and asked me to teach a summer class there, and that's how we got friendly. And then she rang me up one day and said, "Ruth, Alice -- the other Alice and I have started a gallery." And I said, "You need your head examined." That's what I said. And so that was the beginning of Exhibit A. And in the beginning they were in Evanston, and then they moved downtown to Ontario Street, and then they, you know, moved further.

MR. TRAPP: And again, back to your biography, I mean, if we are recalling dates, was this your --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, Alice and I wrote that book together.

MR. TRAPP: Yes. Was this your first major gallery in the U.S.?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: All right. Carry me through --

MS. DUCKWORTH: And I met people like Richard DeVore, and people, you know, so I met some really good artists through that gallery.

MR. TRAPP: I'd like to know how your art changed once you came to the U.S.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Got bigger.

MR. TRAPP: Got bigger. But also, I find this interesting pattern you've discussed in your life of really never having had the formal education that we think of, at least in the U.S., where one's expected to enter a university.

MS. DUCKWORTH: But you realize that somebody like Hans Coper never had any formal education? I mean, there must be a group of people who never had formal education.

MR. TRAPP: Well, there were also in the U.S. Glen Lukens and even Beatrice Wood. But I'm interested in how your art changed, grew, developed once you came to the U.S.

MS. DUCKWORTH: It was never a conscious change. I mean, I didn't try and change in order to be more like the country I was living in.

MR. TRAPP: Do you now work almost exclusively in porcelain?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, no, no, no. That is a whole misconception, really.

MR. TRAPP: All right. Well, let's clear that up.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah, because I don't think more than -- not even half my time is spent on porcelain, because stoneware, to me, is just as important as porcelain. It's just that the porcelain has sold so well that, you know, when I have work in exhibitions, then the porcelain, which is, you know, smaller and more affordable, sells rather than the other things that are there. So I've got a name. Oh, Ruth Duckworth is these little white porcelains. And that sends Thea to the roof, you know, because it isn't really true.

MR. TRAPP: Well, all right. Here I am, a curator, sitting in front of you and vice-versa, and I just came up with a statement that's really a falsehood because your art is more than just porcelain. I think part of that misconception comes from the fact that if I go to a gallery carrying your work, that's what I'm going to see.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: How does one find Ruth Duckworth's stoneware today?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, you go to that gallery I show in Santa Fe, Bellas Artes, and you will find stoneware there and some porcelain. It was Les -- Lenor Larsen.

MR. TRAPP: Jack?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Jack Lenor Larsen, who put together the first summer show for various artists, and that is many years ago now. And I was one of the group that he put in. I didn't know him. He chose me as one of the group of maybe six artists that were in the summer show. And I've been with various artists ever since, although now they only carry two clay artists, and that is Richard DeVore and me, and the rest is fine art or old art.

MR. TRAPP: You mentioned the word "fine art."

MS. DUCKWORTH: I mean painting and sculpture, [Isamu] Noguchi and stuff like that.

MR. TRAPP: Right. I'd like to go into that direction. How do you identify yourself as an artist? I mean, do you think of yourself as a clay artist, or just artist?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. When people ask me, I say I'm a sculptor.

MR. TRAPP: All right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: That's how I identify myself.

MR. TRAPP: Well, I find it all rather maddening, this whole issue of --

MS. DUCKWORTH: It's maddening and it's boring.

MR. TRAPP: It's ultimately very boring because it -- I just think that our lives are committed to the visual.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: And for you, more than the visual, you mentioned form, the tactile qualities. Could you lay out your life as your art progressed, the gallery system that you began to work with?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I don't know that I had a whole system. In the beginning, I thought that Garth Clark didn't like my work. And basically, secretly I still think that may be true. But, so he's carried my work for years now. He's one of my main galleries in New York. And then I had various artists and then I had -- what's her name in San Francisco who just recently closed the gallery?

MR. TRAPP: Dorothy Weiss?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Dorothy Weiss. And those were my three galleries, other than, you know, Exhibit A, which doesn't exist anymore.

MR. TRAPP: Did these galleries approach you about carrying your work?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. All of them.

MR. TRAPP: Well, you are a major figure. You certainly are one of those names when one thinks of when thinking of contemporary clay in the U.S.

What about exhibitions? After you came to the U.S., what were the venues where you were exhibiting your work? Not just in commercial galleries, but what about museums, universities?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I have done very well in that direction. I have a large, beautiful piece in the Contemporary Museum in Chicago that is always in the basement. There's another museum where my piece is mostly in the basement. I have in Hamburg, in the Crafts Museum, they bought -- I had a one-man show there and they bought seven pieces of mine. And every time I've been there, at least three were on show, and beautifully shown. And I had an exhibition at the Boymans Museum in Rotterdam, and they bought six pieces of mine. And last time I went there, they had three on show and they were beautifully shown. And there isn't a museum in America where I have that relation with.

MR. TRAPP: I think that's unfortunate.

MS. DUCKWORTH: It's very sad. The Curator, Jonathon Fairbanks, from the Boston Fine Arts Museum purchased a wall mural and two other pieces of mine. I was one day curious what it looked like and I went there. I was shocked to death about the tiny room they gave the ceramic collection, the bad arrangement, the poor lighting. Terrible.

MR. TRAPP: That was the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

MR. TRAPP: You had mentioned earlier the possibility of a retrospective. Do you think that will happen?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I have no idea. If it happens, that will be beautifully done. I know that. I know the women who would do it.

MR. TRAPP: Is the curator, Jo Lauria?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes. It will be Co-curated by Thea and Jo Lauria. She is very keen on this, and the person over her is very keen on this. But the director changed after we first talked with this, and the new woman there has not yet made a decision. And so that's where it is.

MR. TRAPP: You still feel, I take it, like an outsider?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, in some ways, I think that's built into my psyche.

MR. TRAPP: I don't think that is a negative. It depends on how you use that.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. Well, that's true, it's not necessarily a negative.

MR. TRAPP: That condition. The psychoanalysis you underwent in England, I take it, was Freudian?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: Did the analysis reinforce that sense of being an outsider? I mean, you literally had come from -- you were talking about your life in Germany and how you came into the world, and that sense of at least being on the margins looking in.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. I find --

MR. TRAPP: The same thing in England.

MS. DUCKWORTH: In a family of five children, I felt they picked me up somewhere on the way.

MR. TRAPP: [Laughs.]

MS. DUCKWORTH: [Laughs.]

MR. TRAPP: The stray cat of the family.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. Which isn't quite true. It wasn't that bad. But that's how I felt.

MR. TRAPP: Well, the reason I'm delving into this is that, has that been a motivating force in your work?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I'm sure it has because some of my family called me "stupid little Ruth" because I was bad in school, you see. My brain is the other side of the brain, and so I wasn't good in school, and so I was called "stupid little Ruth" and I felt I had to do something to say, "I can do this." I don't think it was quite as clearly set forth as I'm now saying, but I'm sure some of the impulse to achieve something came from that.

MR. TRAPP: We're sitting here talking to Ruth Duckworth about her life in clay after her move from England to Chicago.

We were also talking about the museums. When you have a chance, or if you have a chance to go to the Renwick Gallery, you, of course, won't see yourself there. That's not an oversight. The reason I bring this up is I think that an artist's working relationship with a museum is often seen as the museum approaches me and not an active participation. Often museums are strapped for finances, for space, like universities, and the commitment, as you've discovered, on the part of some American museums has shifted, not in the right direction, but the wrong direction, backwards.

Do you feel that at your age, you finally have reached that point in your life as an artist?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. I feel that I am accepted as an artist -- as an artist, yes.

MR. TRAPP: You are.

MS. DUCKWORTH: But not by the museums so much, but as an artist by the ceramic community, in a way.

MR. TRAPP: Oh, absolutely there.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, absolutely. No, I feel very pleased about that.

MR. TRAPP: Now, I would say with the gallery system working to help establish your reputation, and I think in tandem with that, publications and so forth, has there ever been -- have you ever had a substantial catalogue devoted to your work?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I had in a Jewish museum in Germany. I had an exhibition in a Jewish museum in Germany about six years ago or something that was the same curator who was in Hamburg when my show was on in Hamburg, and he was now curator of this Jewish museum. And they showed only artists who were affected by Hitler. They had to emigrate or something or something. And so I fitted in. And so I said I could donate a little money and you make a better catalogue, but let me know how much you think of spending. And then one day, Thea rings me up and says, "Are you sitting down? I've just heard from what's his name, and you owe them \$7,000." So it was a hard book catalogue, you know? They just hadn't consulted me how much they were spending. It was very well done, but it only shows my smaller work. It only shows what was sent to the show and what was already amongst collectors in Germany.

MR. TRAPP: Do you ever do public installations for the public, public art, or outdoor installations?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. I've done two large outdoor pieces, two bronze pieces. I did a 10-foot bronze for a public building in Rockford. It's the Social Administration Building. And I did a 15-foot bronze for a community college in Illinois.

MR. TRAPP: What about commissions? Do you accept commissions?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, those were commissions.

MR. TRAPP: Those were, but I mean, do you accept commissions from collectors? Or has a museum ever commissioned a piece from you? [Pause.] No?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I can't think. I don't know. I very nearly got a commission, and I would have got very white hair over that one, from St. Paul in Minnesota. I gave a slide show in Minneapolis, and this Chinese man comes up to me afterwards and says, "I'm a town planner. Can you come to St. Paul? I have a very big project." And so I looked at it. It was a 3,000-foot wall along the Mississippi.

MR. TRAPP: A 3,000-foot --

MS. DUCKWORTH: -- wall along the Mississippi. And so Thea and I flew there twice and we looked at it, we took photographs. It came to nothing in the end, which I'm very grateful for because the now-governor of Minnesota decided he wanted a football field there. But that would have been the biggest project I ever did, you see.

MR. TRAPP: As a curator, one of the things that really intrigues me when I talk to artists is, are you consciously aware of some of the major influences in your art?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, I'm very aware. Some people don't like -- want me to talk about it.

MR. TRAPP: Oh, please do.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I mean, Moore in sculpture, Moore was one of the earliest, but you might say Dürer was because I just loved Dürer drawings. I loved Michelangelo's sculpture. You know, those were. But I was very young. I wanted to paint like Rembrandt, sculpt like Michelangelo and draw like Dürer. You can't, but that was my thinking, you see. So maybe that were influences. And then there was Henry Moore, and after Henry Moore, it was [Isamu] Noguchi, who I thought was just wonderful. I still think he's wonderful. And then there was all of African art, which is wonderful. And then I like Martin Puryear's work very much.

MR. TRAPP: Oh, yes.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Very much. I mean, somehow I feel very related to what he does.

MR. TRAPP: There's something very clean and elemental and basic about your art.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, there is.

MR. TRAPP: I'm intrigued by your limited palette. Would you discuss that?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. Well, I did one mural for a synagogue outside Chicago. It was called the "Story of the Creation." That has more color. That has the most color that I have used anywhere, maybe. But loud color disturbs me or something.

MR. TRAPP: That's fascinating, because I'm sitting here thinking of those artists who say, "I can't indulge myself enough in color," others who, like you, run, in away, from color, and find your calling in a highly muted or limited palette.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I also like the differences, subtle differences, maybe the same tone, but one is more yellowish, one is more -- you know, something very subtle that works together. That intrigues me a lot.

MR. TRAPP: Well, I think anyone who's familiar with your work would say that color would be terribly jarring because you reduce everything to the elemental forms.

MS. DUCKWORTH: That is true.

MR. TRAPP: And you're supposed to experience those forms. I find there's something bone-like.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I've collected bones.

MR. TRAPP: You have?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: Let's talk about that.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Bones are some of my inspirations. I think they're incredibly beautiful. And then my hobby, after a very physical job like sculpture, my hobby is gardening. So I'm very much into plants and leaves and stuff like that.

MR. TRAPP: I think that shows in your work too. I've noticed -- some of your wall pieces strike me as being glacial. It's as though these rippling effects of -- again I'm back to porcelain, but I imagine them in stoneware.

STAFF: I'm going to switch out tapes.

MR. TRAPP: Okay.

[BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 1]

MS. DUCKWORTH: -- one section of it, so that the city could see something. And they wanted part of it to show the immigrants arriving right at that spot of the Mississippi, and I thought --

STAFF: We're recording again.

MS. DUCKWORTH: -- before the -- sorry.

MR. TRAPP: Ruth, let's go back to your statement earlier that you love bones and you love gardening. As I was saying, I think that these two interests or loves certainly do show up in your art. I was saying that often when I look at some of your wall pieces or your small sculptures, there's a clean, bone-like quality to them. Would you talk a little bit about that, your love of bones and gardening?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, it's very difficult to talk about it. It's something I feel. I mean, I think that bones have wonderful strength in them. You can see the strength and beautiful forms, beautiful organic forms.

MR. TRAPP: And it's just such an absolutely wonderful material. Ivory, bones.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Oh, wonderful. Just beautiful stuff. I mean, I don't have as many bone collections as Henry Moore had, but I have quite a few.

MR. TRAPP: No, but I think the fact that you -- we've brought this up is important. And then your connection with nature. I was telling you earlier, with some of your wall pieces, I often feel as though I'm looking at a bit of -- piece of glacier torn out.

MS. DUCKWORTH: What I designed for St. Paul was a whole section on the Ice Age. I chose the Ice Age because that went before the American Indians, who went before the immigrants. So I made myself a -- you know, I could do what I wanted, they said, so I did the Ice Age. And that's what decided me to go on a trip to the Antarctic. I thought I should see the thing.

MR. TRAPP: I didn't know you had made this trip.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I did. That's where I broke my femur.

MR. TRAPP: And when did you do this?

MS. DUCKWORTH: About a year and a half ago. I went over Christmas-New Year's. I had a friend with me and we went on the ice in the morning and I was fine, and right outside my cabin, I fell and broke my femur.

MR. TRAPP: I'd like to go back to something earlier we discussed, and that was, you work with your hands --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: -- which to some academicians is the mark of a laborer and not an intellect. Could you carry me through some of the creative processes that you follow in making a work of art? That is, do you sketch? In your mind, what do you start with?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I used to sketch quite a lot, and nowadays I just sketch, you know, sketch a lot on the backs of envelopes. And sometimes Thea will pick it and keep it and store it, but mostly it's only meant for me to think.

MR. TRAPP: And the sketches are for what kinds of work?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Oh, just related to what I want to do in the studio.

MR. TRAPP: Do you throw?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah, I throw.

MR. TRAPP: Is there any particular technique that you use more than another?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I coil more than any other. I'm now doing a -- we have a client who has a big wall piece of mine who came recently and said, "We're having a new house in Colorado; have you got a biggish piece?" And they came to the studio, and my biggish piece was four foot. And they said, "No, that's no biggish. No, we want something six or seven feet." So I made eight maquettes for them, which you haven't seen yet. Maquettes are this size, but the idea of the pieces would be that they be about six foot. So I'm working on one now, and I'm working on a three-foot diameter shape that will go on top of a metal base. I'm coiling the whole thing. I like coiling. It's very old-fashioned, but it's like a meditation to me.

MR. TRAPP: Therapeutic.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: Meditation.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: Contemplation. Yes. And what will this be made of?

MS. DUCKWORTH: The base will be probably metal.

MR. TRAPP: But the commission you discussed, will that be porcelain or stoneware?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Oh, no. No, you couldn't make a shape that big with porcelain.

MR. TRAPP: I didn't know if you could make it in sections.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, this will be in one piece, you know.

MR. TRAPP: Oh, all right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I'm having one of my kilns changed to hold it. [Laughs.] So this was the easiest of the six maquettes I made. And so if this is a success, I will make one of the other ones. While I can, I feel I ought to make a group of bigger pieces just because I love making them.

MR. TRAPP: So this is a commission.

MS. DUCKWORTH: One of them will be a commission if these people come back to the studio and have a look at what --

MR. TRAPP: And pay for it.

MS. DUCKWORTH: -- I did really for them, you see. He said, "Do us something six foot."

MR. TRAPP: Do you have any ideas perking in your mind now about major projects you want to do? Is there something that you haven't done?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, this is my major project at the moment, to make some of these six-footers.

MR. TRAPP: Is there a direction you've not taken you would like to take? Is there some area you've not explored you want to explore?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No. No. I mean, this an area, when I first came, I did three very large pieces about six foot, and then I haven't done any, other than murals. I've done no really big free-standing pieces for over 20 years. So now I feel I want to do it, just because when I do something large, it involves a different part of your person. Somehow your body is more, as a whole, involved when you work on something that is really big. You get differently involved.

MR. TRAPP: Well, I'm sitting here thinking of a writer facing a -- right in front of me is a tablet, and with you, where do the ideas -- do you know where your ideas begin when you start a project?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, you know, I've had a psychoanalysis, and a lot of my ideas come from the unconscious. But everybody's ideas in many ways come from their subconscious. Or I work on a piece, I play. I have a whole huge section of the studio with leftover pieces or little things, and then I start building these things together. And then when I find myself smiling, I said, "Hello!" And then I think I've got something. It's that accidental, if you like.

MR. TRAPP: So when you find yourself smiling, you know you're on to something.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, then I know I'm on to something.

MR. TRAPP: Could you tell me if you see a difference between a university-rooted or -educated artist and one who has learned his or her craft outside academe, like yourself?

MS. DUCKWORTH: To me it doesn't matter. It depends on do I like the result, really. You mean they talk differently, maybe.

MR. TRAPP: Possibly.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Possibly.

MR. TRAPP: Could you recall one of your most rewarding educational experiences? Perhaps where you learned a technique or you learned to forget something or ignore it?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I don't know. I don't know that such an event happened as an event.

MR. TRAPP: Do you think of yourself as being a part of a movement, a studio craft movement which is focused on clay, or do you just see yourself as an artist?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I feel I'm part of the studio craft movement who's trying to combine it with the art so you can't make a dividing line, whereas Thea Burger is even upset if I think of myself as part of the craft movement. She always says, "You came from art and that's where you're in," you know. That's a slight difference between us.

MR. TRAPP: Well, I often feel that it's a losing battle --

MS. DUCKWORTH: It is a losing battle. It is a losing battle. And I should ever have this exhibition, then it should travel to Chicago, which is my city, there is no venue there. None.

MR. TRAPP: Really?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Really.

MR. TRAPP: Anyway --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, at least that's what I think.

MR. TRAPP: -- I hope that this does come about because there certainly is a need for looking at the lives of American masters.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: And not just looking at what you've done. Let's say, taking your life, Ruth Duckworth, it's not just you, but how you fit in the context of a greater art scene. How do you see yourself within the greater context of American art? You're now American. You're, I think, thoroughly a part of this culture and a major artist working in clay. Have you ever stopped to think about this, "how I fit into this"?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, the funny thing is, I'm more likely to think as how don't I fit in than how I do fit in. But that's my own personal psychological hang-up, you know.

MR. TRAPP: Well, I think that's fascinating in the sense that sometimes -- have you ever heard someone say, "Well, I don't know what I like, but" -- or I mean, "I don't know what I want, but I know what I don't want"? So you look at it from a different viewpoint. "If I'm not the insider, then I'm the outsider."

MS. DUCKWORTH: I had a very good experience when I was in Amsterdam for this international symposium. That was two years ago or something?

MR. TRAPP: Yes.

MS. DUCKWORTH: And I was one of the speakers.

MR. TRAPP: Yes.

MS. DUCKWORTH: And it was a good experience, very good experience.

MR. TRAPP: Tell me about that.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I had a standing ovation. [Laughs.] It's a pretty amazing experience. For my talk. I talked about Hans Coper, Lucie Rie and Ruth Duckworth for half my time, and about my own work and slides of my work for the other half of the time.

MR. TRAPP: All right. In the about 25 minutes left, 20, 25 minutes left: What did you say about your work in that lecture? What are some of the major points?

MS. DUCKWORTH: The point is, it's visual. It's a visual history. And then I'll bring in a lot of funny anecdotes that are true, that don't fit into a thing like this, but I can be funny when I want to.

MR. TRAPP: Oh, that I have no doubt.

MS. DUCKWORTH: [Laughs.]

MR. TRAPP: I've experienced it. [Chuckles.]

MS. DUCKWORTH: [Laughs.]

MR. TRAPP: But in discussing your own work in Amsterdam, did you give a chronology of your work?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes. I gave chronology from living in England and what did I do in England; here I am, arriving in America.

MR. TRAPP: Well, let me ask you this question. Living in the U.S. and working in the U.S., do you see in your life's passage certain turning points or phases? Are there passage moments in your life that you are conscious of, of, "Yes, I have changed, I have taken a new direction. I didn't realize it, but in 1982, this happened," that sort of thing? Is that possible?

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, I think it happened so much more subtle than that. I mean, when I was in Alfred University, I taught just one semester at Alfred University, and I was going to have a show afterwards with -- what was the name -- a couple in New York that had a gallery. And they're both dead now. And I can't remember their name. Anyhow, I had a show there immediately afterwards. So I did my work for New York while I was in Alfred, and that's where I did these drawings that Loren was mentioning. Well, this was something new. I'd never done this before. I did a drawing and then I superimposed it with porcelain slabs. That's not a conscious decision. "Okay," I said, "that's good together." But it was not an intellectual decision.



MR. TRAPP: Well, I realize that in an artist's life, many things are subtle that we're unaware of, but there are those times that are, whether they're catastrophic, but a change is so noticeable and so immediate that we are consciously aware of it the rest of our life. That's what I was asking.

MS. DUCKWORTH: That's not really happened. I don't think so. No, I did this huge mural for the U of C, and I had never made a mural before. When I said, "Why not me?" I was semi-joking. But I got the commission. So then I waited seven years before the next one, and that was for the Dreisner [?] Bank. That's a German bank in Chicago. And they wanted a 20-foot by 10-foot mural.

MR. TRAPP: I have not so much a question as I have something I'd like to talk to you about right now that just came into my mind. Let's say Kenneth Trapp comes to Ruth Duckworth, I coming to you as a curator, and I would like to propose a major retrospective of your art, and we're going to sit down. Could you, in a few sentences that we could build on, give me a framework to develop this exhibition? What are the things that you would want me, as a curator working with you, to give to the public, to give to future historians, scholars, to give to students who may be inspired by you?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, you would have to have a very good collection of small white porcelains because that's special to me.

MR. TRAPP: All right.

MS. DUCKWORTH: As long as it's not the whole exhibition, then I have no objection to that.

MS. DUCKWORTH: In a way, what you and I are doing now is all theoretical. It's hypothetical. We're shaping an exhibition.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: And a curator works with an artist to do that. The guidance would come from you. You want a series of small porcelains.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I worked for four years in England and kept no records. So basically, those four years are ...

MR. TRAPP: Gone.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Gone. Mostly gone.

MR. TRAPP: They're only gone record-wise, but they're not gone memory-wise.

MS. DUCKWORTH: No.

MR. TRAPP: So that's where we retrieve those, because you're living, and then we put them into the record.

MS. DUCKWORTH: To my feeling, I did some beautiful stone carvings, and they really don't exist anymore. The one I loved the most, I brought with me and I had in the courtyard between my apartment and the studio in Pilsen, and somebody stole it. And that was my favorite stone carving. I have two others. But I did some really quite beautiful stone carvings. We [can/can't ?] show them.

MR. TRAPP: What else should we include in this exhibition?

MS. DUCKWORTH: We should include some -- it's very difficult to move some of this stuff.

MR. TRAPP: Let's don't even think about that.

MS. DUCKWORTH: One of these six-foot figures that I did in the beginning would be very good there.

MR. TRAPP: But what do you want me to say, or whoever's writing this? What is the core -- what are the core -- I hate this term -- but what are the core values of Ruth Duckworth that we want to bring forth in --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Variety is a core value.

MR. TRAPP: Variety.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I mean, people come in my studio and say, "How many people work here?"

MR. TRAPP: So we get that across. What about --

MS. DUCKWORTH: And it is true that I have made more murals than most people, that I have got a name for murals, not so much for --

MR. TRAPP: I don't think people know that.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Oh. The committee asked me just particularly to talk about murals when I was in Amsterdam. I've made a lot of murals.

MR. TRAPP: I'm talking about -- to many of us, that isn't the first thing that would come to mind. That's what I'm saying.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. But you see, some of those are difficult to show. You can't show them.

MR. TRAPP: Well, there are various ways of handling it.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I mean, then there are some smaller ones in people's houses that one could borrow, that's for sure. But you can't do any of the ones that are installed.

MR. TRAPP: Well, the reason I'm asking these questions is that frequently by the end of a project with an artist, there's an established relationship between the curator and the artist, so that at the end, the artist begins to open up and things start spilling out that ordinarily might not be forthcoming.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I thought I'd spilled out quite a lot.

MR. TRAPP: [Laughs.]

MS. DUCKWORTH: [Laughs.]

MR. TRAPP: Well, yes, but not enough. So it's really a way of making the visual -- for a curator, making the visual understandable through the written and then going back to the visual, so that both are reinforcing.

MS. DUCKWORTH: You want it to be more conscious.

MR. TRAPP: I guess that's the role, in a way, of a curator of helping the artist to make it more conscious too. But it's not even that. I don't mean to put words in your mouth. But it's finding out what you want to be said about your work, then me telling you what may not be apparent to you.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I mean, one of the underlying reasons for working is something totally different. I mean, when I was young and I was depressed, art helped me out of that. So part of my wish in my work is that it is a cure for people, that it's -- what do you call it? There's a better word for that.

MR. TRAPP: Therapeutic?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Therapeutic.

MR. TRAPP: Contemplative?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

MR. TRAPP: I have this sense -- correct me if I'm wrong -- that essentially you're a loner.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah, I am.

MR. TRAPP: You've referred several times to yourself as an outsider, but at your shows in the past --

MS. DUCKWORTH: I think I would have liked to not be a loner, but that's what I am. [Laughs.]

MR. TRAPP: Well, I don't see it as a negative.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I mean, I've lived alone, for one thing, for 35 years now. It's a long time.

MR. TRAPP: But I think to a person who actually stands in front of your work, there is this thoughtful, contemplative work, there's something soothing and calming in the work.

MS. DUCKWORTH: That's meant to be that.

MR. TRAPP: So that's deliberate choice.

MS. DUCKWORTH: That's deliberate.

MR. TRAPP: But it brings me back to this sense of being alone and working, in your art, through things. So we've picked up a thread and now we carry it back to Manchester. And it's amazing how things pick up, disappear, pick up, disappear, in a life. And that's what I'm getting in this wonderful discussion, is how your life has progressed. Your sense of being an outsider, of being a loner. Just the whole discussion of the lack of color, for example, in your art.

MS. DUCKWORTH: It's not a total lack of color, but it's a lack of intense color, if you like.

MR. TRAPP: Absolutely. In this publication that I was reading earlier, I wanted to go into it.

MS. DUCKWORTH: We could send you this German thing from this Jewish museum.

MR. TRAPP: I'd like it.

MS. DUCKWORTH: It is in German, but there is an English translation that comes with it.

MR. TRAPP: I would also like to ask you, are you seen by Germans as a German artist?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah, probably. Somehow, in a funny way, the Germans are more aware of me than the English, young English artists, and they don't learn any art history, and many of them are not aware of me at all, which is rather peculiar, I think. I had a big influence at that time.

MR. TRAPP: May I bring something to your attention --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes.

MR. TRAPP: -- in this publication of 1977. A quotation. "My color sense consists not of the appreciation between one color and another, nor in color as such, but between its grayness and clarity, paleness and strength." I think that is absolutely marvelous. That it's not so much hue as you're taking about clarity, strength, coming through that limited palette, as I call it.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Now, this book we wrote forever ago, '72 or something --

MR. TRAPP: Seventy-seven.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Seventy-seven. And I still think that's one of the better publications about me.

MR. TRAPP: Do you think there's such a thing as a definite maleness, femaleness, to some claywork --

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, some people have said, "Oh, you're such a female artist." And I said, "Huh? Come again?" I don't think of myself as a female artist with female forms, but if it's there, it's there.

MR. TRAPP: I don't think I'm even thinking so much of forms. And I know it can be an absolutely maddening question because it's so, in a way, presumptive. What I meant was I'm thinking of this posturing. I think of [Peter] Voulkos as very posturing.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah, well it is posturing. Macho. It's very, very macho.

MR. TRAPP: Macho. Do we reinforce that culturally? I mean, I just can't imagine a woman doing what he does.

MS. DUCKWORTH: The American culture is very macho, I think.

MR. TRAPP: And rather gender specific.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. TRAPP: But that's the way we're conditioned. I don't know if we're any different from other cultures. I don't know other cultures.

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, I don't know that either.

MR. TRAPP: Is there anything that you would like to discuss with me about your life, your art, that hasn't come up yet? Any point that you want to make?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, we seem to have covered quite a lot of ground.

MR. TRAPP: How would you characterize yourself if, let's say, I had to give you an index card, and in 25 words or less, "I am." You were to answer some questions, "Ruth Duckworth, I am." How would you complete some of those questions so that I might know more about Ruth Duckworth?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I could make a -- I don't know this answers this -- I could make a postscript behind all this and say --

MR. TRAPP: Oh, please do.

MS. DUCKWORTH: -- the thing that matters most to me is to save the Earth. It matters to me more than my career.

MR. TRAPP: But see, we didn't even get into that.

MS. DUCKWORTH: We didn't get into that, no.

MR. TRAPP: That's fantastic. Let's talk about that.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, it consumes me, in a way, you know. I find it so tragic what is happening. And I'm so aware of what's happening.

MR. TRAPP: With global warming?

MS. DUCKWORTH: With global warming, with --

MR. TRAPP: Pollution?

MS. DUCKWORTH: -- what happens to animals, that we take all the Earth's living space away from them, and oh, just endless.

MR. TRAPP: So, what would you do if you could change this?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, it makes me unhappy. I pay out a lot of money every year trying to -- since I don't have the time to put it in, so all I do is send as much money as I can to the organizations that I think can make a difference, like the Nature Conservancy and so on and so forth. I wish I had more money, and then I could pay one organization so much that I could, you know, be of more influence than what I am. But the first year the accountant looks at my books, she said, "Does Ruth know what she's doing?" And Thea said, "Yes, she does. It's her hobby."

MR. TRAPP: Are you political, politically motivated?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I think I'm more Democrat than anything, but I'm not thrilled with the Democrats that much more than the others, you know. But politics is such a weird thing.

MR. TRAPP: So you have a consuming passion, as you put it now, for efforts to help save the Earth as we know it.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes. If only people cared more. Like Jane -- I met Jane Goodall sometime in New York a couple of years ago. There was something going on, and I have a friend in New York who said, "Why don't you come here and meet Jane Goodall," so I did. There's a wonderful person of the 20th century.

MR. TRAPP: I think we often become, in discussions with artists, so focused on the artist, thinking that an artist is only -- his or her life is only about --

MS. DUCKWORTH: No, that's why I thought I should mention this.

MR. TRAPP: I agree. I think that's phenomenal. This is a totally different direction. Does this passion and compassion ever reveal itself in your art?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well, I guess it must sometime.

MR. TRAPP: When did you first start feeling this strength of commitment?

MS. DUCKWORTH: I started -- I came to Chicago, and I have these friends, the Bishops, who organized the art fair in Hyde Park, and I went to their house and there was a *Sierra* magazine. That was the first time I saw a magazine that said some of the things that were going on, and it was all new to me.

MR. TRAPP: This was the *Sierra Club*?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. It was a real shock. That was 1965. And I then joined the *Sierra Club*. That was the first one. And then I've over the years joined far too many. I mean, it is slightly crazy what I do, but that's what I have to do.

MR. TRAPP: I like the way you put that: "It's what I have to do." And the same applies to your art. It's what you have to do.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah. Well, Thea sums my career up as somebody who did what she wanted to do. She has one way of summing it up.

MR. TRAPP: How do you feel about your life now?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Well ... [pause].

MR. TRAPP: Much more to do? Miles to go?

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yes, there's more to do. Thea told me to think what I wanted to do when I couldn't work anymore; I ought to buy something else now when I couldn't manage my house anymore. And then finally -- I didn't do this for three years, and then she said -- then I thought, well, maybe I should try this, and I talked to people. And then she said, "I know, you're talking to everybody and you think about it all the time, so stop thinking about it. I think you have enough money to stay in your building whatever happens, and you'll get somebody to help. Which is not an answer really, because you may not find some good person to help you, but ... . So I'm staying in my building as long as I can and not make any other plans.

MR. TRAPP: Well, I wish you many years of continued productivity. Greater representation in museums.

MS. DUCKWORTH: That would be nice, wouldn't it?

MR. TRAPP: Yes.

MS. DUCKWORTH: I mean, that is something I would like.

MR. TRAPP: That's a goal to work toward.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Yeah, that's a goal, yeah, that a museum would buy something and show it well.

MR. TRAPP: I bet this will happen.

MS. DUCKWORTH: It doesn't sound like something impossible, does it?

MR. TRAPP: No. No. Not at all.

This is Kenneth Trapp interviewing Ruth Duckworth, Friday, April 27, 2001.

Ruth, thank you very much.

MS. DUCKWORTH: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

References to Thea:

These are references to Thea Burger. Ruth Duckworth's Agent and Artistic Manager since 1982.

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