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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Bettina Brendel,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Bettina Brendel on August 23, 2001. The interview took place in the artist's studio in Los Angeles, and was conducted by Paul Karlstrom for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Pasadena Art Alliance Transcribing Project.

Bettina Brendel has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

PAUL KARLSTROM: Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, an interview with the artist, Bettina Brendel, at her studio on Kenter Avenue in Los Angeles. This is called Kenter Canyon, I do believe.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: The interviewer is Paul Karlstrom. The date is August 23, 2001. This is tape one, side A. Now, Bettina, here we finally are, doing this wonderful interview. We are going to have fun. We have known one another for, actually, quite a few years. You have been a good supporter and friend of the arts.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Oh, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I think this is a marvelous opportunity for you to become a subject rather than just a member and supporter. What interests me, and surprises me a little bit, when I think of it, you have actually been here for, really, quite a long time. When did you come to Los Angeles?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I came to Los Angeles in 1954 from New York where I had lived. I arrived, from Europe, in 1951 in New York. So I consider myself a real California artist, although with roots in New York and Germany because I was born in Germany. I was born, now you would like to know my age? [Laughs.]

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, yes, I guess we should.

BETTINA BRENDEL: On October the 24th, 1922.

PAUL KARLSTROM: This is good. We want to talk about the pre-California times, to get some idea of your background. You were born in Germany, what city?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I was born in Lüneburg.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Lüneburg. L-Ü-N-E-B-U-R-G.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Right

PAUL KARLSTROM: Which is where?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Which is about one hour south of Hamburg, the north of Germany. This is a very colorful city, which was started in 1200, and old medieval buildings—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you get to grow up in a medieval building?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, no. My parents were modernists. They supported the Bauhaus. My father was a doctor of literature and philosophy, and my mother also had her doctorate in philosophy. We lived a little on the outskirts of Lüneburg in a very new building. There were two apartments in the building, where I remember my father's tremendous library and we were always involved with either literature or art, already as children.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yours was a very intellectual family.

BETTINA BRENDEL: It was, yes, it was.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Were either of your parents professors?

BETTINA BRENDEL: My father was, yes, a professor there at the Wilhelm Raabe Schule, which was—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Would you spell that for the transcriber?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes. W-I-L-H-E-M, and then new word, R-A-A-B-E, Raabe. He was a German writer and poet, a scholar [inaudible]. This is a high school that, in the European way, gives two years more than high school. It entitles you, after you've absolved this type of examination in school, the Abitur. You are ready to go to the university, and can get your PhD. You don't have to go for your baccalaureate and so on.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

BETTINA BRENDEL: So my father taught History and German literature there. He was a very courageous man during the time of Hitler. My mother was Jewish, by the way.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And he was not?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No. My father came from a very well-respected old family in Hannover, Germany. H-A-N-N-O-V-E-R

PAUL KARLSTROM: That one they know.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Right. My mother, they met at the University Erlangen in the south of Germany. My mother was from Russia, born in Russia, and living in Riga Latvia.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh yeah. I just wrote an essay about a Latvian artist from Riga.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Oh you did?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes.

BETTINA BRENDEL: As a young woman she came to Germany because in Russia, in those Baltic states, a woman was not allowed to go to the university. So she, on her own, without knowing anybody in Germany, went there to study and get a degree and be active. I remember I always admired that very much. She met my father and eventually they got married. He had different teaching positions until he landed in Lüneburg. By the way, I would like to say, I am very proud. A few years ago, how do you say that, the government, the state, you know, they suggested that [a street in] the city of Lüneburg be named after my father. So there is now a Robert Brendel Street in Lüneburg.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What was his name?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Robert. Brendel. I kept my name.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What was your mother's name? May as well identify her.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Xenia Bernstein. X-E-N-I-A Bernstein.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Thank you. All right, so now I have a picture of the world as you came into it.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Marvelous. You got to live in a modernized town.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, right. My parents supported the Bauhaus, you know, because my father was not only a teacher, a professor of literature, he wrote poetry, and was quite a well known poet at that time. He was published by the Avant-garde publishers. I have a few of his books in German and he published a book of poetry. This was German Expressionism, that he was part of. Language was used in an Expressionistic way, as the artist of that time used paint.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did he have any contact with some of the painters?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, yes. Painters not, but with Kurt Schwitters. He was a close friend of Kurt Schwitters and you know how to spell it, K-U-R-T.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Ah.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Because Schwitters also came from Hannover and that's how they met and they stayed in

touch. I remember Schwitters visiting our house in Lüneburg. Schwitters said, "I've got something for you." I was a little girl then, he came to the apartment in Lüneburg, where I lived, and he said, "I've got something for you." And out of his pocket he took a turtle, a live turtle! And gave me this turtle. On one of his visits he recited his famous poem that is only sounds, you know, that has been written about many times now, and so on. We didn't see his magnificent Merz structure that he did, but of course, I saw it later on. It's now in the museum in Hannover, you can see the Schwitters structure.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Speaking of Schwitters, just a slight digression here, I wondered if you knew Kate Steinitz.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, I met her, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You met her here, of course.

BETTINA BRENDEL: She was a little standoff-ish with me. She guarded the Schwitters as her own property, so to speak. I had children's books by Schwitters that he gave us, you know. He designed some children's books. I still have those. I remembered when he recited his poem and our housemaid, in the kitchen, whispered to my mother, "Is this gentleman good in his mind, right in his mind?"

PAUL KARLSTROM: We have, by the way, Kate's papers at the Archives.

BETTINA BRENDEL: You do? Oh, good.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Her daughter, Ilse Berg comes in once a week, she's very old, and she, you know, goes through and identifies.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, I like that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's interesting, since you have that contact with Schwitters, I would imagine that she would have found that interesting.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Apparently not.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Not so much. I told her that I had children's books but she really felt that she was the only one who could talk about him only, you know.

Well, then, you know, in 1933 my whole world changed. You know, when Hitler took over. My parents were very concerned. By the way, I should probably mention, my grandfather in Hannover, he was really an imposing figure, and I like to think of him with tenderness and admiration. He was a mining engineer, trained as a mining engineer, and was asked by the Guggenheim Foundation in Mexico to become the director of one of the mining areas in Pachuca. That's where my father was born, my father was born in Pachuca, Mexico and he lived there until he was ready for high school and his father wanted to go back to Germany. And so my father spoke fluently Spanish and loved that language all his life. He translated poetry by Garcia Lorca, for example. He always had a small circle of friends where he was able to read his own poetry and other poet's work.

PAUL KARLSTROM: This adds to, what sounds like, a very, very rich cultural, intellectual environment for you. Maybe not so unusual because we are talking about Germany, which has all these marvelous traditions and so forth. Do you remember how you began to, I don't know, get a sense of where you wanted to go, what the direction was for you. Do you remember when you began to get some ideas?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, first of all, I also wrote poetry, you know. I always wanted to be an artist. I was always doing drawings and was very imaginative. Designs with colored pencils.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did they tend to be abstract?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Not yet, in the beginning I was more influenced by artists like Ernst Barlach, B-A-R-L-A-C-H. I cannot call him abstract, but he was an Expressionist artist and had these figures in motion, you know, very strong, heavyset figures. So I was very impressed by that. And Käthe Kolwitz too. I was impressed by German Expressionist art very early and was fascinated by it. My parents had several prints in the house that stimulated my imagination. So I started figurative but abstract simplified. I even have three old clay figures, up there, that are from that period when I was 14 years old.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Now what about your schooling? Obviously, within your family, you had examples and inspiration along the artistic line. In your school, were you able to focus and concentrate on art?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, yes. The school in Lüneburg was very encouraging. I adored my French teacher who

introduced me to French poetry and literature. Now I'm talking about elementary school, we had, in elementary school, a very creative teacher. A woman who made us write plays that were performed in school and also to write poetry, and I adored her. It was hard to leave her, and it was very sad to hear afterwards, that she had committed suicide during Hitler time. These people, you know, were ousted from their professions. All these people, who were forward minded, avant-garde, supporting abstract ideas that were considered [inaudible], how do you translate it in English? There was an exhibition here of this.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yeah, yeah. Degenerate.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Degenerate art, right, yes, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Your teacher, this was your elementary school teacher, your art teacher?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, she was the teacher for all writing, reading, math, at that time, in elementary school she taught everything.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Was she Jewish?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, no.

PAUL KARLSTROM: She wasn't, but she still committed. She just couldn't bear the changes.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Really.

BETTINA BRENDEL: It was so oppressive. Then it started, you know, my father was removed from his position as professor and transferred to another school in Wesermünde, near Bremen.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Tell you what, how do you spell that?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Wesermünde, W-E-S-E-R M-U-N-D-E. Munde, right, this is near Bremen.

PAUL KARLSTROM: This is where he was transferred.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Transferred?

PAUL KARLSTROM: To a different school?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Different school, and the family went with him.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Why was he transferred?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Because he was married to a Jewish woman.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Why was it okay to go to that different school?

BETTINA BRENDEL: It turned out to be just a sham, because he was there for six months or so, and then he got this letter of—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Dismissal.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Dismissal, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: He was fired.

BETTINA BRENDEL: He was fired, and he got a very, very minimal pension, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So, with that, at what point did your family realize it would be prudent to leave Germany? Do you remember any of that?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, no. This comes much, much later. My family never left Germany. By the way, I like to mention that my father wrote to the Guggenheim family for a visa in 1934, I think it was. He was applying for a visa because he wanted to take the family to America and they refused. And we were outraged about it. And then, of course, Hitler came and it was impossible to leave the country. After my father was dismissed and lost his job, forever, you know, he could not be hired any place else. We moved to Hamburg, the big city, because my parents thought there would be more possibilities and it would be easier to disappear there, so to speak.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And that was in 1936?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, in '34.

PAUL KARLSTROM: All right.

BETTINA BRENDEL: '36? Why did you think '36?

PAUL KARLSTROM: I don't know. It was a guess. But that, I'm sure, didn't turn out to be exactly the case.

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, of course not.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Please tell us.

BETTINA BRENDEL: But we were fortunate when my grandfather passed away and left us, my parents, a sum of money. They were able to buy their own house in the suburbs of Hamburg, which was a very great advantage because we would not be harassed by neighbors, and so on. Although, we were harassed by neighbors and we had one neighbor there, a real big guy in the Nazi party and he was constantly harassing us. We lived in the suburbs and it was a very nice house. It was modern and had a little garden with fruits and berries, and we picked them in the summer. But there was a big black cloud over our heads.

I remember my father tried to stay in touch with the rest of the world with his short wave radio, and he moved it away from the outside walls because there were rumors that the Nazi's went around and listened with listening devices to what people were listening to on the radio, can you imagine? So over the radio, we heard that the Americans had landed on the coast of France, you know, because the Germans didn't report it and the papers didn't mention it.

It was all very secretive, and a very sad atmosphere I was living in. I remember my father giving secret lectures in his house, and the students had to come one after the other, they could not come in groups. He read poetry by the poets who were not allowed to be taught, during Hitler, you know. Like Heinrich Heine and other poets and writers who were part of German literature, historically. For a long time we were hiding a Jewish lawyer in our house for several weeks before he could escape to London, because they were looking for him.

And then one thing I will just quickly mention, my mother, of course, was constantly under the black cloud of being deported to a concentration camp. One time, a friend of ours, a doctor, took her to the hospital under the pretext that she had to have surgery, and was not able to make the transportation. And they didn't want to have sick people on the train, you know. The next time—I heard this recently, too, from someone in Germany, who also wanted to hear my life story. I came home and my house was empty, nobody was home, and I had to climb through the window that always was open. I remember, on the table in the hall, there was a letter that my mother had to report at a certain time and at a certain place downtown, and we knew what that meant, you know. They never said, "bring your clothing", they didn't even say that! The people just disappeared. My father came home, then, and my family came home, and—No, I didn't mention my sisters. Did I mention my sisters?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Not yet.

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, all right. I had two sisters, yes; I have two sisters, a younger sister and an older sister. The older sister, during the war, lived in Berlin. The younger sister stayed with us. When my father came home, he quickly made reservations with some friends that we knew, German friends, who lived in the country. My mother had to take a train, you know, and I went with her. I was the daughter who had the task of helping her get there. These friends lived out in the country. They were Germans, and they took great care and took a chance, for themselves for their safety, to harbor my mother. She stayed there for several months.

PAUL KARLSTROM: This must have been very near the end of the war and liberation.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, yes. And so you can imagine that the end of the war was liberation we looked forward to.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, it sounds to me, as if, living under that dark cloud, still, your family was fortunate, because always there was some way to evade the Germans.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, right, yes. My father was very courageous, he wrote letters to the people in charge, you know. The high Nazi's there. He wrote letters and defended the right of the individual, you know. A book has been published about him and I can show it to you.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, really?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I'm not talking much about my mother but my mother was a loving person. She tried to keep

us all together. It was interesting that both of my sisters took piano lessons. That was almost common in Germany, you know. Both went into the music field, which is interesting. I studied the violin but after studying for 16 or 14 years, I realized that I would never be a great violinist, so I gave it up.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What about your, [inaudible] became an artist. What about then, your art training. You talked about elementary school, and you haven't said anything about after that

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, I went to the Lyceum in Hamburg and then I applied to become a student at the State Academy of Art in Hamburg. Since I was half Jewish, I was not allowed to attend that school. There was the private art school and [inaudible]. There was a woman director, she was very intelligent, and she was on our side, you know, and offered me a stipendium so that I could study there. I studied for two years at the, now this is difficult to spell

PAUL KARLSTROM: All right.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Kunstschule means art school.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That one I can do.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, and the name is Schmilinsky. S-C-H-M-I-L-I-N-S-K-Y.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That was the name of that woman, owner and director.

BETTINA BRENDEL: The Kunstschule was in Hamburg, Eppendorf, that was part of the city.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You went there?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I went there. I was then, uh, at Schmilinsky, I have here, '41-'43, and so I was 19 to 21.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What kind of instruction?

BETTINA BRENDEL: They had excellent instruction. Actually, two artists who were also defamed by Hitler, you know, taught there. There was a wonderful spirit there, and the owner was also in sympathy with us. So my teacher was Erich Hartmann, Hartmann, H-A-R-T, Hartmann.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Two N's?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Two N's, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That was your main teacher?

BETTINA BRENDEL: My main teacher, yes, and I kept a very close friendship with him.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Was he one of the discredited artists?

BETTINA BRENDEL: He was a German Expressionist and a figurative artist, but he was not ambitious to show. He was very satisfied to teach. Of course, he had private showings in his home in Blankenese.

PAUL KARLSTROM: He didn't get called out or get singled out as a degenerate?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A.]

PAUL KARLSTROM: I'm enjoying this interview with Bettina Brendel. This is tape 1, now side B. And you were about to tell us

BETTINA BRENDEL: To talk about the Kunstschule Schmilinsky. One memory I have, at that time, during the war and also shortly after the war there was a shortage of models. You could not find anybody who would want to sit or could sit—by the way, the studios were unheated, it was ice cold. You never had nude modeling then. One time when the model didn't show up, and we were very desperate, the lady owner of the Kunstschule Schmilinsky, who knew me quite well and we were good friends, asked me if I would pose for the students. And so I posed in the nude and I didn't feel much embarrassed about it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You said they didn't usually have nude models.

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, because—

PAUL KARLSTROM: —It was cold.

BETTINA BRENDEL: It was cold, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But you were brave, you didn't mind.

BETTINA BRENDEL: No. It was a cold studio.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Good for you.

BETTINA BRENDEL: And Hartmann was conducting the overview and correcting the students, talking about my anatomy, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That must have been really interesting. You didn't—you say it was easy for you to do.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, yes. It was not a huge group, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: If you hadn't been working much with nude models, it would have been an exceptional session and it wasn't as if you were prepared even, for that activity. You really jumped into it.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I jumped in to help out, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's great, good for you. I bet your fellow students were grateful.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I have not met anybody who said "I saw you in the nude at that time."

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's the only time you did it.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Well, something else comes up then. I was traveling, during the war, to the Kurische Nehrung. Do you know where that is? It is at the Baltic Sea, it is a stretched peninsula, there was a wonderful—

PAUL KARLSTROM: —Resort?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Resort, yes, where artists used to come and they painted. For example, in the restaurant, the restaurant was plastered with famous artists' paintings, by Beckman, by Hofer, by—who else? You name it. German Expressionists.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Kirchner?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Kirchner, yes. They painted their way there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Maybe Pechstein?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Pechstein too, yes, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: All the big ones.

BETTINA BRENDEL: All there, yes, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: They went to this town.

BETTINA BRENDEL: They went to this town; it was a beautiful resort with dunes, like the Sahara, you know, for miles and miles.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You will have to spell that.

BETTINA BRENDEL: It is called the Kurische, K-U-R-I-S-C-H-E. Nehrung, Nehrung means peninsula. N-E-H-R-U-N-G.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay, thank you. This was a nice little resort town.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, a resort town. I went with my teacher there. There was a beach there, where you went nude. Sunning in the nude, and nobody ever thought anything about it. I got home and was suntanned from it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So is this a famous place? This is a well-known thing?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, it is.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So almost a Utopian idea of nature. They could go out and have their girlfriends, wives, and mistresses run around and create those famous pictures of them. Was there some of that?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, but, you know, the nude beach, of course, was so wide and so big that you could hardly see the other people sitting there. It was not like the beaches here, no.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you say they were paid to go there? Some of the German Expressionists?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, no. They used it as a summer resort. They painted there. They painted there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And their paintings were in the restaurant or?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, and they gave them to it. They ate a good meal there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And paid with their paintings.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Paid with their paintings. They gave *more* than one good art piece, and they got more than *one* good meal?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Interesting, one special café, one special restaurant.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I don't remember the name.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Can you see it, in your memory?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, definitely.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Is it big or little?

BETTINA BRENDEL: It was big; it was kind of narrow and long.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Was it rustic, with wooden tables?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, no.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It wasn't like a camp.

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, no.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I am trying to picture this.

BETTINA BRENDEL: It had, of course, old-fashioned chairs, but it was a structure that was common during that time. The furniture in the restaurant was common for that time.

PAUL KARLSTROM: White tablecloths?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, yes, very—and waiters and so on.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, that's nice. And wonderful paintings.

BETTINA BRENDEL: And wonderful paintings. And I think, just recently I read that many of the writers went to this place and used it as their summer resort. They had some little bungalows there. They built bungalows there. This is the Baltic Sea there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So that's interesting.

BETTINA BRENDEL: My sister, the older sister, she kind of takes care of the family history, in a way, and she just visited there again and wrote me about it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You went with your teacher, was that Erich?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Erich Hartmann, no, with a lady.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That was more proper.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, she owned the Kunstschule Schmilinsky.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What was her name? We may as well mention it.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Oh, yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Do you remember her name?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, Schmilinsky, God, her first name—her name was Gabriele Schmilinsky.

PAUL KARLSTROM: We'll just call her Madame.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I cannot think of it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Her last name was—

BETTINA BRENDEL: Oh, yes! Gabriele Stock was her name, she got married later. S-T-O-C-K.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Gabriele Stock?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, at that time she was not married.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That gives her credit. At least, that identifies her.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, her son is still living in Munich. A few years ago, he sent some photographs of myself, as a young girl, nude, on the beach!

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's great! They will be in your papers then, right?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Maybe.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, they have to be.

BETTINA BRENDEL: His mother had collected them and kept them.

PAUL KARLSTROM: How interesting. You were a real Bohemian then. That was sort of like [inaudible].

BETTINA BRENDEL: It sounds like that, and then I became very conservative.

PAUL KARLSTROM: These things happen. So, move us along a little bit, because I am now getting an idea of your increasing involvement in art. Eventually as a profession, how did it all unfold?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I think I should mention that after the war, I was able to enroll in the State Academy of Art.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Where you were rejected before.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, where I was rejected. I attended two years and then two years, not the usual art studies, what is this?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sorry.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I went to the State Academy for two years. One of the teachers was my old teacher, Erich Hartmann. I had other teachers also. I had a teacher who taught design and she liked my designs very much and sometimes purchased them to give them to or show them to fabric designers.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Hmm. That's sort of Bauhaus-y isn't it though?

BETTINA BRENDEL: It was all-encompassing. Well, maybe I thought I might go into that field, because art didn't seem to support people very well. Then, after the war, I wanted to get away from my family and be grown up and independent so I went to Munich. I enrolled in a private school there for a while, but I didn't attend very much. But I was steeped in the art that Munich had. Munich has wonderful exhibitions.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh yes.

BETTINA BRENDEL: And the city itself was a very nice city. Very soon, I met a group of immigrants. This was, of course, after the war. I met a group of immigrants, from Austria and the European East, like Poland and Russia and Romania. I met a gentleman from Romania, who was in charge of placing displaced persons and helping them to immigrate to the United States. His name was Arthur Spitzer, and we got married. We got married in 1949 and he was preparing to immigrate to the United States and, of course, I was very excited about that too. We came to the United States in 1951 and we didn't take a boat, we flew.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That must have been the early times of flying trans-Atlantic.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, I had never flown in my life. That was my first flight. I was very, very airsick, I remember.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Was that Pan Am?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Probably, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: TWA, Pan Am, I guess.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, it was Munich to New York.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you have to stop somewhere?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I think not, I don't remember that. It took long. I arrived at the airport and was greeted by my husband's sister and her husband, who lived in Brooklyn. We stayed with them for a while. My daughter was born there, in 1951, that same year. My daughter, Samantha Violet Spitzer.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Samantha Violet?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, Violet.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay.

BETTINA BRENDEL: You can guess that the name Violet was my idea. I loved the color.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So here you are established in New York, and a new mother.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: At what point? Probably the art activity was suspended a bit.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Well, I did paint a little.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Were you able to paint?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, I even had an exhibition in New York.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You did?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, at the Lynn Kottler Gallery, K-O-T-T-L-E-R. I forgot what street he was on. 57th Street, good neighborhood.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's pretty good, I mean *right away*, like a year after you?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, it was probably a year after, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's pretty good. How did you arrange that, knew Kottler, or?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Of course, the first thing I did, when I was able to get out of the house away from the baby, was to look at art galleries and museums in New York. That is *the city*, you know, that one hears about. So I met some people, and talked to some gallery people and Kottler gave me a show. Years later I met him, by accident, again. I reminded him of it, and he said "The only thing I remember", he could only remember vaguely, "the only thing about you I remember was how enthusiastic you were about art and how confident that one day you would be productive", you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: The success.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: This was Kottler?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Kottler.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It was a man.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, Lynn Kottler.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Lyn?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Two N's, I think. I must say—oh, I forgot a lot. I forgot this art historian and art critic that I knew, that I met in Munich. He was British and his name was John Anthony Thwaites. T-H-W-A-I-T-E-S. John Anthony Thwaites.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Art historian?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Art historian, art critic.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What was he doing there?

BETTINA BRENDEL: And he wrote about the new art group there. After the war, there was excitement about abstract art in Germany, you know. He encouraged the abstract artist to work and wrote about them. The German artists formed a group, Zen 49. Zen, like Buddhism, and 49. That was the year that this group was formed and it had prominent abstract artists, like Willi Baumeister, Gerhard Fietz, Rupprecht Geiger. I have a book about them, you know. The American government offered them a big building, in Munich, to have a show. A retrospective show of these artists. Since I knew Thwaites and he liked my work, I was included in that exhibition, which was a great honor. The show was called "Zen 49 and Friends," I think. So, when I left for America, Thwaites gave me a whole list of artists I should contact, because he was about to write a book about them in German, you know. I never saw the book published, but he has written here and there about these artists. I got a letter of recommendation to Mark Rothko, to Reinhardt, to Adolph Gottlieb, etc.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's interesting.

BETTINA BRENDEL: To these guys, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: de Kooning?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Not de Kooning. I didn't use it, but I had a letter. There was another one. He was so kind. Gustin. Philip Gustin.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Philip Gustin?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, Philip Gustin, no, he was not the one who introduced me but I met him also.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Gorkey?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, Gorkey, I think, didn't live then. Did he live then?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Maybe he was gone by then. I thought we were talking about [inaudible].

BETTINA BRENDEL: No.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Kenneth Noland?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I'm guessing.

BETTINA BRENDEL: It was a very tight group there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Alixka [ph.]? Oh well, the abstract experience.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I think he was Jewish and came from Russia, too. I will remember later.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Anyway, you have the introductions, through Thwaites, to various kinds of prominent American painters.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes. Yes. Some I was shy to—yes, I had the de Kooning letter. I was shy to contact them. But I did contact one that came from Russia, because I thought he would be more sympathetic. He was so kind and took me around, you know. He went with me to all the galleries there. At that time it was 57th Street and Madison Avenue. I will never forget that, and now I forgot his name. That's terrible. I know that Silverman represents him, you know. Manny Silverman, he has many of these artists, you know. I once told him some memories I had, private memories, about the artists he showed in his gallery. The name of the artist was Adolph Gottlieb.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's interesting. I was going to ask you about this, if there was a parallel between the Zen 49 and the AE, the Abstract Expressionists?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Actually not, because Zen artists were more, maybe towards Bauhaus more, you know?

PAUL KARLSTROM: More geometric?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: More constructivist?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Rather more, than the spontaneous, energized, gestural.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, less gestural.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It's like the romantics versus the classics.

BETTINA BRENDEL: And when I was there, I saw the first show by de Kooning, *The Women*.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, did you? My, what did you think of it?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I was absolutely—I was shocked! I was really shocked.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Tell me about that. Do you remember how it was?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I do. I do. I remember exactly.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's a historic moment.

BETTINA BRENDEL: It was, yes. I was not prepared for that. I found that it was violent and cruel and shameless, you know. That was the first thought, er, where was it and what kind of nude they were, I mean, no. But it was, well done, yeah. I went back to it, to look at again and—

PAUL KARLSTROM: I remember. Was this a response that was typical, do you think? Did you talk with other people and how they felt about it? Did you find that they were distraught?

BETTINA BRENDEL: You know, I didn't have anybody I could talk to about art.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You just were by yourself.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes. I couldn't talk to anybody about modern art.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's too bad. You didn't have anybody you could talk to about it?

BETTINA BRENDEL: About it? No, my ex-husband was not art-minded either.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What about this?

BETTINA BRENDEL: He was very proud of me.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What about the New York painter, who was so nice to you and took you around?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, yes. I didn't talk about de Kooning. I felt a little backwards, that I didn't appreciate it, you know, because I was involved in grown-up and different surroundings.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, I bet you weren't alone in that response, though.

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, no. I think—

PAUL KARLSTROM: It seemed pretty violent.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, it was.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And the abuse of [inaudible].

BETTINA BRENDEL: It was, it was. And what it did to the bodies, you know, it was a visual violation, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But did you change your mind over time? Have you come to like them better now?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, I can appreciate it now. And then when I met him, he was so well behaved, you know. I met him later in East Hampton, which is where the artists went in the summer. They gave talks there and had exhibitions there. I met him there, later, and he was very well spoken.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Not violent, like Jackson Pollock?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, no. He was aware of his importance, you know. They all were very much aware of their importance.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you ever meet Pollock?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, no. He was, I think, dead in '52.

PAUL KARLSTROM: '51?

BETTINA BRENDEL: '53? '51, maybe '52 or '53, I didn't think. Did you like the movie "Body and Soul" [ph.]?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes, I did. I thought it was good.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, I did. It was, it was.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Now I can't remember what year he died, but I thought it was a little later than that. Isn't that funny, that I can't remember? Do you remember the year he died?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No.

PAUL KARLSTROM: He was in that car accident.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes. But I had, in New York, a studio a few floors up from where Lee Krasner had an office. I, sometimes, saw her in the elevator and we talked a little.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's interesting. So you had your little period where you were rubbing shoulders with, or bumping elbows with these artists.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Oh, no. This is later, because I lived later, in New York again. Take this—

PAUL KARLSTROM: It wasn't then?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, I didn't write that down anyway.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Because after my divorce, I moved back to New York and lived there for eight years.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So how did you get here?

BETTINA BRENDEL: My ex-husband was advised to go to California for business opportunities.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That was in '53, wasn't it?

BETTINA BRENDEL: That was in '53.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Your husband's career brought you to California.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What did he do?

BETTINA BRENDEL: He was in the oil business. Gasoline stations.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did he work for Chevron or someplace?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, no. It was smaller independent gas stations; the whole thing was a little different than it is now. Now, you only have the big companies.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Anyway, some career opportunity assignments sent him to Los Angeles.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Where did you settle?

BETTINA BRENDEL: He drove, with his partner, down by car. I flew with the baby. We settled down in the Beverly area, not Beverly Hills, what would you call it? It is near Mt. Sinai, Cedars Sinai Hospital, in that area.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh. That's sort of Beverly Hills, isn't it?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I think it was.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Or is it West Hollywood?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Maybe West Hollywood. Clark Drive, we lived on Clark Drive. This was—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Near Beverly Center?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, near. Yes, near Cedars Sinai, not—

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, aren't they right next to each other?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Near Beverly Center? Oh, yes! What is now Beverly Center, right, yes. I lived in a two family home and raised my child there, and painted, of course. There was a porch and I could paint there. The veranda was taken over by me as a studio, and I painted there. I met Lorser Feitelson at that time, and Helen Lundeberg, of course. Lorser, kind of, took me under his wings.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did he?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, he did.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did he become a little bit of a mentor?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, advising me a little bit. At that time, he was very active with the L.A. Art Association. So, he gave me a show there. My first exhibition was called *Artists You Should Know*, you know. It was a series of first exhibitions for local artists.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, that's interesting.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And Lorser would put these shows together?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Lorser and Helen Lundeberg, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: They did it together?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes. They put it together and contacted the people. In this old raggedy thing, I have all the clippings.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right, all the clippings and—

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, the clippings from the [inaudible].

PAUL KARLSTROM: There you are in '58. I've seen a picture of you in '58.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's interesting, so through the L.A. Art Association, presumably, you met a few other artists.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Oh, yes. I got contacts there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you see MacDonald-Wright at any time?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, I met him, but not at that time. I met him later.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Who were some of the other artists that you found interesting at that first period in L.A.?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Was Merryl or anybody?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, I had not. I should have thought about that.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Fischinger?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, I met Fischinger. He painted then, at that time, with his wax process. He gave demonstrations on how he did it, so, I went to several of his. And I met Eltriede and Oskar. Who else was there? A little later, I met Jules Engel. Of course, he was still working for the "Mr. Magoo", you know, a writer.

PAUL KARLSTROM: UPA.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Right, UPA, right. He was not an artist, a fine artist at that time. He painted on the side. My husband and I bought two of his graphics. I met Leonard Edmondson.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, yeah.

BETTINA BRENDEL: We also bought some of his graphics. Who else was there? Helen Lundeburg was the one who kept this artist association going, under the advice of Feitelson. That was in this old building near a park downtown. It was quite nice to go there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Would that have been MacArthur Park?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, MacArthur Park, yes, correct. I enrolled at USC to inform myself and to learn printmaking, which I had not studied at the Academy. I studied there from '55-'58, as a part-time student only.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Was Edmondson teaching there, by any chance?

BETTINA BRENDEL: He was my teacher for one semester. And Jules Heller was my teacher there, too.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you consider going to Chouinard, at that time? Because that was located, actually, right by the Art Association, I think.

BETTINA BRENDEL: We lived pretty far from there, you know. I was not too fond of driving at night there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, yeah, but USC was just as far.

BETTINA BRENDEL: USC was an assignment of courage. Then we moved to Downey, California. And when? I don't have the date.

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE B.]

BETTINA BRENDEL: Decided that I have to get away from the city. I don't know if I can mention this here, but I think I should talk about it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Fine.

BETTINA BRENDEL: During the divorce, something terrible happened to me. And that was, my husband volunteered me to participate in a very dangerous experimentation at the hospital. I was there with other people, who were also somewhere admitted, unknowingly, by their spouses. We were exposed to different kinds of electromagnetic energy and, in some cases, nuclear energy, and how the brain reacts to that and how the body reacts to that. It was a nightmare. I was kept there for several months. I had no access to an attorney nor access to friends. The only person that was allowed to visit me was my now ex-husband and my daughter, who was a young child. I saw what went on there and I spoke up. They took revenge on that. The doctors thought I was the enemy, the spy in the hospital, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What was the facility?

BETTINA BRENDEL: It was one floor that was completely rebuilt to house this kind of thing, you know. I was—some people were given drugs. They experimented with LSD. At that time UCLA did this, too.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, yes. Stanford did it, everybody did it.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Right. My husband had said "No drugs for her." you know. So I had to go through the other things, which were nightmares. I cannot even talk about it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Where was the place, though?

BETTINA BRENDEL: It was Cedars Sinai.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, that was Cedar?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Now this sounds pretty illegitimate.

BETTINA BRENDEL: That was before they tore down and rebuilt it, because there were so many things in store there, they would never have gotten away with it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: This does not sound like legitimate medical research. Especially if you did not give your permission.

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, I didn't. I was under the—I had lost weight, I was worried about the divorce and all of that, and so they said I should have—both my husband and his girlfriend, who he had at that time, said that I should have a medical check-up. I was going into this hospital under the impression that I was to have a two-day checkup there. The door slammed behind me and I was there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's incredible.

BETTINA BRENDEL: It was cruel and incredible.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I don't think he has the power to do that.

BETTINA BRENDEL: And I saw some poor women there, you know, whose husbands wanted to get rid of them, you know, when they were exposed to all sorts of research situations.

PAUL KARLSTROM: This is shocking, shocking.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, it was shocking.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did he get paid for this?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I thought he discussed it with my psychiatrist, I had to see a psychiatrist at first, and that the payment was done by the insurance company. So I really want to get this out, you know. I really want to get this out of my system. There was one scene that I want to remember and I will never forget it, and that was the isolation room. Certain patients were sent to the isolation room and some patients returned looking as they were before. Others were completely dazed and almost dead. They had to stay in bed for two days afterwards. They didn't remember a thing and so on. Well, I was sent in there too. I found out what they do in there. They have poisonous gases piped into that room, so that you cannot breathe anymore. All oxygen is being—the brain is being deprived of oxygen. And, you know, when you look up in medical books? This is a very dangerous procedure. They might have claimed they wanted to erase the memories of the patients. I could have died in there. I could have died. There was a kind nurse who heard my screams and—[inaudible] I didn't scream, I was afraid to scream, I begged him quietly to relieve me and let me out of there. He finally turned on the air conditioning and I was able to breathe again. But one minute longer or one second longer I think I would have passed out and, maybe, woke up like, you know, a handicapped person.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I was wondering if this was a kind of committal, a commitment. You know, when they commit?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes. But I was a rational, functional person, you know? Maybe that's what they do there; I don't know what they did it for. I read up in the medical books, you know, about it and what can happen when you deprive the brain of oxygen. You become a real vegetable afterwards. But on the other hand, they tricked my ex-husband also. He didn't realize all of that, because they had told him that they would heighten my creative spirits, you know. He used to come to me and say, "Have patience with them. You are a genius. They will try to stimulate your brain cells." and so forth.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What do you think was his motivation was? Do you think he had your interests in mind?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, no. His motivation was that we had community property and he wanted to put the money away, while I was away. I was never very well informed about our community property. I had to fight for it. When I came back, I hired an attorney and fought for it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, I hope you were successful.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Many times, in some instances, not—

PAUL KARLSTROM:—Not everything.

BETTINA BRENDEL: But I have, fortunately, I have enough to exist.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes.

BETTINA BRENDEL: And I made peace with him, because he was not informed what they would be doing in there. I am at war with psychiatrists. I can't stand these guys. There I have really experienced what they can do, what power they have, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It sounds to me as if that's illegal, I would think, and actionable. You almost certainly could have sued them.

BETTINA BRENDEL: But, you know, everybody is afraid of them. I wanted to sue, you know, and I had hired—somebody recommended an attorney that deals with malpractice.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes, exactly.

BETTINA BRENDEL: He was always delaying it and delaying it and then, all of a sudden, he said that you can sue within one year, and this time has elapsed and we cannot do it anymore.

PAUL KARLSTROM: My, my.

BETTINA BRENDEL: But this is not true, because if the side effects of this experiment last longer than one year, you know, then this can be sued until you die, you know, I mean.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You did not pursue the suit after the ending.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I did.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay.

BETTINA BRENDEL: But I had this one attorney and I was naïve about the law. I didn't know exactly. And there were so many people involved, that was incredible. Some nurse was trying to keep me in there. It was really incredible. Some—the artistic community knew about it. At that time, they experimented with LSD, with mind-expanding experiences, you know. So this, maybe, was also called a mind-expanding experience, when you think you've dropped dead and you cannot take a breath anymore. But to me, I really noticed what it was. It was a malpractice that was really hidden away from public knowledge.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Was it ever exposed at all, do you know of? Was there ever a time that this thing was brought out, as, as?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, never. And there were some men in this group, you know. There was an engineer in this group. He always took me to the side and whispered what he wanted to tell me. "Look what's going on in here." he told me. He said he worked for the government and they had secrets. He worked for the defense department and, after a while, after he had worked several months, they commit him to the hospital and he gets brainwashed.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Wow.

BETTINA BRENDEL: And this man went to the isolation room and when he came out he was like a little baby. He couldn't even remember where his room was or how to dress himself or anything. After a few days he recovered. I met this man in New York City. He came up to me on the street and said, "Bettina". I looked at him because I didn't remember his face. He said, "Bettina, don't you remember me? I was with you in the hospital." And he said, "You know what happened to me? They fired me. I lost my job.", because he had talked to me, a lot.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's pretty bizarre.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Would you think this goes on in the world, like that?

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, it's pretty shocking.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I find it too.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And I know there are some bizarre activities, sometimes, under the auspices of legitimate medical procedures in hospitals.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: But this sounds, from what you say, a little more organized.

BETTINA BRENDEL: It was organized. It was not the first. They told me there were some juvenile patients there, also, in the group. They told me that somebody had died in this isolation room and, you know, and things like that. I don't know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, that sounds awful.

BETTINA BRENDEL: It was. They made experiments with ESP, also. This was the time, you know, when LSD and ESP and all this was experimented on. But to take chances with unsuspecting people was just—

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's terrible.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Cruel.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Completely irresponsible.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Anyway, this was a big factor in your wanting to get away.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, wanting to leave Los Angeles.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So you went to New York, and happily, you got yourself out of the place.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Right. I think I was quite brave. I didn't know anybody in New York, in the big city. I, first, rented an apartment in the village, Greenwich Village, on 13th Street. The landlord was not so nice. And then I changed it and lived on Gramercy Park, which is a very lovely area, overlooking the park.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And how many years were you there?

BETTINA BRENDEL: From '66 to late '72, almost seven years. And New York was a very important part of my development, I think.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Why do you say that? Why is that?

BETTINA BRENDEL: This city is an exciting city, you know. The whole rhythm of it is different. You go to work every morning. As an artist, you are a worker, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I lived in this very beautiful building. It was built by Stanford White and overlooked Gramercy Park. We had a doorman, you know, and every morning he'd say, "Going to work?" He expected me to leave my apartment at seven o'clock in the morning and go to work, right? I had a studio in two places. The first studio was in the building where I met Lee Krasner in the elevator. Later on, I moved to 23rd Street across from the Chelsea Hotel.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well.

BETTINA BRENDEL: It was not easy. So, I walked down 23rd Street every morning and walked to my studio.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And where was your studio?

BETTINA BRENDEL: My studio was on Seventh Avenue, almost across the street from the Chelsea Hotel.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, that's where your studio was. Where did you live at that time?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I lived on Gramercy Park.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay, I got it.

BETTINA BRENDEL: So that was an interesting area. Sometimes, in the morning, I had to step over drunks, which were lying in the doorway, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, it's not changed all that much.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yeah.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Our daughter lives in Chelsea, you know.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Whose daughter? She does, yeah? Oh.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It's becoming a big art gallery place, now. Many, many galleries there now, more art galleries than—more than SOHO.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Oh, really?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, it's a big place. But it's still pretty gritty there.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, it is.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Anyway, so there you were.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I went to the studio, a real live beautiful studio. I had some racks put in so I could store my large paintings. It was a walk-up studio and I met some of the other artists.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Like Lee Krasner.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yeah, but I didn't meet her there. Oh, that was the first studio, now I am talking about my second studio.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Where was your first studio?

BETTINA BRENDEL: The first one was on 23rd Street, in a big building there, near Madison Avenue. I remember I had to bring my tape measure. I painted already in huge dimensions and they had to lift the paintings up, the elevator was much too small, through the staircase. What do you call this?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Spiral?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, the staircase goes this way and there is a hollow space inside?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Stairwell, I guess?

BETTINA BRENDEL: They had to have a crane and lift the paintings up. That was crazy to have a studio there on the fourth floor, in that building on 23rd Street.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Now, what about Lee Krasner, though? I mean, I am interested if you talked with her at all? Conversations?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Not much. I had seen her name on the door there and I saw she got her key out, and I asked her who she was, and she was Lee Krasner. I said, "I'm an artist, maybe sometime you will come up and look at my work?" She never did. She was a little aloof.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I don't get the sense that you had much more of an art community in New York than you did in L.A.

BETTINA BRENDEL: No.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It sounds to me, with Feitelson's support and so forth, you would have had more. Interesting.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Let me think about New York and whom else I knew there. In the building of the other second studio, I met the artists. One gave me some brownies and they were made with marijuana.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's nice.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I didn't know that, you know. He should have warned me. It was an atmosphere of work there, you know, and it was respected when you were an artist. I don't see that so much here, in Los Angeles, you know. Art was respected. Oh, I met a very nice couple there. We went out together, sometimes, to the studios. And now I don't remember his name.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You said it was an important experience for your development as an artist. Why don't you tell me what kind of work you were doing then and how that might have reflected your New York experience, comparing, just say, the work you are doing here to the first phase.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I had always—this was what we wanted to talk about altogether. I was always interested in physics and science, and somebody way back gave me a book called *The Universe and Mr. Einstein*. I was very

stimulated by that. When I went to New York, I could finally put this into action and enrolled at the School of Social Research.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Social, is that right, the new school?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, yes. The New School of Social Research. They had courses on physics that were taught by prominent visiting scholars and I remember two courses. One was with a local physicist who was connected with University of NY. The more important impression I had with the other one, was an Italian physicist who taught at MIT. He gave this course and I took two courses with him. I was always interested in atomism; do you know what that means? The structure of the atom. That fascinated me, because I felt that was not finished yet, in physics. They had not finished the imagery yet, with the electrons swirling around with the nucleus. That did not gel with me.

So, this Dr. Enrico Cantore, that was his name, he encouraged us to find new ways to describe the world of physics, to describe sub-atomic phenomena, and we wrote papers on it. Afterwards I bought his book. He published a book, later, which is called *Atomic Order*. There I found a lot of the questions that we raised in that course. This Dr. Cantore, when he heard I was German, said, "Why, since you are so interested in physics, why don't you contact Werner Heisenberg? This is like telling me to contact Albert Einstein, you know. He was the greatest physicist at that time. He won the Nobel Prize in 1970. I had the courage to write a letter to him, telling him that Professor Cantore had recommended that I ask him if I could correspond with him and ask him some questions and so on. I did. The papers are still in the Max Planck Institute in Munich.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You [inaudible] the correspondence?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, we corresponded until 1976, when he passed away. I met him in 1972 in Munich. I met Heisenberg in Munich. I had a wonderful two-hour, maybe even longer, conversation with him.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What year did you meet?

BETTINA BRENDEL: We met in '72. He died in '76.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Was he attracted to the fact that you were an artist coming at it from quite a different perspective?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes. He had also written a book, *Max Ernst*, an introduction to a book about Max Ernst. He was interested in creativity. Actually, he was a physicist and a philosopher. His philosophy could be applied to art or music. It was very widespread and very beautiful. I had this one book, which I touched yesterday again, and looked into it, and I was really so moved and impressed. How he expressed his ideas. It's called *Physics and Philosophy*. There he brings philosophy into physics. He always points out the limitations of what we find, because we are limited in our tools of finding, and we are limited by our human perspective. Our eyes only see so much, you know. He had that much wisdom. So this was a very human philosophical approach to physics, to science.

PAUL KARLSTROM: How did he see the conjunction, point of contact, between the scientific way of approaching and what you seem to be working towards in your work as an artist?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I had told him that I'm interested in visualizing what physics teaches. The laws that physics has built, I try to visualize it in imagery. I said to him that some scientists object to that, they say it's all mathematics and you can't visualize it. Heisenberg said this is not true, because even in talking about physics we have to use words, we have to use imagery. We compare the process with something we are familiar with. So imagery has its place in science. This book that he had published, in '42, it was so long ago, has been reissued now. I have been in contact with a physics historian in Munich. That's how I got the invitation to the celebration in December.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Now what's that going to be?

BETTINA BRENDEL: This is the 100th birthday of Werner Heisenberg.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You are going to go. Are you going to say something?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I'm going, but a lot of international people are going to be there and scientists are going to be there. There will be a meeting, and then an informal interchange of memories of him or letters of correspondence with him. We will say, "When I talked to him, he said this or that", you know. It will be very interesting.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Haven't you done something like this before? I thought you had given a talk in Europe several years ago.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, I have. I was called to the Gulbenkian Foundation in Paris once, and I talked about the artist as physicist. The same paper or similar paper I gave in Portugal at the Gulbenkian Foundation there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Gulbenkian?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Gulbenkian, G-U-L-B-E-N-K-I-A-N. I have all these catalogs from there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What was the name of the talk? The Artist as Physicist?

BETTINA BRENDEL: "The Artist as Physicist".

PAUL KARLSTROM: What form, then, did the work take coming out of this quest of yours, this objective? How did you come to this way of visualizing the laws of physics, the issues of physics, the scientific phenomena?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I cannot really pinpoint it to anything. But I can say, for example, this experience in the hospital made me aware that we don't know very much about our mind. And, maybe, the experiments they made with ESP, and this force that is being radiated by the thinking brain might be something like nuclear energy, you cannot catch it yet, but it is there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: All right, this is continuing our interview with Bettina Brendel. It is after a brief interruption. This is tape 2 side B, and Bettina is walking off with her—and we were getting some very important discussions here, because we introduced and brought in your whole interest in science and physics, and making visual scientific principles and so forth. You were going to recall your process of coming to imagery.

[PLEASE NOTE: SIDE A ENDED HERE. NO TAPE INTRO ON SIDE B]

[END OF TAPE 2, SIDE A.]

BETTINA BRENDEL:—As short lines rather than points. The idea behind this is that these particles are in motion and vibrating. There is no point there but the energy radius and linear movement that would express much more than points. My whole work is based on this conviction that I put into various forms, portraying various activities of these subatomic particles which involves light, also photons, all moving and have life, time, and moving as linear energy lines. You can find this in my work. If you understand where it comes from you will see that it could open up a new knowledge about sub nuclear phenomena. I would like to point out that I went gradually into this stage.

I started out painting molecules and was fascinated by oval shapes. Giving the movement of oval shapes. I should mention that movement is very important in my work too. To portray motion in my paintings is very important to me. The falling, the drifting, the striving vertical directions, all of this motion is given on the canvas, is suggested on the canvas. To find ways of portraying that, has taken me a long time. Even when I painted about molecules, I tried to give them the motion of molecules. I tried to give one overlaps the other one to give depth to the painting. Now I'm concentrating more on linear shapes, I should not say linear shapes but linear combinations of fine lines that suggest depth. They can suggest space and movement and driving force and the canvas is the plane on which it happens, is just the containment of it. One could go further by using the computer, for example, where you can overlay things and really make deep space appear like deep space. All that is still in the future for me and holds many possibilities.

PAUL KARLSTROM: When did you start using the computer in your work?

BETTINA BRENDEL: In 1988, a friend told me about a program at the Museum of Science and Industry, and I applied to be a part of it and was working there from '88-'95. Then I got my own computer and the program was discontinued. We had an excellent teacher for a while, a physicist who supported my ideas and strivings, and helped me to make a video, for example, that portrays my ideas in science that I show once in a while.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Where was that program, that special program?

BETTINA BRENDEL: What was it called?

PAUL KARLSTROM: No, where was it?

BETTINA BRENDEL: The California Museum of Science and Industry.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Okay, downtown.

BETTINA BRENDEL: On Exposition Park. In the meantime the museum has been torn down completely and they don't have this computer program anymore. This was a program where visitors could come, and we would demonstrate how a computer works, how you can draw and paint on a computer. In return for this

demonstration service, we had unlimited time on the computer. I stayed late at night, sometimes, and worked on it. Again, since I had been in New York and had met Werner Heisenberg, I felt that physics has not finished its visual portrayal of the atom, and there's something to be improved. We still work with the Niels Bohr atom, which shows the typical orbiting electron. This is very old-fashioned and has not caught up with what we know now about the electron. Just recently I read an article, in *Physics Today*, which is a magazine that I subscribe to, where they say the electron is not only on the outside of the orbit. This is where we can observe it, but what it does between observations, where the electron is, is a speculation up to this point. I have this idea and have designed this new model of the atom where the electron is transversing the nucleus and comes out the other side and returns and this is happening in such minute increments of seconds that we cannot find it. We can only measure the electron when it is on the outside and does its orbit around the atom. This theory has been encouraged by some scientists.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I was going to ask you, which scientists you've been in contact with? Did you ever meet Richard Feynman?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, I went to several courses, you know, and lectures.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes, but did you ever talk with him?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Not personally. But he said something—

PAUL KARLSTROM: He would have been interested, because he was interested in art and music.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I was sitting in the first row and he was saying that from one part of our brain emanates nuclear energy, there is a nuclear part, we have a nuclear part in our brain. And he looked at me. I remember that. I was too shy to talk to him personally.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's too bad, he would have been really interested, I think. I never knew him but I read some of his—

BETTINA BRENDEL: He was an interesting person.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You know, he was a real good friend of Bill Jirayr Zorthian, you know, that artist [inaudible]. He was a good friend of mine, you know. But Feynman seemed, from what I know about him, entirely open to new ways of thinking and seeing. You know, he wrote, and often said, I think, that nothing is closed, nothing is done, nothing is finished and it's constantly—which sounds to me very much the way you're operating.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, what I am thinking. But Zorthian is funny. He always told me that Feynman loved to draw nude girls. That was his interest in art, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Sort of, but I don't think it was just that. That may be Zorthian's interest. I interviewed Zorthian about this very subject.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Oh, you did?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Oh, yeah. About artists and models.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Oh, yes?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes. This is interesting. A number of questions arise. It's difficult to talk, I think, about your work, even looking around here. It's complex in a certain way. In one way, you can look at it and it's very much —, well, you can see coming out of design, with these works. But design, by itself, doesn't have the intellectual underpinnings, the sort of scientific curiosity that you bring. One of my questions would be, how often do the people get that? Respond to the work in a way that suggests they understand that there is a kind of system behind it, that there is a method to the decoration? Do you have any idea about that? Or do they have to be told?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I don't know, sometimes I will put it in the title, you know, like those two paintings there. One deals with waves, you know, and the waves are formed out of a level of particles, a layer of particles. Each wave, of course in physics, each wave has corresponding movement of electrons. Now since I'm getting ready to go to the celebration for Heisenberg, Heisenberg with his quantum physics has, with Max Planck and Niels Bohr, has tried to combine the wave with the particle. So I'm trying to do it in my art now, and I have to paint a series of waves, of particles waves and visualize it. I have a friend there, who goes along with the idea very much, a physicist friend, who basically can follow this, and thinks it is within the acceptable scientific range. But you were asking about something else, right?

PAUL KARLSTROM: I suppose. Your paintings can be read in a number of different ways. Now I'm looking at that

from the world of art and creative images and the meaning they might convey or seem to have to viewers. One of the ways that your work could be regarded is as abstraction or near abstraction, not objectivity. It could be, in some cases, rather flat surface patterns, sometimes there's more depth. But if you think of it in typical traditional art language, it would be degrees of abstraction and/or moving towards decoration, whereas surface is filled in a certain way. What you describe is something quite different, and that is, as I've said, an intellectual sub-structure scientific quest. You seem very interested in finding ways to make analogs of what we do know about the subatomic world. Okay, now, that seems to be the meaning of these works for you. I'm wondering, to what extent do the viewers—

BETTINA BRENDEL: It has to work as art also.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes, but to what extent are viewers going to be able to apprehend some of what you are truly trying to do?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I think the viewer needs a title maybe, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I looked at those works over there and I think a little bit of Mark Tobey and his writing.

BETTINA BRENDEL: You do?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes, in a formalist kind of way. It's a way of covering the surface. It even reminds me a little bit of, not so much of spiritualism but, say, of somebody like Lee Mullican. Not exactly.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, well, I feel close to them, yes. Mullican had his fascination with tribal art and so on. But here, for example, the one with the three windows, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes, that's the one I'm looking at.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I call it *Window to the Microworld*, you know. The center window actually is a huge magnification of the pattern, you know. If you could go further and further with a microscope, a nuclear microscope, and then you'd have to have another strength, you would analyze these lines that cross each other as having connecting planes between them, and you could arrive at this center image, you understand. The center image is a huge magnification of what goes on with the crisscrossing of the lines.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Right. No, it's a very handsome painting. There's no—there's no question about that.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Maybe you can just appreciate it as a painting, but if you know or you look at the title and maybe it helps you to see what I was saying with it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So I gather then in a way for you, that it's not absolutely essential that the viewer understand your own personal interests and concerns.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Not completely.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That you say this is a way to help produce an image that can operate at different levels.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, I think that's right what you say, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What year is that painting, *Window to the Microworld*?

BETTINA BRENDEL: This is a later one, 2000. I even have a catalogue, here, you know. I give you these catalogues.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, listen, we are about ready to shortly wrap this up. I want to make sure that, in terms of the work itself, it seems to me, just talking with you, we haven't talked a whole lot about the work, but that there's been a consistency almost back to before you even came to this country. I am imagining, I haven't seen any of the works and obviously your scientific interest wouldn't have been there in that way, but it seems to me that you've always been interested in covering surfaces in a way that—I don't mean decoration in a trivial sense but in a sophisticated way of, which of course is Bauhaus in many respects, of covering a surface, and in my imagination, that's how your work came to be, the images you were making, the works you did when you were in school. We talked about design being a very important part of your work, that you enjoyed making designs, and that part seems to have stayed with you as one of your basic tools or interests, is that right, over the years?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I don't know, I don't think of it this way. I have an idea and I ask myself, "How can I put it into color and lines", of course, I think as any artist. I think any artist works by visualizing ahead of time what he is going to create. Maybe, I am wrong in that respect. I have read stories where the artist just steps up to the canvas and lets the hand lead him.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That's what they say.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I lie awake and visualize very clearly before I start and it doesn't always turn out the way I wanted it but—I also like to have themes. I worked on one theme called Symmetry, you know. There I have a project and I like to play around with it. There's not much science in that, but that idea of symmetry, in itself, is a word that's already an intellectual idea, you know.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You think of yourself, though, as an abstract artist. You've described yourself that way, and so—you described, of course, letters of introduction to some of the abstract artists in New York, and how you met a few. I don't know if we can remember, yet, the name of the nice one who showed you your way around. Then you came to California and you actually did hook up—I mean, Lorser and Helen came to be leading abstract artists. In fact, in '59 was the big show at LA County with the Abstract Classicists.

BETTINA BRENDEL: One thing I would like to add right here. When I came to L.A. and I met Lorser Feitelson, he was not an abstract artist, at that time, in 1954.

PAUL KARLSTROM: He was moving towards that because—

BETTINA BRENDEL: He was painting horse skulls at that time. Very much like Picasso, still lifes with a horse skull. Several, he had a whole series there. I went to his studio there.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Where?

BETTINA BRENDEL: On Third Street.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Probably that grew out of his post-surrealist work of the earlier days. But the fact is, Lorser then moved very much into the geometric abstraction and, probably, he is best known for that along with Helen, who also went that direction, but with a separate feeling. There were these other people around then, here's the point I'm getting at, like Frederick Hammersly, like Karl Benjamin, like John McLaughlin—

BETTINA BRENDEL: Karl Benjamin? I met him.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes, who were, sort of, independently going in the same direction and to a certain extent, in L.A., became known. It's form of abstraction for the most part, the interesting work, was geometric abstraction. As opposed to the Bay Area, where it was like New York abstract expressionism and gestural painting. You always worked, it seems to me, in a much, much more conceptual way and with a sense of control.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Right, right.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It's not random, there's no kind—you studied German Expressionism; I mean you were interested in German Expressionism in the earlier times. But it seems to me that you, sort of, purged a bit of that kind of emotionalism, if you will, in your work. There isn't, in my view, I'm sounding something like a critic, you'll have to excuse me.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: There isn't much emotionalism at all, and it's cerebral. Very, very beautiful to look at but cerebral, controlled. And that's the same as these other L.A. artists who were working in abstraction. So it strikes me that there are some similarities.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes there is, there is, right. John McLaughlin and I met, you know, several times. I organized a little show when I lived in Downey. They have a museum there and I organized a show for them about abstract art, and wrote a little blurb about it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, and he was included there and he asked me if he could use my writing for something.

PAUL KARLSTROM: So you were the curator of the show.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you work at that Downey museum?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I knew the woman who established that Downey museum. Alice Woodrow was her name. We were good friends and I helped her many times to organize shows and gave her ideas of what to show.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Does the Downey museum?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I'm disconnected here.

PAUL KARLSTROM: What do you mean?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I think there is something missing.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Ah.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Oh, I am connected again. All of a sudden I saw it was loose.

PAUL KARLSTROM: It doesn't matter, as long as this thing is near you.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Oh, really?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes, that's just a holder. I hope you are on there.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Was there anything else you can think of at this point? We've done pretty close to two hours.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: There's always more to say, but I suppose, maybe as a last question—I think your work is interesting in a number of respects. It seems to me you've taken a kind of individual, not maybe lonesome course, but that you're very much your own person and you're one of those artists who has a very clear mission, I think, an exploration, using your art to explore these ideas.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, I'll let you use this word, mission.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Is that all right?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: This, sometimes, can keep you a bit isolated, and I was going to ask you about that. How do you feel? You don't seem to fit into any group around here, particularly. Is that true?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, that is true. Right. But I have good friends, artists. I belong to art associations here, but in Los Angeles, they fall apart, these associations. I belong to an association that's called, Artists. Ron Blumberg was the head of it. I forgot the name of the association. I have never been actively involved in it. I belong to the Printmakers Association and they have a yearly show of their members' work. I submit slides to many shows, competitive shows, you know, sometimes I get in there. For example, the Palm Springs Museum has these shows and I won two prizes, two years, two prizes. Yes, I like to be part of the art activity here.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You had gallery shows down in this area, right?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, Esther Robles.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Esther was your dealer?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Oh, yes.

PAUL KARLSTROM: And Esther's gone now?

BETTINA BRENDEL: I know. You know, they didn't even notify the artists about it, you know. I had been with her for at least 20 years or 15 years.

PAUL KARLSTROM: That was Bob's job, I guess.

BETTINA BRENDEL: We were quite close. We went out to dinner together, and all that. So, when did she pass away? Somebody else told me about it, just recently.

PAUL KARLSTROM: I have to be in touch, because we're supposed to—she and I, over the years, would always talk about her papers coming, her gallery records. It never has really happened. But anyway, you showed with Esther?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Oh, yes. Many years.

PAUL KARLSTROM: She was a pioneering—

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, we didn't mention that at all.

PAUL KARLSTROM: No and that was important.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Galleries—Esther Robles. I had many one-woman shows there, and I was included in her travel shows. The other gallery was Comara Gallery, do you remember that?

PAUL KARLSTROM: That was on La Cienega, wasn't it?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, La Cienega.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Did you every have any connection with Joe Natham, by any chance?

BETTINA BRENDEL: No, no.

PAUL KARLSTROM: Well, you knew the gallery.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I knew it, yes. I knew it.

PAUL KARLSTROM: How many years with Esther?

BETTINA BRENDEL: Twenty years, I think 20 years. I have it here. You know, I forgot to mention her, you know, in my itinerary, which is not good either.

PAUL KARLSTROM: You have to mention that, otherwise people will think you're an isolate.

BETTINA BRENDEL: Yes, no. I have been with the gallery. I showed with the Santa Barbara Museum, and all that. But you take the most comprehensive biography is in here, all the dates, Esther Robles and everything. Also, I have shown at the L.A. County Museum when they had their group shows, you know. I have been in every County Museum exhibition. Can I go to the telephone?

PAUL KARLSTROM: Yes, actually the tape is over.

BETTINA BRENDEL: I disconnected—

[END OF TAPE 2, SIDE B.]