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Oral history interview with Tony Natsoulas,  
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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Tony Natsoulas on August 9 and 11, 2004. The interview took place in Sacramento, California, and was conducted by Liza Kirwin 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.

Tony Natsoulas and Liza Kirwin 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

DR. KIRWIN: This is Liza Kirwin interviewing Tony Natsoulas at his home in Sacramento, California, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, August 9, 2004.

And, Tony, you are just going to tell us everything in your life.

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh, great.

DR. KIRWIN: So, could you tell me when you were born, the year, and something about your early childhood, family background?

MR. NATSOULAS: I was born in 1959, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. My father was teaching at the university there. At that time he was a graduate student at the University of Michigan.

DR. KIRWIN: What was he teaching?

MR. NATSOULAS: Psychology. We moved to Middletown, Connecticut, after being in Michigan, and from there to Madison, Wisconsin, and then to Davis, California. We moved to California when I was five or six. I grew up in Davis, California, where my dad taught psychology at the University of California, Davis. That's about it for the beginning.

DR. KIRWIN: What did your mother do at this time?

MR. NATSOULAS: She was a housewife, "a household engineer."

DR. KIRWIN: [Laughs.] Okay. Well—

MR. NATSOULAS: Not only was she a wife and mother, she studied anthropology throughout my childhood.

DR. KIRWIN: Oh, at the university too?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: What are your early recollections of Davis?

MR. NATSOULAS: The city?

DR. KIRWIN: Yes, and growing up there.

MR. NATSOULAS: Davis was a really small college town that you could get anywhere on bicycle. I think there were 20,000 people living there at the time. Half of the people living in Davis were working at the university or going to school there. There was no crime and it was very quiet. There were probably 20 kids on my block that were my age, which was great, because I had a whole group of friends to hang out with and do different things with. We had sleepovers, cub scouts, and doorbell ditching. It was an interesting place to live, because the university was there and we got to reap all of the benefits of living near it.

DR. KIRWIN: You were on the campus a lot then?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, for different lectures, movies, and functions. It was wonderful and stimulating living in Davis at that time.

DR. KIRWIN: So you really grew up in a faculty environment.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, at the time I had no idea about the rest of the world. I just thought that everyone was

liberal, environmentally conscious, and I did not understand what I saw on the news about the rest of the world. I did not understand why there was prejudice and other social problems. It didn't make any sense to me. Davis was a fantasyland, sheltered and safe.

DR. KIRWIN: Did you go to public school?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: - elementary school?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: And all through -

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, all through high school too.

DR. KIRWIN: - your education?

MR. NATSOULAS: There was a point in the middle of fourth grade and all of fifth grade I was in a private hippie school. The school had diagnosed that I had dyslexia. I had a really hard time in school concentrating and doing my work. My parents took me out of public school and put me into this hippie school, which was not structured at all. I learned a lot of creative things, but not a lot of academic things.

DR. KIRWIN: What was your first exposure to art?

MR. NATSOULAS: During a school field trip in grammar school, we went to the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco; I saw a [David] Gilhooly sculpture there of a fertility goddess that was a casserole dish. The frog fertility goddess was adorned with a lot of breasts, and I thought, boy, this is cool. I also saw a lot of art at UC Davis. My parents, who are from New York City, exposed me to art. We would go back east every summer to visit relatives, and would go to museums and galleries. This was in the '60s and '70s, so I saw all of the Pop art that was going on at that time by all the big-deal artists. I remember seeing [Edward] Kienholz's work and George Segal's. Both artists profoundly influenced me. Painters like Warhol as well. That was my beginning of being exposed to art.

DR. KIRWIN: How long would you stay there on your visits?

MR. NATSOULAS: I don't remember. My parents and I did not fly, so we would take the train. With that kind of investment in travel time, I am sure we stayed for quite some time. My father got summers off from his teaching.

DR. KIRWIN: Did you go with your parents to museums or -

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh, yes.

DR. KIRWIN: So your parents were -

MR. NATSOULAS: They are intellectuals who exposed me to all sorts of things. Art, literature, politics, film. These trips back east started when I was very young till I was an adult.

DR. KIRWIN: Do you remember what it was about Kienholz or Segal that impressed you?

MR. NATSOULAS: I think what impressed me the most about the work was, both artists were making full-sized people in environments. It was incredible that they'd have these sculptures that were as big as we were and they were artworks. I also loved the dioramas at the Natural History Museum, and that tied into the installations that Kienholz and Segal were doing. Their works were also dioramas. I wouldn't really want to have [those sculptures] in my house and look at [them] every day, because they have pretty depressing subject matters, but they impressed and inspired me.

DR. KIRWIN: Did you see people like Duane Hansen at the same time, too?

MR. NATSOULAS: No, I don't remember seeing Duane Hansen's work back then. I do remember seeing a show of Danish modern furniture, which I found to be beautiful. It was all so contemporary - the odd materials, odd shapes.

DR. KIRWIN: Where did you see that?

MR. NATSOULAS: I think it was the Museum of Modern Art, but it may have been the Crafts Museum [now called

the Museum of Arts & Design, New York City]. I think it was the Museum of Modern Art. I've tried to go back and get the catalogues from that show, but I haven't been successful yet. There was also a shoe show I saw at the Crafts Museum that was of artists' made shoes.

DR. KIRWIN: Was there a gallery on campus at Davis that when you were young you saw?

MR. NATSOULAS: There was a gallery on campus, called the Nelson Gallery, but I don't remember visiting the gallery at that time.

DR. KIRWIN: Where did you go to high school?

MR. NATSOULAS: Davis Senior High. It is the only high school in town.

DR. KIRWIN: Did they have a good art program?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, an incredible program. They had a whole classroom that was dedicated to clay.

DR. KIRWIN: That's very unusual for a high school.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes it was. In the classroom they had kilns and wheels, with a teacher that just taught ceramics.

DR. KIRWIN: Wow.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, it was a great opportunity to be in an environment like that. I just jumped into it.

DR. KIRWIN: Is that where you started clay?

MR. NATSOULAS: No. I started working in clay when I was younger. I made that piece over there, that little dragon.

DR. KIRWIN: Kind of describe it. Okay.

MR. NATSOULAS: It's a little dragon – all glazed blue with its eyes popping out of its head.

DR. KIRWIN: Okay.

MR. NATSOULAS: I made it in fourth grade

DR. KIRWIN: Oh, really.

MR. NATSOULAS: I made the dragon around the corner from my parents' house at a friend of mine's mother's studio/garage. After that, my parents had given me some oil-based clay to work with.

DR. KIRWIN: Could you go back to the making of the dragon?

MR. NATSOULAS: My friend's mother had a ceramics studio in the garage, where I was able to make my first clay piece. With the oil-based clay my parents had given me, I made little vignettes. Little sculptures where I'd have narratives happening. I started sculpting right away. Maybe it was out of boredom, I don't know. But I do remember going to the art department at UC Davis and getting Styrofoam. For some reason they had a lot of Styrofoam there. I built houses with the Styrofoam and had all these little creatures inside, a whole fantasy world. In the summer between fourth and fifth grade, I had taken a three-dimensional art class at the local junior high school, which is pretty weird to have a class like that, I think, for someone as young as we were then.

DR. KIRWIN: For that age, yes.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. It was a summer school class, and my teacher had introduced us to clay immediately. I was just thinking that I still know this teacher and have kept in contact with him all these years.

DR. KIRWIN: What is his name?

MR. NATSOULAS: His name's Mr. Neu. Dennis Neu. N-E-U. We initially started out in his class working in clay. I made more dragons for some reason. I did about five of them. I couldn't stop with the clay. Mr. Neu wanted me to work with wood and paper mache. He wanted us to try different kinds of media. I'd half-heartedly do the assignments but always would go back to the clay. I even remember him taking the clay away. Then at the end of the class he was going to fail me because I didn't do all the assignments. I finally came in with a little wooden sculpture, so he gave me a C-minus.

DR. KIRWIN: So really you were kind of hooked on clay.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. In junior high school I took his class again, which was general art. And we did more clay. And then in high school I had another teacher named Donna Hands.

DR. KIRWIN: H-A-N-D-S?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. She encouraged me to do sculptures when everyone else was throwing pots. I started making these big fingers. Why? I don't know?

DR. KIRWIN: They had wheels?

MR. NATSOULAS: They had wheels and all kinds of equipment. It was great.

DR. KIRWIN: Had she gone through the program at Davis?

MR. NATSOULAS: I don't think so. I don't know exactly where she studied. She was definitely trained as a potter. She probably studied somewhere in the Bay Area. I haven't kept track of her. I don't know where she went off to. She and her family lived on my block and I went to school with her son. So I knew her throughout my childhood. She was originally from Montana.

DR. KIRWIN: So you made hands?

MR. NATSOULAS: No, I made fingers. Three-foot-tall fingers. I don't know why.

DR. KIRWIN: Any finger in particular? [Laughs.]

MR. NATSOULAS: No, just really large fingers. They always had large fingertips. Maybe it was some phallic thing? I don't know. [Laughs.] Really odd. They were really realistic. I also made some other large pieces, some big fish and birds, but cartoony. My grandfather loved to fish and I really liked him, so I think that's when I became interested in making sculptures of fish. Mrs. Hands saw me doing these large sculptures, and she said, "You really should go to UC Davis and take a class there." They had this program where you could take classes concurrently with high school classes. So I signed up for a ceramics class, which happened to be taught by Robert Arneson. In the class, I made pieces that looked a lot [like] Gilhooly's - David Gilhooly, who was a student of Arneson's in the '60s.

DR. KIRWIN: How old were you when you—

MR. NATSOULAS: I was 18; it was the second half of my senior year in high school. When I took the class with Arneson, he had a graduate student there named Kelly Detweiler. Kelly was the artist who did that piece over there, that wall piece [indicating a work of art in his home.] Kelly was the graduate student at TB-9 [Temporary Building #9 at UCD.] He was teaching the class, for Arneson, but Arneson would come into class and supervise. Later that year I took another class from him.

DR. KIRWIN: From Kelly?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. Another encouraging thing early in my education was entering a high school art competition at the local bank, Sacramento Savings and Loan. Mrs. Hands had me put two of my large sculptures in the competition. I won best of show, best of the ceramics category. I won \$100. I thought, *hey*, I enjoy making art and I can make money at it, so why not make this a career?

DR. KIRWIN: Uh-huh. And what did your parents think about this?

MR. NATSOULAS: They thought it was great.

DR. KIRWIN: What was your first impression of Arneson?

MR. NATSOULAS: He was a really interesting person. For all the whimsy and all of the loudness that he portrays in his sculpture, he's really a quiet, shy guy. As I got to know him, I found that he was really funny, an avid reader, and was *really* knowledgeable about a lot of different things. It was just great. He really took teaching college very seriously. He wasn't just teaching art; he was teaching philosophy through art.

DR. KIRWIN: What were those classes? Were they sculpture classes?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: - credit classes?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, they were all sculptural credit classes through the UCD. UC Davis is a research school. They don't teach the technical aspects of a subject. They take a philosophical approach to teaching. You can't take a welding class there. You can't take a throwing class there either. You can't take any classes that only concentrates on technique.

DR. KIRWIN: Like a fundamental technique?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: Okay.

MR. NATSOULAS: You could take a drawing class and you learned how to draw, but you always had the philosophy of drawing or philosophy of art behind it. It wasn't, "Draw this cup." It was more like, "Why are you drawing this cup?" "What does the cup mean to you?" "What are you trying to say about the cup?" That was interesting to me.

DR. KIRWIN: Then you went to Davis?

MR. NATSOULAS: No, since I could not get into UC Davis after high school, because I didn't have good grades in high school, I went to Sac State – Sacramento State College. There I took throwing classes from Ruth Rippon. I did all my college requirement classes at Sacramento State. I also took a ceramic sculpture class from Robert Brady. I think I actually took two classes from him and two classes from Ruth Rippon. I also took a class from a sculpture teacher who, halfway through the class, told me to quit, because I made funky narrative sculptures. He was an abstract artist. It was really the first time I ran into resistance about my work. I also took drawing classes. I was there for a year and a half. I was so excited to get back to Davis that I did everything I could to get back there.

DR. KIRWIN: Did you learn anything specific from Brady?

MR. NATSOULAS: It was, what, 1977? I'm sure I did, but I can't remember specific things. I still have really good friends today that I went to school with back then. After Sac State, I went to UC Davis for another three and a half years. I wanted to study with Arneson again. So that we would have other influences, Arneson would take off a quarter every year and would have visiting artists come teach in his place. He invited an artist from Canada, Joe Fafard. Joe inspired me to make figures. He is a wonderful figurative sculptor.

DR. KIRWIN: Who were the other ceramic people at Davis at that time there? It wasn't just Arneson was it?

MR. NATSOULAS: Just Arneson.

DR. KIRWIN: Oh, it was just him?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, just one teacher, and that's the reason why he would take a quarter off every year and get visiting artists.

DR. KIRWIN: Oh.

MR. NATSOULAS: Not the reason, but it was sort of a –

DR. KIRWIN: Relief?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, for him and a different learning experience for us.

DR. KIRWIN: Yes.

MR. NATSOULAS: It expanded our horizons to have visiting artists come in his absence.

DR. KIRWIN: Right.

MR. NATSOULAS: And then I thought – after graduating from UC Davis, I wanted to go and see what the East Coast had to offer. I wanted a diverse education. I applied to RISD [Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI], but I did not get in. I applied to the Maryland Institute College of Art and was accepted. I spent a year in Baltimore, and that was the first time I'd lived outside of Davis. It was just a complete eye-opener. I didn't like being there at all; it was too much big city reality to deal with. I didn't like it. People were getting beaten up on my doorstep and people breaking into my apartment even while I was home. I had never had these kinds of experiences before. And poverty. It was all so foreign to me.

DR. KIRWIN: Where did you live in Baltimore?

MR. NATSOULAS: I lived on Washington Square, where Peabody [The Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University] is. I lived right across the street from Peabody School.

DR. KIRWIN: Gee, that's a nice area.

MR. NATSOULAS: Is it?

DR. KIRWIN: [Laughs.] All the buildings are beautiful there.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, they are beautiful. I had a basement apartment and lived with a roommate who went to Peabody.

DR. KIRWIN: And you'd just walk over to the Maryland Institute?

MR. NATSOULAS: Well, actually at that time—it was 1983—disco was raging, and so I would roller-skate everywhere. I roller-skated all over UC Davis as well. [Laughs.] Three o'clock in the morning I would be roller-skating from the Institute back home. It was a cheap, easy way to get around, and it kept me in shape.

DR. KIRWIN: Who were the teachers at Maryland Institute?

MR. NATSOULAS: Doug Baldwin and another artist named Ron Lang, who both are really good artists. I was the only graduate student in clay, and so it was really lonely. I didn't really have anyone else to pal around with, and of course, the painters' attitudes were, "Oh, you're doing clay?" Except for one painter, who changed my way of looking at art.

DR. KIRWIN: Who's that?

MR. NATSOULAS: Eddie Bisese, the *best* painter in the whole entire world [Ed Bisese is married to Dr. Kirwin]. No, he did really change my outlook on art. Eddie left halfway during the year. So I decided to leave Maryland Institute because of the crime and isolation. Grace Hartigan was a painting teacher upstairs at the Maryland Institute. She asked me to stay and get my degree in painting there. Was she your teacher? [asking Ed Bisese, who is also in the room.] I told Grace, "Oh, no, no, forget it, I can't do it. I can't get my M.F.A. in painting when I want to do clay." I was doing some paintings and trying to do two-dimensional work. It was just so difficult to do two-dimensional work for me.

DR. KIRWIN: Eddie was talking about your time at Maryland Institute, that you were managing the clay studio.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, I was the technician for the ceramic studio.

DR. KIRWIN: What did that entail?

MR. NATSOULAS: Fixing the kilns, mixing clay, mixing glazes, and making sure the kids didn't do anything dangerous. It was a great education to be there, and I'm glad I went. But I had to go back to Davis. I had to get out of there. I learned a lot of things, technical things, that I didn't learn at Davis that I am grateful for.

DR. KIRWIN: Had you thought about going to New York then?

MR. NATSOULAS: Arneson kept telling me to get a gallery in New York. A lot of my friends had gone to New York before me, and it was a nightmare for most of them. How do you fire your work there? How do you make enough money to live? Living to work and not working to live.

MR. BISESE: I just wanted you to know that at Maryland Institute Tony did a lot of gathering the painters to come downstairs to try clay.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, that's right.

DR. KIRWIN: Oh, yes?

MR. BISESE: He made the clay room a lot more interesting than I think it would have been otherwise.

MR. NATSOULAS: I don't remember that.

MR. BISESE: He would go on a little pilgrimage and take someone by the hand –

DR. KIRWIN: Gather people up?

MR. BISESE: – and bring them downstairs.

MR. NATSOULAS: "Come. Come downstairs and make clay sculptures; *It'll save your soul!* Say, 'Hallelujah!'"

DR. KIRWIN: [Laughs.]

MR. NATSOULAS: There were a lot of characters at the Maryland Institute. Man, oh, man. God, it was incredible. At Davis, for some reason, it seemed so homogenized. I guess because Baltimore is such a big city. I like Baltimore now. I've been back since, and I think it's great, a great city. I'd live there in a minute. I don't know if my wife would, but - I'm really glad I went to school there. In the summer after Baltimore, I went to Skowhegan School of Art [Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, Skowhegan, Me]. It is a nine-week summer program in Maine.

DR. KIRWIN: So directly from Baltimore to Maine?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, Skowhegan was a school placed in the middle of a forest with really famous artists teaching there. It was a great learning experience to be able to see the artists work on their artwork firsthand. I was able to show them my work, although it was really frustrating, because the school was not set up for clay whatsoever. Just to make a little, teeny sculpture you would have to pay a lot of money to make it and fire it there. I just couldn't afford to make my large sculptures, so I was painting most of the time and learned how to weld. I made some large welded figures.

Francesco Clemente would come over to my little studio space, where I would have these little ugly sculptures that I was working on. Thank God I could show him my slides and not rely on what I was making there. I wanted Francesco to know that I had been making major works prior to being at Skowhegan. When I was at Davis, I had started making life-sized figures as an undergraduate. I showed Francesco slides of my life-size figures and he really liked them. He wanted me to make a blank head out of clay so that he could manipulate it and see how well he could work in clay, since he was a painter. I never did the blank. I should have, because we could have maybe worked together like Picasso and the Ramiés [Georges and Suzanne].

DR. KIRWIN: So he wanted to collaborate and -

MR. NATSOULAS: Well, not really collaborate; he wanted me to make a form so he could make a piece that he would claim as his own. He did not know the first thing about sculpting in clay. I remember him telling me that at his level in the art world, he could not make any mistakes. I didn't do it. I thought, oh, God, why doesn't he learn how to do his own clay sculpture?

DR. KIRWIN: Who else was there at Skowhegan?

MR. NATSOULAS: Judy Pfaff, an installation artist. I love her work. She was a wonderful person and was really encouraging. [Earlier] I went to another art camp called Ox-Bow [Ox-Bow Summer School of Art, Saugatuck, MI] that is attached to the Chicago Art Institute. Ellen Lanyon, who's a Chicago artist, helped in getting me a job at Ox-Bow, as the assistant technician in ceramics. I met her when she was out as a visiting artist at UC Davis. I think it was '80. Maybe it was '81.

DR. KIRWIN: Mm-hmm, I have it here.

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh.

DR. KIRWIN: Summer 1980.

MR. NATSOULAS: Saugatuck, Michigan.

DR. KIRWIN: - Michigan?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. I met a lot of artists there. I met Andrew Ginzel, a big-deal New York artist now. He was just a kid then. He constructs giant installations. They are just amazing, and a great guy. I met a ceramic artist named Cynthia Carlson and Jody Pinto, a printmaker. Jody was so nice and she encouraged me make prints. I made lithographs there, which I hadn't done before.

DR. KIRWIN: Let me get the chronology straight. You were at Davis. Then you went to Ox-Bow?

MR. NATSOULAS: I was hired at Ox-Bow in the summer between my first and second year as an undergraduate student at Davis.

DR. KIRWIN: Okay. And then you also have down here "visiting artist at the Can Building, Syracuse." What was that?

MR. NATSOULAS: Every summer I'd try to go to a different art school. One of those summers, I went to work with



Margie Hughto, a ceramic artist and teacher at Syracuse University. She had a program where she would invite abstract painters to work in clay. This is probably where I got my idea to go up to Grace Hartigan's class and drag painting students down to the ceramic studio. Friedl Dzubas, a '50s abstract painter, was supposed to come that summer but did not make it. So I was left with graduate students. I was really looking forward to working with him. Helen Frankenthaler was also a painter that was invited to work in clay.

DR. KIRWIN: Dzubas.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, Friedl Dzubas,

DR. KIRWIN: He was at – he was teaching in Boston.

MR. NATSOULAS: Was he?

MR. NATSOULAS: Another artist who came to work there before I came was Ken Noland.

DR. KIRWIN: He did the targets.

MR. NATSOULAS: Right. [Laughs.] Margie was an abstract artist. It was really great to get a different perspective on making ceramic sculptures than I had been taught. I was hoping to get that different point of view by going to an East Coast graduate school. I think everybody needs balance between abstract and figurative work.

While in Syracuse, I did a whole body of abstract sculptures. Because of making abstract work, it made me more fluid in my sculpting. The Can was an old can company in downtown Syracuse that Margie had made into a giant ceramic studio. Margie gave me a very large studio there to work in. I was too young to really take advantage of it. I wish I was doing my figures at that point, but I wasn't. Margie would mix a bunch of colored clays or colored porcelains to make her work. I had never worked with this technique before.

DR. KIRWIN: Well, speaking of abstraction, how did [Peter] Voulkos figure into your thinking about clay?

MR. NATSOULAS: For the longest time I thought, ugh, God, his artwork was so ugly. Since those naïve days I have realized what a major impact his work had on my work. There are really two schools of thought in the clay world. One way of thought is Voulkos's school, which is the expressiveness of the raw clay, and the other one is the petting of the clay to death school. I'm saying this in a critical manner, but actually, I really like both views.

Marilyn Levine makes her ceramics look like they are made of something other than clay. I'm sure that kind of work comes out of the tradition of throwing and making pristine work. Then there's Voulkos. You can never dispute it was made out of anything but clay. Not cement, plastic, metal, but clay. He had the same idea as the abstract expressionists, that this is paint and we're going to move the paint around; it's going to be nothing but paint or clay. I don't want to be critical of the people who aren't treating clay in this way, but it's a more honest way of dealing with the clay. That's what all my work was about. These are my fingerprints in the clay. These are my tool marks in the clay; recording everything I have done to the clay. Arneson pounded away at us about Voulkos. I remember that he truly respected Voulkos as an artist. While I was in school, my peers thought my work was sloppy and that I was being lazy, but in fact, I was just trying to make the surfaces of my work electrified. My perspective is this is clay, and this imprint in the clay was made by a tool recording my gesture. I used these Voulkos techniques even though I may have been sculpting a pair of pants, or face, and not an abstract sculpture. So I melded the two forms of sculpture, the figurative and the Voulkos abstraction.

DR. KIRWIN: Did Arneson bring Voulkos to UC Davis?

MR. NATSOULAS: No. And I don't know why he didn't. In the five years I was there, I don't know why we didn't go to his studio either. So, that was very strange, now that I think of it.

DR. KIRWIN: Okay.

MR. NATSOULAS: Getting back to Skowhegan, Mark di Suvero came while I was there. I showed him my slides. He said to me, "Figurative art is out." I thought that was the funniest thing, because he does abstract sculpture, so therefore he would want abstract to be "in." William Wegman was there as well.

DR. KIRWIN: How was Skowhegan set up? Did they have people come in and then give lectures or –

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, there were a lot of lectures. There were visiting artists, and there were resident artists staying for the whole nine weeks, like Francesco and Judy.

DR. KIRWIN: di Suvero?

MR. NATSOULAS: No, di Suvero just came in for a couple of days.

DR. KIRWIN: Judy Pfaff?

MR. NATSOULAS: Judy Pfaff was there as a resident artist as well as others. I had the great opportunity to paint frescoes there too. I got to work on a giant fresco while I was there. I had never done frescoes before.

DR. KIRWIN: Wow.

MR. NATSOULAS: They had this big barn there, and they would let students fresco it over and over. Every year they would take down the last fresco for the next group of artists to do their fresco.

MR. NATSOULAS: [Back at Davis] I ate, slept, and breathed to make life-sized clay figures. When I started sculpting life-size figures at TB-9, the technician's name was Joe Mannino.

DR. KIRWIN: Joe Mannino?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, Joe is currently teaching at Carnegie Mellon [Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA]. He was great. Joe was the one who taught me a lot about technique. Arneson just wanted to teach the theory and the philosophy of clay.

DR. KIRWIN: You were a student of Joe's?

MR. NATSOULAS: No, he was the technician, but I would talk to him about how to make large sculptures successfully.

DR. KIRWIN: He ran the studio?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: Okay.

MR. NATSOULAS: Joe took a few of us one day to see Viola Frey, who was making life-sized figures at that point. It was probably 1980, 1981, something like that. Viola's whole backyard, and I'm not exaggerating, was *filled* with her life-sized figures. It was a normal-sized backyard being used as storage for all of her completed pieces. Viola was another major influence on me. I was able to see how she put her figures together and how she applied her glazes to them. Arneson at that point wasn't glazing his work in a painterly fashion. He was basically just glazing them. He used some green highlights, and then would glaze his faces pink. But Viola was using different colors on her surfaces, which were more like three-dimensional paintings. Her glazing technique really took a hold of me, and ever since then I have been trying to make my sculptures more painterly.

MR. NATSOULAS: Arneson had let me teach the same class that Kelly had taught all those years ago when I was a high school student. I fashioned the class so that the final sculptures made up a large installation of life-size figures at a party. We had a big opening at the end. It was wonderful. I thought I was going to teach after getting my M.F.A. from Davis. After graduating I did get a job teaching ceramics at Cal State; Stanislaus, in Turlock, California. I think I earned \$500 a month for teaching one class. When I was at UC Davis, Rena Bransten came out from the Rena Bransten Gallery in San Francisco and asked if she could represent me. She's one of the major players in the art world in S.F. DR. KIRWIN: This was when you were in graduate school?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. Which was pretty remarkable. She was representing Viola at the same time. She sold a lot of my work. Rena sold a life-sized figure every other month for me and gave me a one-person show in '86. I sculpted that entire show in a teeny little office that I was using as a studio at Cal State Stanislaus. I don't think it was bigger than 8 foot by 8 foot. There were 12, larger-than-life-size figures I made for that show, and she sold half of them. As my career took off, I was in a lot of different shows in museums and galleries around the United States.

After living in Turlock for two years, I moved up to Chico, California, to teach at Butte College. I started making art right away and had another show with Rena that same year. I had a nice, big studio. It was in a horrible tin warehouse, but I loved it. Chico is an hour and 45 minutes north of Sacramento, and the weather is much hotter than Sacramento. From the heat in the tin studio, I could have fired my work without the use of a kiln. I was making a lot of sculptures there and showing quite a bit. Two years later Rena decided that she didn't want to focus on showing clay anymore, except for Viola Frey and Ron Nagle, so she let me go.

I was sort of lost for a while. I learned that making sculptures was what I really wanted to do for my career, and not teach. I stopped teaching, moved back to Davis to be closer to the art scene, and got a studio. I met my wife [Donna George] and got married. We've been married for 12 years now. Since being married it has made me focus 100 percent on making my art, showing in museums, teaching workshop,s and lecturing.DR. KIRWIN: That

brings us right up to the present.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: We need to backtrack some. I have some questions that we are asking everyone.

MR. NATSOULAS: Sure.

DR. KIRWIN: In your experience and the people that you've interacted with, what is your sense of the difference between a university-trained artist and a craft artist who comes up through an apprentice system, or outside academia?

MR. NATSOULAS: The two ways of study are different on the surface, but both schools want the same thing, to make great works. I got my master's of fine art in art and not clay. I know in my instance I do not look at myself as a craft artist but a fine artist working in a craft medium. I don't know what a craft artist is. I don't know if materials have to do with being a crafts artist. I really need to talk to someone who's a crafts artist and ask them why they're a crafts artist and not an artist.

The differences between us, I suppose, is that someone who's outside academia is probably more apt to throw and make functional work. I'm not. I'm concerned about showing my audience my personal vision of the world. Crafts artists are more like abstract artists. I think that they may be more interested in form, line, and color. I believe that they are interested in not only how many potatoes can fit in a bowl, but is it an aesthetically pleasing bowl to place potatoes in, too? So it's a little different from abstract sculpture in that the art has a function.

A lot of people say that crafts is lower form than fine art, which is the general feeling in the art world, but as you can see, I have a huge collection of craft in our home side by side with fine art. I have pottery and hand-blown glass along with paintings, drawings, and prints. I love it all. I have just as much respect for craftsmen as someone who paints a painting or makes a sculpture.

DR. KIRWIN: Okay. Well, let's talk about some of the ideas in your work.

There does seem to be a divide between people who make functional things and what you are doing.

MR. NATSOULAS: Mm-hmm. You are correct; there is a divide. It comes from the thought that craft artists are only concerned with technique, and fine artists are only concerned with ideas. Which is not necessarily true.

DR. KIRWIN: Is large-scale figurative work drawn from a lot of popular culture influences, and if you would speak a little bit about what inspires you to take on these large works? It's wonderful to see them in the environment of your home, because I think you have some common aesthetic that you're involved in here.

MR. NATSOULAS: Inspiration is a very elusive thing. Absurd television shows, people, toys, cartoons, plays, and movies that are nostalgic inspire me the most. I also look at other artists for inspiration, such as Robert Arneson, Clayton Bailey, Red Grooms, David Gilhooly, Big Daddy Roth to name a few. Recently, I have been concentrating on larger-than-life, exaggerated ceramic busts of people that have inspired me on many different levels. For example, as a child we watched a television show entitled the Honeymooners. It starred Jackie Gleason as Ralph Kramden an overweight, loud, and very opinionated man who was married to Audrey Meadows, who played his wife, Alice. During the days that this program aired women were portrayed as mothers, wives, and happy homemakers. They had no opinions, made no fuss, and everything was a neat and tidy package of dribble. The character played by Meadows, Alice, was very different from the rest of the housewives on television. She stood up for what she believed; she was not afraid of her loud, overbearing husband. She was wise, firm, loving, and still was able to be feminine. I admired the character of Alice, and was drawn to sculpting her and immortalizing her in clay.

In this series of busts I also sculpted Inspector Clouseau, Hercule Poirot, Uncle Fester, Auntie Mame, Pee Wee Hermann, the Duchess from *Alice in Wonderland*, and more. Our art collection and my work have similar aesthetics. Humor, pop art, bold color, figurative, narrative.

DR. KIRWIN: Your vision. If you could talk about—these are your works, they're—sometimes they're -

MR. NATSOULAS: What?

DR. KIRWIN: - empowering.

MR. NATSOULAS: My vision was—when I started out—was to try to straighten out the world. I wanted to straighten the world out because I thought and think it's crooked. [Laughs.] I was making these life-sized figures to make my political statements, trying to remind people that there are good ways of going about things,

and bad ways. Then my work progressed into a more formal way of sculpting. How can I push this clay figure as far as possible? How can I make the figure stand on its head or stand on one leg? Pushing the limits of the figure in clay with balance and expression.MR. BISESE: Concerned with form.

MR. NATSOULAS: Concerned with form, right.

MR. BISESE: Not formal like a tuxedo.

MR. NATSOULAS: Right, concerned with form. I have made some sculptures dressed in tuxedos, though.

MR. BISESE: That was your formal.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. [Laughs.]

MR. NATSOULAS: I tried to balance the formal aspects of sculpture with subject matter. My main concern was to concentrate on the gesture of the figures and how to make them in any position I wanted. About six years ago my friend, Ross Turk, a collector of mine said, "Have you ever considered making smaller works, maybe busts?" Ross brought up the point that busts might be easier to ship, fit into the ever day person's house and be easier to move around. I really respect Ross; he's always been my biggest supporter and he has always looked out for my best interest.

DR. KIRWIN: Okay.

MR. NATSOULAS: We're going to visit him and see his great art collection on Friday.

DR. KIRWIN: Okay.

MR. NATSOULAS: I thought, well, okay, I'll start doing some smaller works. I decided to make half-sized figures, but wanted to sculpt them with bigger heads, so I could still have the exaggeration, as I did in the larger sculptures. These works were much smaller in the beginning, but they grew. I am compelled to make everything the size of my kilns, which are three foot by two and a half feet by two and a half feet. I started making this new body of work, concentrating on who the figure was, as opposed to just an anonymous person. This was the first time I really focused on making specific portraits. I probably had made 130 life-size figures between 1980 and 2000. So I was ready to change the format of my sculptures.

I started concentrating on the sculptures' personalities. First I sculpted a self-portrait for a self-portrait show I was in at a local gallery. Then later, the Everson Museum in Syracuse, New York, selected the piece to be in their Ceramic National exhibition that traveled for two years to other museums throughout the United States. I'm really a nostalgic person. I wanted to make a series of characters that I felt nostalgic about. I sculpted Pee Wee Herman, Cary Grant, Audrey Hepburn, and Peter Sellers as Inspector Clouseau, and others. It really taught me how to do somewhat realistic portraits, not only capturing their likeness, but their personalities as well.

When I was at UC Davis, they did not teach portraiture. [Wayne] Thiebaud was there at that time, and I took classes from him. I learned a lot of formal aspects about painting and drawing, but nothing about portraiture. Wayne's classes were pretty straightforward: still lifes and color theory.

MR. BISESE: What was it? Street-tilting? [Joking.]

DR. KIRWIN: [Laughs.] Street-tilting. Cakes?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. Street-tilting and cakes, yes, exactly. It was a whole class on street-tilting and cakes put together. I mean, you have all these cakes rolling down the hill.

DR. KIRWIN: [Laughing.]

MR. NATSOULAS: No, it was still life, and figure drawing. The other teachers at that time had a '60s mentality even though it was the early '80s. They would put a still life on the table, put on some groovy music, and then tell the students to draw whatever they wanted. They were good teachers, but I didn't learn anything about academic art whatsoever, and so I tried to make up for that with the series of heads. Sculpting specific people and learning how to sculpt in a more academic way.

DR. KIRWIN: How did other people respond to your experiments?

MR. NATSOULAS: People really liked them a lot; I received a great response from them.

DR. KIRWIN: How did they connect with them?

MR. NATSOULAS: I think they connected more with the big heads than the raw treated life-size figures. People were telling me that my new work was more polished and more refined than that of my previous work.

DR. KIRWIN: Well, the surfaces are very different.

MR. NATSOULAS: They are.

DR. KIRWIN: Do you want to explain how the expression of the surfaces changed, because people just hearing this might not know?

MR. NATSOULAS: In the beginning I started with a kind of "Voulkosesque" approach to the clay. I would take boards, and I would hit the sculpture's wet clay pants to try to make an abstract pattern look like folds. I was not looking for realism. You would see the mark the wood left in the clay. I was into that kind of technique of texturing and still am to a certain extent, but it's more controlled "Voulkosism." Expressionism is really what I was trying to go for. I really like the German expressionists. I really like that whole idea of beating up the clay and making it not just a pair of pants, but a pair of pants alive with texture. I love doing abstract textures, in the hair, where I just claw it with my hands or I have a loop tool or I make it look like my fingers have run through it.

Then when I started making the specific portraits, I had to make the surfaces a lot smoother. I made a second series of busts that included the Beatles and Uncle Fester from *The Addams Family* TV series from the 1960s. I took figures from my childhood or my teenage years that I found nostalgic. I sculpted Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot from the public television series. I have produced 20 or more sculptures for this series.

DR. KIRWIN: Say something about personalities that appealed to you.

MR. NATSOULAS: Well, they were—

DR. KIRWIN: They were part of your—

MR. NATSOULAS: They were part of my childhood. I'm really nostalgic about that whole era – the '60s and '70s. I set out to do the minor celebrities, like Alice of *The Honeymooners* instead of Ralph, because I think she should get as much credit as he did. She was just great. She stood up to this big bully and didn't care he yelled at her. She was feminine, funny, and loving. She was never afraid of him. They seemed like equals. I also made Peter Sellers in *The Pink Panther*. I didn't sculpt the big-deal actors, because I'm more interested in the minor ones. After that I made a series of my friends and wife, dressed as 18th-century people. I love that period, the baroque period.

DR. KIRWIN: Well, there's a lot of common experience with those characters.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. In both series. The pop culture and baroque series.

DR. KIRWIN: Well, could you talk a little about that series? The piece you showed me yesterday.

MR. NATSOULAS: I wanted to do figures from the baroque period because I love the styles and the outrageousness of their dress and attitude. I wanted to sculpt specific people, because when I don't have a specific model, I don't think my work is as strong. I also wanted to carry on working in portraiture. I decided to use my friends and wife as my models, not only because they were easily accessible for me to take pictures of, but I also wanted to use models that were part of my life. I incorporated objects that represent each models' personality, along with things they love. When using subjects like the Beatles, Cary Grant, and different celebrities, I had to rely on the Internet and books. It was a challenge, because I couldn't get the correct angles. I was telling Eddie that the Beatles were so hard to sculpt because there weren't any side views of any of them. It was great using my friends as models because I could capture every angle I needed with my digital camera.

DR. KIRWIN: Have you talked about your involvement with any current schools like Penland [Penland School of Crafts, Penland, NC]?

MR. NATSOULAS: I went to Penland last spring [2004] and taught there for two months.

DR. KIRWIN: What did you teach?

MR. NATSOULAS: I taught portraiture. [Laughs.] It was supposed to be portraiture and caricature mixed together, although we didn't really get into caricature that much. I had eight students. It was great, although I never felt like I fit in, because I always felt like I am more of a fine artist as opposed to a crafts artist. I'm so used to being around painters and sculptors, and at Penland I was interacting with jewelers, metalsmiths, and glassblowers. They come from a different perspective, in that their work can stand alone with out a narrative. Which must be pretty freeing. Once I got to know them—like the jewelry teacher, Marjorie Simon, she knew more than I about fine art and [she] knows a lot art history. I felt more at home after realizing that there was

little difference between fine artists and crafts artists. It was great, because it expanded my awareness of what other artists, or crafts people, were thinking.

DR. KIRWIN: Did you do any other kind of work while you were there?

MR. NATSOULAS: I learned how to enamel, and I made some jewelry.

MR. BISESE: Glass?

MR. NATSOULAS: I blew one little teeny object in glass. I was able to do a lot of different kinds of firings there in kilns that I don't have at home. I was able to do wood- firing, salt firing, soda, and raku. They had a lot of great equipment, like a sandblaster. I borrowed a sandblasting technique from the glass teachers and used it on one of my clay pieces.

DR. KIRWIN: And what were the students like?

MR. NATSOULAS: They were at different levels of abilities and had different goals.

MR. BISESE: Tony, I think you should explain your students, because you had an observation about the type of person who's available to spend eight weeks at Penland.

DR. KIRWIN: Oh, tell me about it.

MR. NATSOULAS: I don't want to be critical of them.

MR. BISESE: It was an observation. It wasn't—

MR. NATSOULAS: Okay. I tried to figure out what kind of person could take an eight-week course. Before I got there, I thought many of them would be college students and retired people.

[End Tape 1 Side B; Begin Tape 2 Side A.]

DR. KIRWIN: This is Liza Kirwin interviewing Tony Natsoulas at his home in Sacramento, August 9, 2004, this summer, and we're talking about the students at Penland, of who is available for—

MR. NATSOULAS: Okay.

DR. KIRWIN: Well, you talked about who was likely to be a—

MR. NATSOULAS: Right. I found when I got there the students that could take the time off to go to Penland were college students in transition or had just graduated from undergraduate school. Most of the students didn't know what they were going to do with their lives. They didn't know what they were going to do next, and so they went to Penland. They thought the eight weeks away would give them time to figure out where they were going next and what they wanted to do. Some had just broken up with their girlfriends or boyfriends. They needed a place to go to, for a separation. So it was kind of an odd mixture of people. But there were some good students, a few. I think there were 85 students in all.

DR. KIRWIN: In this whole class?

MR. NATSOULAS: No, in the whole session.

DR. KIRWIN: Yes.

MR. NATSOULAS: Most everyone there, with an exception of just a few, I felt they were a part of my family. It was intense to be there night and day for eight weeks in this small community. We ate together, watched slides together, worked together, and talked together. It was almost like being back in Davis again, as a kid, where there was no crime, nothing bad happened there; I don't know if that's a good thing or not, but it's kind of a fantasy world. There was no TV, radio, or newspapers.

DR. KIRWIN: Well, there are some people that go and never leave.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, they buy houses, make art, and live happily ever after there.

DR. KIRWIN: Did you go to meet any of the other clay people in the area?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, sure. Cynthia Bringle.

DR. KIRWIN: Oh, yes—

MR. NATSOULAS: There was an artist who just moved there, that I knew from California, named Lisa Clague. She graduated a year after I did, but from the College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland under Viola Frey. We are sort of contemporaries-ish.

DR. KIRWIN: Have you been to Haystack [Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, ME]?

MR. NATSOULAS: No, I haven't had the pleasure but hope to go sometime. I had a great experience teaching at Penland, so I can imagine how wonderful it would be to teach at other schools as well.

DR. KIRWIN: Did you find that the students there had expectations of you at Penland that you would give demonstrations? I know the crafts people are really involved in the demo.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: And did you have—

MR. NATSOULAS: I didn't realize that the students wanted a lot of demos. I did some demos, but I didn't realize that the students relied on demos so much. When I was going to school at Davis, we just found our own way and techniques.

MR. BISESE: That was one of the only criticisms you got from your students, wasn't it?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

MR. BISESE: That you didn't give any demos.

MR. NATSOULAS: Well, not enough, in their opinion. The metals teacher next door would give a demonstration every single day of the eight weeks, and she enjoyed it. I was taught to teach using the "do your own thing" method. That was what every teacher, except for Thiebaud, would say, just find your own way and do whatever you want to do. So that's how I taught.

DR. KIRWIN: It's a very different teaching philosophy.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, it's a completely different way of teaching. I did teach the students a lot and they were able to make some really good sculptures in the end. I think they did come a long way from where they started. I was there morning, noon, and night. They should have taken more advantage of my knowledge.

Next time I teach a workshop, I will do a lot more demonstrations. I realize that students do need a lot of guidance in that manner. The conflict, though, comes when teachers demonstrate, showing students exactly how each teacher makes their own work; you turn out a whole bunch of students who are doing work that looks just like yours and not their own. The teachers I had were shying away from that method of teaching, making their students strong artists with their own individual styles.

MR. BISESE: Is imitation a bad thing in the crafts world?

MR. NATSOULAS: I don't know. It is in the fine art world.

DR. KIRWIN: It can be, yes.

MR. BISESE: But you'd expect from the tradition of demonstrations that you get people just imitating what's—

MR. NATSOULAS: That is my point.

MR. BISESE: Then it's a bad thing in crafts. It's bad in art.

MR. NATSOULAS: Some people say, imitation is the highest form of flattery. I don't know if I agree with that. I just think it is important that people come up with their own ideas and techniques to feel comfortable with their decisions, making their work unique. Otherwise all work looks like same and is watered down and becomes stagnant.

MR. BISESE: How valuable is flattery?

MR. NATSOULAS: [Laughs.]

DR. KIRWIN: Would you identify yourself with the school of Davis? Are you part of an artistic legacy at Davis?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, oh, definitely. I'm proud of it, too. In the present, from my perspective, the art world doesn't seem to have any kind of particular movement anymore. Isn't it called pluralism now? Where anything

goes, and there is not one major style? For the last few years conceptualism has been in the forefront. I feel like I've been left behind in a way, passed by into conceptualism. But other artists keep telling me that the pendulum always swings back and forth. I really relate to painters more than I relate to sculptors. A lot of painters will make figurative art, and I really relate to it. I relate to the color and their ability to do what they want. They can make a person floating in the air; I wish I could do that, but it would be quite [impossible] because of gravity. Well, I guess I can do it in fiberglass, but not clay.

DR. KIRWIN: You have.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, I have worked in fiberglass, and have made my sculptures float in the air.

DR. KIRWIN: Does your work have any connections with Pop Art?

MR. NATSOULAS: I do feel my art in some degree connects with Pop Art. There was the Pop movement, and there was also the Funk movement. Funk was actually started in the '50s or the '60s by some conceptual artists. Bruce Connors and Bruce Nauman were part of that, among others. Then the clay world stepped in and said, "No, Funk Art is ours," and so I'm part of that movement. I don't think that Funk Art is Funk clay, because Funk Art was supposed to be making art out whatever was around, like found objects and such.

DR. KIRWIN: See, now we think of Funk as clay.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, The whole idea was that Funk clay—or Funk Art—was thumbing their noses at artists that were using traditional materials. I think Funk clay took over the idea of thumbing their noses at traditional potters, and also at the general art world. So, yes, I'm part of all that. I'm probably the last little remnant of the Funk clay movement. The first Funk show was in '65 in Berkeley at the Berkeley Art Museum, 40 years ago now. [Laughs.] The vestiges of time. Neo-Expressionism was happening when I was just getting out of college, and I really relate to that, even though my art probably doesn't look like it, but it really had a huge influence on me. I really like this new movement, called Post-Pop. Have you seen this yet?

DR. KIRWIN: Explain it to me.

MR. NATSOULAS: I could show you a magazine?

DR. KIRWIN: Sure.

[Pause as Mr. Natsoulas finds magazine.]

MR. NATSOULAS: What it is, is commercial artists doing fine art and in a tattoo manner.

DR. KIRWIN: Oh.

MR. NATSOULAS: Tattoo art is really, really big here on the West Coast.

DR. KIRWIN: So this magazine's called—

MR. NATSOULAS: *Juxtapoz*.

DR. KIRWIN: —*Juxtapoz*.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. My art is not wild like that, not crazy, but I just love it. It's kind of Surrealism, but it's really an updated Surrealism.

DR. KIRWIN: Hmm. I've never seen this magazine.

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh, it's really great. Some of the art goes so overboard I can't even look at it, but most of it I really like.

DR. KIRWIN: This is where you're moving?

MR. NATSOULAS: Well, yes, and I kind of want to join their club, but I don't know if they're going to let me.

DR. KIRWIN: [Laughs.] You just muscle your way in there.

MR. NATSOULAS: I don't know if I actually want to do work like theirs, because their work is a little too abrasive, and sometimes too much for me.

DR. KIRWIN: Well—so this really—yes, it is wild stuff.



MR. NATSOULAS: This style was underground for a number of years, and now it's sort of popping up in different places. New York is showing some of it. I know Los Angeles is as well.

DR. KIRWIN: It's very—

MR. NATSOULAS: Very, very narrative. Very explosive. Very extreme.

DR. KIRWIN: Yes, very extreme.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: Fantastical.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, yes. That's right up my alley, though.

DR. KIRWIN: Well, it may be the Robert Crumb influence.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, it did. But their technique is amazing, they're really good artists. I think you should have all your work in these magazines also, Eddie.

DR. KIRWIN: You should subscribe to this, Eddie.

MR. BISESE: I think I should.

DR. KIRWIN: Yes. Okay, does religion play a part in your work?

MR. NATSOULAS: [Laughs.] Absolutely none.

DR. KIRWIN: None? Okay. Does spirituality? No?

MR. NATSOULAS: No, I don't think so.

MR. BISESE: Are you avoiding it on purpose?

MR. NATSOULAS: Mmm, probably.

DR. KIRWIN: Okay.

MR. BISESE: I mean—what I mean. Are you—

MR. NATSOULAS: I'm not antireligious, but—

MR. BISESE: Do you naturally ignore it, or are you antireligious?

MR. NATSOULAS: I'm not antireligious. I'm just neutral. Plus, I'm not supposed to make images of people, right?

DR. KIRWIN: Graven images?

MR. NATSOULAS: Graven images.

DR. KIRWIN: You talked a little bit about issues of gender in looking at this piece of Alice Kramden. Do you explore issues of gender, race, and ethnicity?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes I do. In the time I was doing life-sized figures, I was afraid to explore certain issues, because everybody looked at my art as being cartoony and thought I was making fun of people. I don't know exactly why they thought I was making fun of people, because I wasn't. I was just making expressionistic figurative pieces. So for a long time, I stayed away from making sculptures of women or minorities because I didn't want anyone to interpret that I was criticizing anyone. Now that I am sculpting more specific people, it's not an issue anymore. Like this sculpture here; this one is definitely about women standing up to overbearing men [the sculpture of Alice Kramden]. So yes, I do deal with difficult issues, but in sort of a roundabout way.

DR. KIRWIN: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Just in the people that you choose to represent—

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: - those who are -

MR. NATSOULAS: I don't know what to say about race, really. I've never dealt with race. I have done some

African Americans like Miles Davis. I also did a sculpture of Maceo Parker, who is saxophone player for James Brown. I never think about race when sculpting; I just sculpt people I find interesting.

DR. KIRWIN: But is this hero worship?

MR. NATSOULAS: Well, no, it's just [a] reminder of things or people I love. What makes me feel good. When I am able to reminisce back to being young, looking at different things and remembering, oh, I used to watch *The Honeymooners*, and wasn't that great, that whole feeling of seeing these TV shows for the first time and how wonderful and magical that was. When I look at this sculpture of Alice Kramden, I feel that magic again, even though I've seen it 100,000 times – the sculpture 100,000 times—because it's in my house, I always feel nostalgic.

DR. KIRWIN: You're not really looking at it as a social critic.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, I look at myself as a social critic. I made Alice Kramden honoring women and their spirit to stick up for who they were and what they believed in, in a time when women were looked at as housewives and mothers only. I am happy about the opportunity to make the sculptures that I'm making for the Little League Park Commission. I am going to make the players all different genders and races, to include everybody that has played on this Little League field.

DR. KIRWIN: Well, this is very—this is a very, pretty white area, Davis, isn't it? I mean, there isn't a lot of—

MR. NATSOULAS: When I was going to high school, I think there were four black kids, some Hispanic kids, but we all blended together.

DR. KIRWIN: Of course. But it wasn't necessarily your experience growing up.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: I was at a public school with 800 kids, and I think there were two African Americans.

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh, really? I would have liked it if it had been much more diverse than what it was. I'm sure my parents would have liked me to be in a much more diverse atmosphere, as well. At the university where my father taught, it was much more diverse than the city of Davis was at that time.

DR. KIRWIN: Do you want to talk a little bit about your relationship with dealers? You talked about one dealer early on who took you in, represented you, and promoted you through their gallery. Have you had other dealers that came along?

MR. NATSOULAS: Mm-hmm, Rena Bransten was great, very professional. Others have been down right rotten. They sold my work and did not pay me. Lately, I've been concentrating on nonprofit spaces to show my work. I think that I have more freedom that way. I can show whatever I like, although the curators do have a certain control over what is being shown. I think they're more open than a gallery dealer. If an artist wants to show a controversial piece, a museum would probably show it more likely than a gallery would. A gallery needs to sell.

DR. KIRWIN: Have there been dealers that have told you to do certain things or make smaller pieces or—

MR. NATSOULAS: Mm-hmm, yes.

DR. KIRWIN: Okay.

MR. NATSOULAS: And I would always get into trouble when I listened to them.

DR. KIRWIN: Uh-huh.

MR. NATSOULAS: Every time I would facilitate their ideas, it would backfire on me. "Oh, why don't you do a guy playing golf?" So I would make a golfer, and it would never sell. No one wanted it. Then I would have to cart it around with me for the rest of my life. I don't have space to store pieces that are someone else's mediocre ideas, not that mine are all that great, but they mean something to me.

DR. KIRWIN: Could you describe some of the qualities of your working environment here in your studio?

MR. NATSOULAS: It's a 20-foot-by-20-foot studio along with an attached 10-foot-by-20-foot kiln room. It is our two-car garage that I converted into a studio.

DR. KIRWIN: Could you talk about—

MR. NATSOULAS: I live in a suburban neighborhood of all contemporary 1960s houses. I love my studio because I can open my door and look out and see my neighbors and see them mowing their lawns, walking with one another, or walking their dogs, and it's just great. It's a nicer environment than a lot of artists who live and work in industrial spaces that are unhealthy and dangerous. I'm a spoiled brat now for having all this, but I can work on my work, and I don't have to worry about someone climbing through a window or whether there's toxic waste dripping through the basement floor. It's an ideal work situation for me. It is a very pleasant, clean, spacious environment. I am able to go inside and eat any time I want, or use the phone or get on the Internet for pictures.

DR. KIRWIN: Do you listen to music while you're working?

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh, yes.

DR. KIRWIN: What kind of music?

MR. NATSOULAS: All sorts. Everything but country music. Heavy Metal, Swing. Big band, Funk, and Jazz are what I listen to the most. Santana and Tower of Power are my favorites.

DR. KIRWIN: [Laughs.] Eddie always has the TV on when he's working.

MR. NATSOULAS: Really? I can't watch TV and work.

DR. KIRWIN: He doesn't watch it. He just listens to it

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh.

MR. BISESE: Just hearing the story.

MR. NATSOULAS: I can't do it. I can't even listen to books on tape.

DR. KIRWIN: Really?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, I would stop working to watch the TV. I have to have the droning of music in the background at all times when I work in the studio.

DR. KIRWIN: Okay.

MR. NATSOULAS: And I have to have it.

MR. BISESE: When you say all kinds of music, is there a time period that you're – you have music? Does your collection—

MR. NATSOULAS: Well, it's everything from the '50s to now. A lot of jazz, some disco.

MR. BISESE: A lot of people have kind of high school/college –

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, I like a lot of music from the '70s.

DR. KIRWIN: So when you're working, it's nostalgic?

MR. NATSOULAS: When I was sculpting the portraits of the Beatles, I would listen to all the Beatles songs that I could find. It took me about two months to make them, so for two months we'd listen to nothing but Beatles music day and night. When I was making the Baroque series, I did get some Bach and tried to listen to that. When making the portraits of Cary Grant or Audrey Hepburn, I would watch the movies they acted in, but not while I sculpted. The music was very important to creating an environment to sculpt in. It inspired me.

DR. KIRWIN: Do you have any people that help you in the studio?

MR. NATSOULAS: My wife helps me sometimes.

DR. KIRWIN: Let's talk about some of the most powerful influences in your career. And you've talked a bit about that. How about technological developments? Anything along those lines that have really changed—

MR. NATSOULAS: Digital cameras have changed my life completely, as far as doing the portraits. I was telling Eddie, the next time I do portraits of famous people, I'm going to get a DVD player on my computer so I can stop live action. I was saying before, I couldn't get side views of the Beatles. I'll be able to find a DVD of them getting interviewed, and if they turn their face, then I can stop it and print it, which will just be incredible, because that will be just like having them right in the studio, which would be really wonderful.

DR. KIRWIN: Do you ever sketch? Or do you just look at the photographs?

MR. NATSOULAS: No. I've tried to draw, and I've tried to do sketches in clay – little models. But I really like to just tackle the work head on. I find that all the other preliminary work just stops me from getting to the meat of it all.

DR. KIRWIN: So you—

MR. NATSOULAS: It is actually easier for me to do a sketch in clay, like a little mask, and then do the figure, but I'm just too excited to do the piece. I know it's good for me to do a drawing beforehand, but I just want to get to it and work it out as I go.

DR. KIRWIN: With the baseball heads, those are like little maquettes.

MR. NATSOULAS: Well, I had to do that for the proposal. I wouldn't have made the maquettes normally.

DR. KIRWIN: You wouldn't have?

MR. NATSOULAS: If someone said, "Do baseball players, you don't have to do a proposal," I would have just done the pieces, without maquettes. They are not necessary for the way I work.

DR. KIRWIN: Oh, okay.

MR. NATSOULAS: I have it all up here in my head. I just have to get [it] out. The other technological device that I am using is a computer in my kilns. It allows me to program a firing and walk away. There are also new paints out that I use that are glossy that match my ceramic glazes. If I'm not happy with something, I can paint on it, and you can bake it in the kiln.

DR. KIRWIN: Could you talk a little bit about your process of making one of these large pieces, from the start to finish, and how you put it together?

MR. NATSOULAS: Sure.

DR. KIRWIN: What clay you use?

MR. NATSOULAS: I use very groggy clay. Right now I'm using clay called Sonora White; I think it's 40 percent grog, maybe even 50 percent. Grog is already-fired clay that's been pulverized and then mixed back into the clay. This allows the clay (since part of it's already been fired) to have less shock when it is fired. It's really gritty, so it stops me from doing any kind of really fine detail. I want to stay away from fine details.

When I get ready to make a sculpture, I go through the Internet and try to find as many pictures of the subject as I can. If I am sculpting my friends, I'll take pictures of them and I'll print them out, which is another great technological tool that I use in my art making. I have a printer and I don't have to go to the store to get the photographs developed. I put the pictures up on my studio wall to look at for reference, and I start building the sculpture.

I start by putting a slab of clay on my sculpture stand. I set slabs of clay vertically in a ring for the bottom of the bust. Then I build it up with slabs that are about seven inches tall. Every day I build the piece up; after I get each section gets to be leather hard, so it's not wet and not dry. I'll build the body and let that get leather hard, and then I build the head inside of that body so the neck hole is completely open. The sculpture is now in two separate pieces, so I can pick them up easily. The hands are usually separate in case I break the fingers. I can make new hands and stick them back in. Whatever objects the sculptures will be involved with, I also make separately. All pieces are fired together yet are separate and are assembled together after the pieces have been fired and set up.

DR. KIRWIN: And the head—the head is—

MR. NATSOULAS: My work is all made of slabs. I don't have patience to do the coil thing. That's a traditional craft thing for small objects and pots, not my sculptures.

DR. KIRWIN: And is it hollow on the inside?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. The walls are probably three quarters of an inch thick. I make them thick so they are sturdier.

DR. KIRWIN: And the features are built up on the outside of the slab?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, solid. Then I fire the work really slowly. I fire them for three days. The firing is really gradual. I close the kiln up slowly, and I turn it up slowly.

DR. KIRWIN: So it doesn't crack?

MR. NATSOULAS: Sometimes work does crack, but it is quite rare. The grog that I was describing earlier helps with cracking. I then take the piece out of the kiln and glaze it; I put as much glaze as I can on each piece. Then I fire it again and put the sculpture all together. That's how I build the sculptures. Does that make sense?

DR. KIRWIN: Yes.

MR. NATSOULAS: If I need a little more color, I put these gloss paints on, very sparingly. And if I need to glue something on, like her notebook into her hands, I use silicone rubber.

DR. KIRWIN: Wow.

MR. NATSOULAS: The silicone is supposed to last 50 years, and if you bump it, it has some give, but you can't pull it off. It's just a silicone window caulking.

DR. KIRWIN: They must be very heavy.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. Probably 100 pounds. Like I said, I make them in two pieces so I can lift them.

DR. KIRWIN: So does her head—the head comes off?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, and her ponytail.

DR. KIRWIN: Well, it must be really hard to ship something.

MR. NATSOULAS: No, it's not bad.

DR. KIRWIN: No?

MR. NATSOULAS: No. You put them in a crate and call Yellow Freight, and they pick it up and send it. It's just expensive.

DR. KIRWIN: How would you say how your work's been received over time? Are there particular people that have written about your work that you think, they got it?

MR. NATSOULAS: My art has been received very well, and I have been given a lot of press regarding my work and accomplishments. I think most people really respond to figurative work. My work lends itself well to print like newspapers and magazines. As far as who "gets" my work, the curator at the Crocker [Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA], Scott Shields is one. I had a show at the museum two years ago, and he wrote some articles about my work and me. The Australian magazine *Art and Perception* and a Greek magazine *Kerameiki Techni* both published Scott's articles about my work and [the] Baroque series. *American Craft* also published an article on me, the latest was written by Elaine Levin, who is ceramic historian out of the Los Angeles area. There are also collectors, fellow artists, and other museum directors and curators who get my art.

DR. KIRWIN: Do you pay attention to craft magazines and do you get the magazines?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, I get them all—all the ceramics and craft magazines. I used to get all of the art magazines as well, but haven't subscribed to them for years now. When conceptual work got big and has continued to be the in thing, it just made it so hard for me to read about or look at, because that work is not interesting to me. I hate to say this, but it's just too wordy—as soon as the pendulum swings back, I'll start getting the art magazines again.

DR. KIRWIN: So you subscribe to *American Craft* –

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, *Ceramics Monthly*, and the Greek magazine, which is called *Kerameiki Techni*. There's another one called *Ceramics Art and Perception* from Australia. *American Ceramics*, *American Craft*, *American Style*, *Artweek*, *Juxtapoz*, and some others I can't remember right now. And I used to get *Sculpture* magazine; I've got to start getting that again. I used to get *Art in America* and *ARTnews* and *Artforum*.

DR. KIRWIN: Do you think that these specialized periodicals have played a role in your development as an artist?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, I can see a lot of art that I probably wouldn't see normally; I've gotten articles in them, so

it's elevated my career. I have more opportunities to meet other artists and see other work and be in shows with people that I probably wouldn't have if I did not receive the magazines.

DR. KIRWIN: You talked earlier about putting these figures in different attitudes that would defy gravity. What are the limitations of clay that you seem to always be pushing? Do you think there are limitations to the medium that you've chosen? What is it about the clay that is the best thing to express what you're trying to express?

MR. NATSOULAS: The thing about clay is that it's really great to work with, but it does have limitations, because it weighs a lot and yet it's fragile. Those two things are almost insurmountable, although there are still a lot of artists who continue to work with it. An easy way to work with clay directly is to use an armature; that's great, but that entails hollowing out the piece when it is done, and I don't want to get into that on a day-to-day basis. Clay records everything you do to it. So it's such an incredible medium. Ultimately it'd be great to sculpt in clay and cast in another material, like the fiberglass sculptures you saw at the downtown plaza that I was commissioned to sculpt. Some of them are 14 feet long, and they may weigh 70 pounds; if you drop it, they don't necessarily break. They may chip a little bit, I made them look like they're made of glazed clay by painting the sculptures with car paint. I wouldn't mind working in fiberglass again.

DR. KIRWIN: So it's not necessarily the clay itself, but the final product that you're after?

MR. NATSOULAS: I love working in clay, but the final product doesn't have to be clay, in my eyes. The only reason why I don't work in fiberglass is the cost. It's \$3,000 every time you want to cast a piece.

DR. KIRWIN: You have done some things in bronze.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: That seems like a much different look to me, but could you talk about bronze and some of the things—how do you decide to make something in bronze?

MR. NATSOULAS: In placing a public piece, the sculpture has to be durable, and so I have the piece cast in bronze. I then paint sculptures to make it look like as if they were made in glazed clay. I don't like that brown look of raw brown bronze. I think it's ugly and depressing to have a bronze—natural bronze. You have to make the sculpture durable and safe in a public setting for the sculpture to exist. Most people think my bronzes are clay sculptures.

DR. KIRWIN: You've made it look like clay.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: Could you tell us about some of the big commissions that you've had?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, my first commission was for the city of Davis. It was two life-size bronze sculptures of people running in opposite directions [*The Joggers*]. It was done in the summer of '85, right after graduate school. Arneson was so nice. I didn't have a studio at that point, so he let me work in his studio at school on the pieces. I had the pieces cast, and then decided not to paint them because it was my first bronze and I thought, "Oh, I should do a traditional look." Back then jogging was a big thing in Davis. I sculpted joggers jogging in opposite directions; the woman sculpture was looking back at the male sculpture pointing in the opposite direction. As if to say, "You're going in the wrong direction; come with me this way." I put it on the corner of the street in front of the old police station.

A city inspector, who was there while we were installing the pieces, was supposed to check out whether we were doing the cement correctly, said, "You have it back too far, pull it forward so it would be closer to the sidewalk" So I pulled it forward three feet, and I thought this is great, to have it so close to the sidewalk. Three weeks later, there was a letter in the local paper from a woman complaining about Davis. She said, "The water's terrible, the air's terrible, and the students are awful." And in the last sentence, she mentioned, "and those sculptures! Someone's going to poke their eye out on that finger." The female jogger has her finger out like this, and it's at eye level. The piece is so large that you couldn't help to see it before you would ever run into it, let alone impale yourself on it. So then the city council got all upset and said, "We want you to do something about this finger, because we don't want to be sued."

DR. KIRWIN: It goes back to the finger. You started working in fingers.

MR. NATSOULAS: That's right. It's weird, huh? [Laughs.] What does it mean? Maybe I should sculpt some more fingers. Anyway—so luckily there is a law in California—I think it covers the whole United States now—that you cannot alter or destroy a piece of artwork unless you get written permission from the artist. So they couldn't do anything, and they knew it. They kept saying, "Come on; you've got to do something." They wanted me to

cut the finger off, and I said, "No." They wanted me to take the sculptures and turn them around the opposite way, so that she's pointing at the police station. I thought, oh, no, no, this is too weird; it would have looked like she's saying, "Don't attack me; the police station's right there." So that wouldn't have worked.

I told them that, "I'd be happy to cut the finger off, but you're going to have to build a pedestal that sits right in between the pieces that would be 20 feet tall so I could put the finger on the pedestal showcasing it and protecting the public from the harm it would cause them." They didn't like my idea. I said, "Okay, well, I'll change it if you rubberize all the sidewalks and all the signs, the stop signs, fire hydrants, and the bicycle racks, so that people don't get hurt on any of them either. The fire hydrants - somebody could just trip over one of them and hurt themselves."

The silliest thing was, when it was all said and done, we moved the sculptures right back where I had originally placed them to begin with. The city then had someone build flowerbeds to obstruct pedestrians from getting too close to the sculptures. Narrowing the path that the joggers were traveling on. It's much better now, but you could trip over the flowerbeds and break your head. So we finally resolved it all, but how silly it all was.

The next public commission I got was to do a bronze piece for the Bing Maloney Golf Course in South Sacramento [*This is not a Game*, 1989].

DR. KIRWIN: Tell me, did you have a golfer ready?

MR. NATSOULAS: No. With public commissions, I do not have work that is pre-made before I get the job. This golfer would be standing in a fountain a water trap.

Basically what happened was that a city landscape architect had designed this fountain for a golf course. The Sacramento Metropolitan Arts commission got involved with the site since it was a public golf course and was a new construction, and two percent of the building budget had to be spent on public art. You know how landscape architects are? [Making a joke for the benefit of Ed Bisesse, who is a landscape architect, as well as a painter.] Not listening. So the city arts commission came in and said, "Now, wait a minute, we need a fountain there by an artist, not by a city landscape architect." So, needless to say, his design was thrown out and never used. Because of this, throughout the entire project the landscape architect just hated me and was giving me so much trouble about everything.

I did a sculpture of this guy hitting his golf ball out of a water trap. This time I painted the bronze because I didn't like the brown patina. So I painted the sculpture really colorful with car paint to look like my clay pieces. Ten years later somebody took the golf club out of the sculpture's hands, and somehow broke the bronze golf club off and broke into the pro shop, stealing a lot of merchandise. I felt bad that someone would do such a thing and a little guilty they used my artwork to help do such a thing.

DR. KIRWIN: You provided the weapon.

MR. NATSOULAS: I provided the weapon.

MR. BISESE: Determination. You can't do anything about that.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, you're right. I epoxied a stainless steel club in since then; hopefully they won't steal that one. I haven't been back there for a while to look in on it.

Then I made a commission for the Downtown Plaza, the one we saw yesterday, the sculpture with all these everyday things piled on top of his head [*Balancing Act, Too*, 1993]. When I was making this piece, I was thinking about what it meant to go to the mall and shop. What do people do, and what are they thinking about? We're always balancing things, right? Always balancing a checkbook, whether you can afford something you want to buy or not. I have a figure balancing on a cylinder. I had remembered in a philosophy class about a concept that we need these basic instinctual things that we need or have to have before we actually do anything else. We have to have shelter, food, sex, and some other things as well. So I have these objects representing those human needs on his head. And, again, I painted it with a lot of color, using auto paint.

I have had problems with every single public sculpture, because people are so offended—by art—whether it's in a gallery or in the public. But they're not offended by billboards and other crap like that [that] or bad architecture. There was this woman who owned the Music Box store at the mall where I was installing the piece. She came storming out of her store screaming and throwing her arms up into the air "That is the worst thing I've ever seen in my life; I'm losing customers because of it. I shouldn't have to look at that every day." And blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I said, "Sorry it's here to stay."

I asked her why she was so offended and why she would get so mad about a piece of art. She could not answer me. I told her that I did not particularly like that store, but I would never yell and scream about it being there,

that I would just walk by if I didn't like it. I guess the sculpture has not hindered their business, because they are still there and have been since 1993.

It is wonderful to go to the plaza and see people taking Christmas card photos, or just photos next to my piece. I have seen people put money in the sculpture's hand, go up and pet him, or put half-eaten food in his hands. He is a real fixture there now.

DR. KIRWIN: Did you go through a competition?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. For all three of the commissions.

DR. KIRWIN: Kind of nice—it's at a nice spot now in front of that natural spotlight there.

MR. NATSOULAS: Except for those stupid kiosk shops that completely surround the sculpture now, but they do protect it from being vandalized.

DR. KIRWIN: Yes, the merchants' carts—

MR. NATSOULAS: But there's nothing I can do about them being there. Three years later the same mall commissioned me to do several fiberglass pieces of flying shoppers, a magic carpet table cloth with a hamburger, fries, and milk shake on it, a huge coffee cup, and a fork. These sculptures were to entice shoppers to go upstairs and to draw their eyes towards the second level with all of the color. I used my wife, Donna, and a friend's daughter as my models. I had never worked in fiberglass before then, and it really showed me how wonderful fiberglass is. It is really strong, very durable, and light. I really want to use it again sometime on other pieces I make. Those are all of the public pieces I have done but I have also made a lot of work for private parties' sculpture commissions as well.

DR. KIRWIN: What are some of those private pieces?

MR. NATSOULAS: One sculpture I was commissioned to make was of a life-sized figure made of clay sitting on the balcony of a two-story house pouring a bucket of water onto the people below on the first level. The "water" was made of transparent glass, so it looked very realistic. Another commission I made was of Neptune jumping into a big old bunch [of] water, all made of clay. I made it into a fountain for my dentist's backyard. I made fish that are jumping out of the clay water that sprayed Neptune with real water. I just made another commission, two clay murals for a winery in Chico that my dentist owns. One is of an underwater scene for the men's restroom, and one is of musical scores and instruments for the women's rest room. I have also been commissioned to make busts of collectors, or musicians as well.

DR. KIRWIN: Do you think about teaching now?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, I do think about teaching, but I don't want to teach full time. I'm always happy to teach one class a semester or go to do a workshop. I really want to concentrate on my artwork, and I've made my overhead low enough that I don't need to teach full time. As soon as I pay the house off it'll be even better. My wife, Donna, is very supportive, and has helped me with the business end of my art along with helping me in the studio. I want to spend time with her and concentrate on making my art.

DR. KIRWIN: She's an artist, too.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: Do you want to talk about how you met?

MR. NATSOULAS: I put an ad in the local paper. I don't go to church and I don't drink so I never went to bars; I thought, I want to meet someone, and I was ready to settle down. So, I thought I would be able to meet someone special if I took out a personal ad asking for all the qualities in a person I was looking for. Donna never saw the ad, but her friend did and urged Donna to call it. Her friend was looking out for her that day.

Donna was not going to ever call an ad, so her friend dialed the number from my ad and put me on speaker phone so that Donna could hear the message I left about myself and what type of person I was looking for. She thought that I was funny; she thought I was so funny her message to me was of her laughing so hard the machine cut her off. She felt bad and called me back, but said she would not go out with me, but she knew a lot of people in Davis and wanted to know if I knew any of them. Within minutes I called her back. At the time she was living in Sacramento, but she lived in Davis for a while and knew people that I had grown up with and went to high school with. When we spoke on the phone, she asked me who I knew in Davis, and where I had gone to school. Funny thing is she knew my artwork—and so she called her friends up.

DR. KIRWIN: She did a little background check.



MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, I was okayed and cleared. So that's how we met, and we've been together ever since, inseparable, and making art as a career for 13 years now. Donna's just been so supportive of everything I've done, and do.

[End Tape 2, Side A; Begin Tape 2, Side B.]

MR. NATSOULAS: Donna helps me do everything, and she's the wind beneath my wings. [Laughs.]

DR. KIRWIN: And she makes purses?

MR. NATSOULAS: She recently has been hand-painting on retro, vintage purses.

DR. KIRWIN: Hand-paints found purses.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. She went to CCAC—The College of Arts and Crafts [now The California College of the Arts, Oakland, CA] before I met her. She was taking animation, and drawing classes, but she got sidetracked. She had to make money to live, so she quit school to work to support herself. It's very expensive to live in the Bay Area, so she stopped doing art for a while.

DR. KIRWIN: Okay, well, we can talk a little bit about the similarities or differences between your early work and your recent work. Have you reflected much on how your work has changed over the years, and why?

MR. NATSOULAS: I started out being more aggressive with the subjects and subject matters I chose to work on. I did a lot of political and environmental work. As my life became more comfortable and I was much more happy, I began making more comical and fun pieces that were not so biting. That is one major change. And that's why I want to get back to this magazine [*Juxtapoz*—what this magazine represents. The work is on the edge, wacky, and very critical on society, and politics. For some years now, I have not been critical in my art or subject matter. I think that it's one of the jobs of an artist to criticize society. I don't know why, but I think it is. [Laughs.]

I had an English teacher at Sacramento State who said that it's an artist's job and duty to poke at the fat of society, and I really like that idea. I think Arneson did too. I think that's why he was drawn to Funk Art and throughout his career he made socially critical pieces like the whole series of antinuclear pieces, poking fun at everything. The Mayor Moscone pieces and the Jackson Pollock series were all very socially critical. I think he related to Pollock, and wasn't really criticizing him, but empathizing, which was odd, based on most of his content and subject matter in his work.

I started out kind of critical, and then as I got more comfortable, it sort of went into another direction. It's interesting, the whole way things move and evolve. I have been making these big heads, but I am not poking fun or being critical about our gluttonous society while making them. I'm just having fun making them. I guess I am softening in my old age, but I have this obsession to make pieces fun; [that] is stronger than my guilt for not making more deeply meaningful sculptures. [Laughs.]

DR. KIRWIN: Well, I wanted to talk a little about your teaching. You have done some school teaching, and do you have any particular teaching philosophy that you impart to students?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. And Penland *really* helped me sharpen my teaching skills. I started the Penland class out by saying the hardest assignment that you're going to have is to not make work that looks like mine, because that's what happens sometimes [when] a teacher teaches an intense class. The students work looks like their teacher's artwork. Then I was talking to a friend of mine who teaches ceramics, and he told me that that is what teachers are supposed to do; they are supposed to make protégés. I don't know if that is true, and if it is, if I believe it.

Arneson didn't teach as if he were making protégés. Bob didn't teach his students anything technical. It was mostly the philosophy of making art. You always have to get the students to do a wide variety of exercises and do techniques that they wouldn't usually do. Arneson was always trying to get us to work in the opposite way of how we were working. If you were making small work, he would want you to make it big; if you're making big work, he would want you to make it small—always trying to push the limits of the students, and I try to do that, too.

The problem with the students at Penland was that they didn't look at enough arts and crafts. I'm always looking, going to art shows, galleries, looking on the Internet, looking at TV, trying to see what is going on in the art world and what other artists are doing. It's like there's a bar. It's like these people are doing this quality of work; I should be up there with them raising the bar. My art shouldn't look like I'm an amateur, because—anyone can be an amateur, but you need to raise yourself up, not just in skill level as far as techniques go, but what you're making art about. I sure pounded away at the students at how important it is for artists to go and *see art*.

I dragged them down to the Mint Museum [Mint Museum of Craft & Design, Charlotte, NC] to see a show of 250 teapots done by artists that were absolutely amazing ["The Artful Teapot," January 31 - May 30, 2004]. Did you see that show?

DR. KIRWIN: No.

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh, man. It was incredible. How far are you guys from Charlotte?

DR. KIRWIN: Pretty far. About six hours.

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh. You could fly there. Anyway, it was a great show. And the other thing about students is that they get so uptight that the piece that they are working on has to be the way they envisioned it and it can't become something else. They wanted to make a head that is supposed to be a woman and that's that. It can't turn into a man or something else entirely different. They were not open to experimenting.

DR. KIRWIN: Do you think that your work evolves like that as you're working on it?

MR. NATSOULAS: It used to more in the past. Now I work on specific people. From 1980 to, let's say, like 1988, I said to myself, "Okay, I'm going to make a man sitting on a shoe stool selling some shoes." Right? Or whatever the subject. I knew what I was going to make specifically, and I did it. Then I had probably a year, maybe a year and a half where I had a block. So one day I just couldn't stand it anymore. I had to make something; I sat down and began building a base. I made a foot, I made a leg, I made the leg going this direction, made the hips; I had no idea what it was going to look like.

It was the best thing to have happened to me at that time. I had always heard of intuitiveness and the concept of to just start sketching and the rest would come; I'd never worked in this manner before. After the piece was completed, I was able to interpret it along with any other viewer, because I didn't know what it was. I had no preconceived idea about what it was going to look like or the content. I learned to trust myself to do a great sculpture without laboring over what it was going to look like. From that point on, I made life-size sculptures without a set plan and made many sculptures in this way, until I started this present series of the portrait heads.

It was freeing to work intuitively, because when I had a preconceived idea, my audience would interpret the piece differently than what I had intended. The audience would look one of my sculptures and say, "Well, I don't get it," or "Oh, I know what this is about," and it would be completely different than what I had in mind when making the piece. It dawned on me that people can only interpret or read into a sculpture or a piece of art using their own lives references, unless you're going to write it out, and then you might as well have a book in the gallery to tell what the art is about. So this worked perfectly, because I was interpreting the sculpture's content my way and you could interpret it in a completely different way. So it worked out really, really great. And then for some reason I stopped doing it. [Laughs.]

DR. KIRWIN: So there was a kind of built-in ambiguity about the piece?

MR. NATSOULAS: Well, actually, when I was done, there was no ambiguity.

DR. KIRWIN: To you.

MR. NATSOULAS: It wasn't ambiguity, because your mind immediately starts making up stories and references for the sculpture. Your brain and imagination want to interpret whatever you come in contact with, wanting to understand. No matter what the

circumstance. I guess that's it. [Laughs.] It really worked well.

DR. KIRWIN: Well, you did talk about your sources of inspiration over the years, that they have changed.

MR. NATSOULAS: They have changed in that I am always looking at new things and artists' work. There are a whole slew of things that inspired me. There are old movies and all the old TV shows, and definitely Eddie. I don't care if he hates me saying this, but he has really been a big inspiration through his artwork and his friendship over the years. Along with Arneson, and those other people I was talking about earlier.

DR. KIRWIN: You've had a long friendship with Fred Babb, too.

MR. NATSOULAS: Fred inspired and inspires me, as well. I think he's a genius. I always tell him that he's the King Midas. Everything he touches turns to money.

DR. KIRWIN: Where did you meet Fred?

MR. NATSOULAS: We were showing at Michael Himovitz Gallery in Sacramento in 1985 together, and have been

the best of friends ever since. We have made several collaborative artworks together and kibitz back and forth. He is wonderful and a wonderful artist.

DR. KIRWIN: What were some of your collaborative things?

MR. NATSOULAS: We made paintings together, and sculpture, along with art-related T-shirts. Fred even painted a T-shirt on one of my sculptures. Fred for years had his own art T-shirt business and got quite well known for his art and illustration. We've lived in different parts of California, so it's sort of been hard to collaborate at times. We've shown a lot together in galleries and museums.

DR. KIRWIN: What are those circumstances of showing together?

MR. NATSOULAS: The Davis Art Center. The Michael Himovitz Gallery in Sacramento, where we showed quite a few times together. Fred also owned an art gallery and art-related store in Cambria, California, where we also showed together. Cambria is where the Hearst Castle is, near San Simeon. Michael Himovitz, through his gallery, got Fred and I into shows that traveled to France and Japan.

DR. KIRWIN: Did you go there?

MR. NATSOULAS: No, because I wasn't flying at that point. I had a fear of flying.

DR. KIRWIN: Oh.

MR. NATSOULAS: [Laughs.]

DR. KIRWIN: And Fred went, and you didn't go?

MR. NATSOULAS: No, Fred didn't go. The art went. I don't think any artists went. Another artist friend of mine, Paul DiPasqua, who I met when I was living in Chico, also has inspired me. He does figurative found object sculptures. He takes anything he finds and makes these figures that are incredible. They're whimsical, and I think he's another artistic genius.

There was a show when I was an undergraduate that inspired me quite a bit of Richard Avedon. He had a show at the Berkeley Museum [University of California, Berkeley Art Museum] that just floored me. The show was of all his works, all prints. The series he made were of life-sized prints of Humphrey Bogart and Marilyn Monroe, Andy Warhol, and other famous people. Absolutely amazing. I think I was an undergraduate. Maybe I was a graduate student. But that show shook me. All of his subjects, models, beautifully photographed and all were life-sized. They were in black and white, but you could study every single thing about them.

There were a lot of different shows during the years that really knocked my socks off. There was also a show at the Whitney [Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City] called "Six Ceramic Sculptors" ["Ceramic Sculpture: Six Artists," 1981. Included Peter Voulkos, David Gilhooly, Robert Arneson, Kenneth Price, Richard Shaw, and John Mason].

DR. KIRWIN: Did you have any interaction with Jim Melchert?

MR. NATSOULAS: No. I didn't. I think I met him once. We haven't been in the same circles. Richard Notkin, who is a phenomenal artist, has inspired me too. Arneson had him come and show slides, and I absolutely loved these chess games that he did: little, teeny pieces. I think they were four or five inches tall. I use a lot of pieces that balance on my sculptures' heads, and Richard made sculptures that were balancing umpteen books and checkers, and other objects as well on top of one another. Frozen, yet had movement. I really like his work, and [he] has been another source of inspiration to me. I saw a retrospective of George Segal's work when I was a kid, and it, as well, was very inspirational.

DR. KIRWIN: Have you ever thought about casting people?

MR. NATSOULAS: No, I'm much more interested in sculpting. I do like the final object, but I would rather go through the time to sculpt the piece than just have it done.

DR. KIRWIN: Are you involved with craft organizations, like NCECA [National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts]?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. I've shown with them and have also been a member. I've gone there [to NCECA conferences], but I haven't gone for years. I used to go a lot to their conferences. I used to go to the CAA [College Art Association], but that was when I was trying to get a job.

DR. KIRWIN: How about the ACC [American Craft Council] shows?

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh, yes, I've gone to them. I haven't participated in them, I have a whole other line of smaller sculptural work that I do as a production line. For a while it was my bread and butter, bringing in an income when the larger sculptures were not shown or sold.

DR. KIRWIN: Because—what's the show in Philadelphia?

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh, the Rosen Show.

DR. KIRWIN: Yes.

MR. NATSOULAS: I did that, right, with the production work I made.

DR. KIRWIN: And those were?

MR. NATSOULAS: Brightly glazed ceramic fish that hang on the wall, teapots, and shoe sculptures, all of my smaller works. I was trying to figure out a way to buy a house. The way I actually was able to buy a house was that I sold six pieces at this Crocker Museum show, and a life-size piece after the show came down. I am also a member in the Association of Clay and Glass Artists of California.

DR. KIRWIN: I've never heard of that group.

MR. NATSOULAS: It's a small group. There are 500 members; it's clay and glass artists only. The organization puts on shows, art festivals, or ceramics and glass festivals. They produce publications as well as calendars and such. All the people that are in it are pretty good – I don't want to say artists, but they're really good craftspeople.

DR. KIRWIN: Have you met a lot of people through that association?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. And I've made a lot of connections to art lovers through doing their shows. Gallery owners, art collectors, and art consultants.

DR. KIRWIN: Do you work with people that try to place your pieces in public spaces?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, but I've never been successful at finding a consultant to work with that actually follows through on anything.

DR. KIRWIN: – public –

MR. NATSOULAS: I mean, consultants call me up and tell me, "Oh, yes, yes, I've got the collector that wants it," or that they have a big client looking for public or corporate art and that my work is just what they are looking for and want. Then they never follow through, and seems it will never come through. I know it will someday.

DR. KIRWIN: Has your working process changed over time?

MR. NATSOULAS: It's the same as when I started in high school with those fingers I used to sculpt. I use slabs when I build, just like I did back then. I used to have to put newspaper in the clay using it as a form or armature, and now I don't put newspaper inside for an armature. I've figured out how not to do that. I have better tools and better glazes now, along with the knowledge of different techniques and application of glazes.

[Audio break.]

DR. KIRWIN: Okay. This is Liza Kirwin with the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, interviewing Tony Natsoulas at his home in Sacramento, California, August 11, 2004.

MR. NATSOULAS: So my name is Natsoulas. (Pronounces "Nat-sue-less.")

DR. KIRWIN: Natsoulas?

MR. NATSOULAS: Instead of Natsoulos. (Pronounces "Nat-soo-los.")

DR. KIRWIN: It is?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. It's A-S. Just for the fun of it.

DR. KIRWIN: Well, we didn't talk about your Greek heritage—

MR. NATSOULAS: We didn't.

DR. KIRWIN: – the other day – no. But this autobiographical statement is really interesting about your background. Do you want to talk a little bit about your "Greekness"?

MR. NATSOULAS: Well, let's see. I don't know exactly what to say about it. Both my parents are Greek. My mother was born in Greece. My father was born in New York City, but both sets of grandparents were born in Greece.

DR. KIRWIN: Do they speak Greek?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, they spoke Greek all the time when I was growing up, but they didn't teach me how to speak it. And I'm not sure exactly why, but I have a feeling that because they were immigrants, they wanted me to assimilate into the American culture. So I think that's why, but I could be wrong.

DR. KIRWIN: But did they introduce you to Greek culture in other ways?

MR. NATSOULAS: Greek food, and we'd go to church now and then. I think there's a whole vitality to Greek and Italian, or Old World, Mediterranean cultures, with their lust for life; they take on the day and do whatever has to be done and enjoy life to the fullest while doing it. As opposed to other cultures that are much more subtle and laid-back, I don't know how much of that is passed on through [heredity] or how much it is the culture. But it's definitely there.

I don't know how much influence this was, but my grandmother on my father's side—and my grandmother on my mother's side too, but more my grandmother on my father's side—would crochet, and of course make food all the time. I guess they used to make these things out of straw that looked like giant hotplates, but I don't think they were because they were also very decorative. They must have been some centerpiece that you put bowls on or something like that on them. Anyway, I think possibly that that may have influenced me to go into something as a career where I would use my hands all the time. My Ya Ya was always crocheting, always making some sort of scarf, blanket, or preparing food.

My parents didn't make anything. They were really into education and books and theories. I don't think I ever saw my father mow the lawn or wash a car or do regular things, which is fine. He had me to do it, which is fine, too. And I did it reluctantly back then, but—[laughs]—but that whole hands-on thing is what I am getting at that was so important in their culture. And I think that possibly that's why I started doing sculptures, because I could make something with my own hands. Ya Ya was a peasant and she had to make things in order to have things. People had to make items instead of buying things that they could not afford. I think that was part of the hierarchy of her culture.

DR. KIRWIN: Where were they coming from?

MR. NATSOULAS: My grandmother on my father's side was from Cyprus, and my grandfather, who I never met, was from Macedonia. I guess there's a Greek Macedonia. And my other grandmother and grandfather were from a little island called Symi that was a sponge-diving colony. My grandfather made a living sponge diving. They all immigrated to New York in the 1930s, becoming U.S. citizens. I think my grandfather on my father's side polished silver for the New Yorker Hotel, which I don't think exists anymore. I think it got knocked down. And then my other grandfather was an elevator operator.

I have another story that is not related to being Greek, but to my uncle, my mother's older brother. Uncle George polished floors and washed windows for all of these buildings in New York City for years and years until, I don't know, probably 10 or 15 years ago. One day—this was when I was in college—he was trying to relate to me and to what I was doing. He said, "I remember going down to Soho in the '60s, where I was hired to wash the floors, polish the floors, and wash the windows at this art gallery. I was looking around, and there were all these sculptures"—well, he didn't say sculptures, he said, "There were all these smashed cars in the gallery." And he thought that was completely absurd. Uncle George didn't quite understand what was going on, and it turned out that it was John Chamberlain at Leo Castelli. So that was kind of interesting, because it's a small world—my uncle's cleaning Leo Castelli's floors. [Laughs.] So anyway that's a non-Greek thing, but a family thing.

DR. KIRWIN: Did you ever go back to Greece?

MR. NATSOULAS: No. But some day I would like to go and see all of the historic sites.

DR. KIRWIN: No, you've never been? Did your parents go back?

MR. NATSOULAS: No. We were all afraid to fly.

DR. KIRWIN: No? Okay. We talked about your education. There's something that came out—actually at the

tour of the di Rosa Preserve [Napa, CA] yesterday -

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh, yes, about the decision I was going to make.

DR. KIRWIN: Yes.

MR. NATSOULAS: I completely forgot about that. Sorry.

DR. KIRWIN: I don't know how much of a conflict it was early on with music.

MR. NATSOULAS: I was really into playing saxophone, and my parents had actually bought me a saxophone for my high school graduation. I was trying to choose a major, and it was between art and music, and I decided on art, because you had to learn German to major in music at UC Davis.

DR. KIRWIN: In music?

MR. NATSOULAS: I thought that would be too hard to learn.

DR. KIRWIN: That you didn't want to learn German?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: Did you play in a band?

MR. NATSOULAS: I played in a jazz band in high school and some college. I played in big band jazz kind of situations. I wasn't very good, because I really have a hard time doing things over and over again, like practicing. I don't have the patience for that kind of thing. So that probably was another reason for not majoring in music, not just the having to learn the German language.

DR. KIRWIN: You also mentioned yesterday that you had dyslexia.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: And I know there are varying degrees of that.

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh, it was minor. Really minor. But it was enough that I had a hard time reading when I was a child. But according to my mom I got over it in the sixth grade. I don't know exactly what happened back then. To this day I still see some letters sideways - or backwards, but I think it's as much as anyone else. Or maybe it wasn't dyslexia and they misdiagnosed me. I don't know. I remember I had to go to special reading classes, and to this day it's hard for me to read, so—it's much easier for me to sculpt something.

DR. KIRWIN: And yesterday we visited Clayton Bailey at his home, and you've had a long relationship with Clayton.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: Can you talk about when that began and what that friendship has meant to you?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. 1977. I'd never heard of him before. Nineteen-seventy-seven was the year that I had taken classes from Kelly Detweiler under Arneson; Kelly had taken us to Clayton's studio, no, he took us to the Eight Wonders of the World, or what does Clayton officially call his museum? Is it Wonders of the World Museum [April 1976-October 1977]? Kelly took us to Clayton's museum that was housed above the famous Juanita's Restaurant [Warehouse Café] in Port Costa, California. It was the most amazing place I'd ever seen or been to in my life. I went to Disneyland, and this was 100 times better, because one guy made it, and it was the most fanciful thing I'd ever seen. We even got to sit down and talk to Clayton after the tour through his museum.

DR. KIRWIN: Can you describe—

MR. NATSOULAS: The pieces?

DR. KIRWIN: Yes, what it was that you saw.

MR. NATSOULAS: It was a pseudo museum. It was pretty small. But you walked in, and he had all these artifacts under glass boxes. Clayton also had other artifacts that were on pedestals. He had a full skeleton of Bigfoot that he had made from clay but looked very real. He had a giant skull of a cyclops. He had sculptures of doctors working on patients— absolutely gross, but I loved them. He also had this little plaque on the wall that was really wild. I was 18, so I was still a kid. The plaque showed a comparison between human penises and Bigfoot penises. The plaque said that the Bigfoot penises were double-jointed and how much better they were

then the human's. What was it he was saying yesterday? He was saying that they were—

DR. KIRWIN: He showed us the bone.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, but he said that they were good for birth -

DR. KIRWIN: Contraception.

MR. NATSOULAS: Birth control, because you could tie it in a knot or something like that.

DR. KIRWIN: [Laughs.]

MR. NATSOULAS: That whole experience blew me away so much that I thought, oh, my God, I want to be able to do anything I want, like Clayton does. I didn't want to do what he did exactly; it looked like everything was from his childhood, which was the '40s, '50s. The experience opened my eyes, and I thought, we could do anything we want as artists. I didn't see Clayton for years after that; I was a kid, and so he—I'm sure he didn't remember me. Later on when we were showing in a lot of the same galleries, we got to know each other, and became very good friends. I went and showed my slides to his students at the school where he was teaching.

DR. KIRWIN: And where was he teaching then?

MR. NATSOULAS: Hayward State University, California [California State University, Hayward]. Clayton has put me into two shows where artists select other artists to show with that had been inspirational to them or they to the other artist. I think that was really nice of him to do. It's so wonderful to meet someone that had such a profound impact on you, and then to go on to become friends with them later on in life. To see your hero and become friends with him. It's such an honor. Every time I go over to his house and studio there's more stuff to see, his art, and their collections, and he's always so genuinely encouraging. He has always been so good to me.

DR. KIRWIN: And he marries people—

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes he does. We asked him to be our reverend—at our wedding—and he said he would be honored to marry us. The strange thing is we thought since he's so wacky—we thought that he was going to do something really funny, but he took our wedding, and him presiding, very seriously. He takes that really, really seriously. He had the wedding sermon written and planned out. It was really wonderful and very special that he would do something that intimate and so personal for us. It meant so much to us both to have someone we know, love, and respect marry us. And who knows us, both Clayton and his wife Betty. Clayton made us a sculpture called the *Bone of Contentment*. He presented it to us while marrying us. The sculpture is a huge gold-leafed wishbone with both our hair encapsulated in it and our names and wedding date embedded in the lettering on it.

DR. KIRWIN: Can you talk a little bit about your wedding? Because you had hula dancers there as well.

MR. NATSOULAS: We got married on the UC Davis campus in the Garden of White Roses. It's this little place on the Arboretum at Davis, and there's nothing but white roses all around, with greenery and a round gazebo. Clayton married us there, and then after the wedding ceremony, we all went to the reception that was held at an artist's house in Davis. Our friends, Arthur Gonzalez, who's another ceramic sculptor, and his wife, Christine, hula-danced for us for half an hour. And it was great. They did the courting/marriage dance. He and his wife have been learning how to dance hula all these years. It was very touching and a very personal tribute they both made in our honor.

DR. KIRWIN: Oh.

MR. NATSOULAS: At the wedding reception, we had a blues band there that was made up of other artists we knew. People danced. It was really wonderful and magical.

DR. KIRWIN: And we also saw Roy De Forest yesterday and you had taken some classes from him that you—

MR. NATSOULAS: I took two classes from Roy. He was also on my graduate committee. He's a great painter.

DR. KIRWIN: What were the classes that you—

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh, I took a color class from him, and I took materials and carriers—painting materials and carriers. They were great classes. I learned a lot, but there is a big difference between two dimensions and three dimensions, and I felt more comfortable with sculpting.

DR. KIRWIN: Yes. Do you think Clayton and Roy De Forest have much cross-pollination there since they're right

up against each other?

MR. NATSOULAS: It doesn't look like it.

DR. KIRWIN: It's so—well, I could say for the tape yesterday, we went and visited them, and they live in the middle of nowhere.

MR. NATSOULAS: Seems like in the middle of nowhere.

DR. KIRWIN: But they're smack dab next to each other. [Laughs.]

MR. NATSOULAS: They do live right next to each other.

DR. KIRWIN: It's so funny.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: And it's a really beautiful area.

MR. NATSOULAS: Clayton doesn't use a lot of color in his artwork, and Roy does use a lot of color and doesn't make much clay. He did a couple of pieces years ago with Robert Arneson. They were called Bob and Roy pots.

DR. KIRWIN: I wanted to go back to Ohio State University. What did you do when you were there?

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh, I was a visiting artist, and I taught two classes and a graduate seminar.

DR. KIRWIN: When was that?

MR. NATSOULAS: I think it was '87.

DR. KIRWIN: Did you like that?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, it was an incredible experience.

DR. KIRWIN: How did you get that job?

MR. NATSOULAS: I applied for it. But, like I was saying the other day, I didn't have a lot of formal or technical training, so when I went there, I learned a lot about glazes, firings, and techniques I had never tried before. At Davis we concentrated on low-fire glazes and low-fire clay. It was really great, because I actually probably learned more than I taught while at Ohio State.

DR. KIRWIN: [Laughs.] That's always good.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, oh, it was great.

DR. KIRWIN: Do you mix your own glazes? You don't?

MR. NATSOULAS: No.

DR. KIRWIN: You don't, do you?

MR. NATSOULAS: No, and I don't mix my own clay either. I really do relate to the painters a lot in that. Painters don't mix their own paint or knit their own canvases. I figure, well, why should I? I'm too excited to make the piece; to sit there and make glazes that I could go buy at the store would just drive me nuts. I use so many different colors in my work that I would be mixing glazes all day and night if I made my own. On these big pieces I use a lot of glazes.

DR. KIRWIN: What kind of glazes do you buy?

MR. NATSOULAS: Duncan and Mayco glazes. Duncan used photos of my sculptures as advertising in their color catalogue, which was nice.

DR. KIRWIN: An advertisement for colors?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. The same thing goes with mixing clay—both mixing clay and glazes are so dangerous to mix, with the lead content and the clay dust itself. I want to keep my health so I can keep making more sculptures. And anyway it's kind of contrary to what the crafts people are doing. They're mixing their clays and trying to find the right clay and the right glaze, and they're keeping all their glaze recipes secret so no one else



copies them. It is great that they do it, but I don't. Like I said before, I'd rather sculpt my sculptures in clay, glazing them any way I like, or to cast them in fiberglass and paint them anyway I like. [Laughs.]

DR. KIRWIN: Yes.

MR. NATSOULAS: I'm trying to head towards that point.

DR. KIRWIN: Yes. What's been your most satisfying exhibition of your work so far?

MR. NATSOULAS: The Crocker Museum.

DR. KIRWIN: Could you talk about the space and the circumstance of the exhibition?

MR. NATSOULAS: My father had brought home a book of Meissen ceramics for me, German ceramics, when I was an undergrad. Are you familiar with the work? I fell in love with them. I remember the next year going to New York and seeing them in person at the Met. Absolutely incredible. I mean, the content is cornier than hell, but the poses, the colors, the fluidity of the poses just blew me away. I wanted to sculpt life-sized renditions of them. But that would be huge feat. There would be two or three people on these big ceramic bases, so I didn't take it on. I've always wanted to do that, so it's always been ticking away in the back of my head. I had the curator of the Crocker Museum come down to my studio on Broadway, and—

DR. KIRWIN: What was his name?

MR. NATSOULAS: Scott Shields. This was four years ago.

DR. KIRWIN: Was he new to the museum then?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, brand new.

DR. KIRWIN: And he was going out doing studio visits?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. He was trying to get familiar with artists around town.

DR. KIRWIN: Oh, okay.

MR. NATSOULAS: And the director was new, too, and she had come, too, which was nice.

DR. KIRWIN: What was her name?

MR. NATSOULAS: Lial Jones. She had come from Delaware. So Scott came, and he said, "Oh, yes, we definitely have to have a show of yours." I hadn't had any museum attention at all until this point. I mean no one coming to my studio, even though a few museums owned my work, but the pieces in those museums were donated by collectors. Scott said, "But we can't have your show until 2005," because they're building a new building." I thought, oh, gosh, there's got to be some way to show the work earlier, because, again, I'm impatient. So I looked around the museum, and I thought, God, this ballroom, it looks—sort of like a baroque ballroom, why don't I do this Meissen-themed series in the ballroom as an installation?

So, instead of doing the life-sized figures, I decided to make larger-than-life-sized busts, since I was doing busts at the time. I placed all of the sculptures along the walls and put ropes in front of them like it was an exhibit as opposed to an art exhibit. I made 12 sculptures for the show, using my wife and my friends as models. I sold six pieces in that show and a life-sized piece, as well, at my opening for the show; there were 300 people or more that came that evening. Everybody loved it. The models were there at the reception—all but one—people were taking pictures of the models in front of the pieces I had sculpted of them. People were asking the models and myself to sign their photos in the catalogue the museum made for the show. It was great. I got three articles from major ceramics magazines as a result of the show. I had never had articles that were this big before with as many pages and color photos. Everything seemed to blossom from there. I was really happy with the show. Not only was it successful, but also it was successful artistically in my mind. So that was the best show so far.

DR. KIRWIN: What year was that?

MR. NATSOULAS: I think it was 2002, summer.

DR. KIRWIN: When was the Oakland show?

MR. NATSOULAS: That was a year before that. It was wonderful because it was in this giant space with three walls of windows that went up three stories, so it was very beautiful and the work showed off well there. I sold a few of the pieces before they even reached the show. There were no sales from the show put together by the

Oakland Museum at their annex.

DR. KIRWIN: No sales from that?

MR. NATSOULAS: Not from the show itself. I'm sure a lot of people saw it. The artists opening reception was small.

DR. KIRWIN: What do your pieces sell for?

MR. NATSOULAS: They're \$6,500 now—the busts. But then the commissions are a lot more. I just received a commission for \$100,000 for five figures.

DR. KIRWIN: And you were also instrumental in introducing Scott to a number of local artists in the area, weren't you?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, well, not a number, but a few. Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: Okay.

MR. NATSOULAS: I always try to plug my friends, because I think they are really great artists.

DR. KIRWIN: That's really nice. Who were those people that were your friends that you connected with him?

MR. NATSOULAS: Well, they actually had applied to show, but I encouraged Scott, so I don't know if I can take any of the credit.

DR. KIRWIN: Could you talk about some of the themes in your work? Because there were a lot of musicians, and we looked at one yesterday at the di Rosa Collection, and you had mentioned that you have a series of different musicians. Are there other similar themes in your work?

MR. NATSOULAS: I did that whole series of people sitting on chairs. I bought the most interesting chairs I could, and then I tried to use them as a starting point. I had one figure sitting in a barber chair, and another one sitting on a shoe salesman's chair, and others were on bus seats and bar stools. It's harder to make someone sitting down in clay than standing up. Part of the problem is that the sculpture is top heavy and if it is on a chair like the bar stool it would fall over if I do not engineer it right. The other thing is, the clay shrinks. So you have to resolve this problem on how to get the feet to touch the floor. Plus you have to build from the legs and the hips down, whereas if you build a piece standing on the ground, you're building from the feet up, so you have the support.

DR. KIRWIN: How many musicians did you do?

MR. NATSOULAS: I did quite a few. I probably did 15 or 20—saxophone players and guitar players and bass players, trumpet players.

DR. KIRWIN: Any famous people or just—

MR. NATSOULAS: No, they were totally anonymous, because that was what I was doing then. I thought the most important thing was the gesture of the sculpture. I was not making specific people at that time.

DR. KIRWIN: You are a self-taught portraitist.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: And what was your process in learning that?

MR. NATSOULAS: Just doing it. And actually going to Penland really helped me with it, because I had to teach portraiture for the first time in my life and I really figured out that you're supposed to not just start making the sculpture, but you're supposed to have a general plan and then you go more specific. I didn't realize that's what I was doing, for one, and, two, that made sense why some portraits were harder than others, because I would start generally, but some of them I would start on the nose and finish the nose, and then I was kind of stuck, because the eyes weren't in the right place. So it's kind of a problem. When teaching, you really become aware of a lot of things you do unconsciously. I didn't realize that you could learn a lot while teaching.

DR. KIRWIN: Well, it's just you have to clarify. You have to explain it to someone else.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. Now I'm ready to teach more so I can learn some more. When you don't teach—I'd go for years without teaching, and then—I'd do a little workshop or I'd teach a little class, "Gosh, I sure know quite a

bit about this subject." Not in an egotistical way. There's this chunk of knowledge that you have to have to make big pieces, and you don't realize it until you start telling people how to do it. So it's kind of nice, because you think, well, I actually do know stuff. [Laughs.]

DR. KIRWIN: Yesterday we also saw a piece at Roy De Forest's, who was one of your teachers. Well, it would be interesting if you could describe the piece but also what that particular person meant to you as a teacher.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, but I don't remember him actually teaching me anything specific. It was a realistic portrait of Roy sitting in a chair with a can of beer in his hand.

DR. KIRWIN: Oh, okay.

MR. NATSOULAS: He was my teacher; the artist [another portrait] was Joe Fafard, and he's a Canadian artist; he does specific portraits of people. That's all he did back then. He did Roy De Forest. He did Bill Cosby. He did Arneson. He did the Queen. He did a multitude of people. When I saw this piece of Roy at his—Roy's—house, it brought back all of what Joe was all about. I hadn't seen the piece for what—twenty years probably. It's a beautiful little piece. I just love it. I just—I want to steal it away from him. Joe's got this wonderful naturalistic sensibility, but he's got this flair to make the portrait in the most simple way, so it's not like this tight little portrait; it's like you recognize him, but you recognize him in this general way. He generalizes a lot, but somehow it works. They're little things.

I remember thinking to myself, these figures should be life-sized and I don't know why Joe doesn't make them life-size, so I'm going to show Joe how to make life-size people. That was the beginning of me making large-scale sculptures. That was 1980. Arneson had invited Joe to teach a quarter while Bob was on sabbatical. He had come in the spring of '79, and we were friends for quite a while, but I've lost track of him now. I did go to visit him once when I was in Canada.

DR. KIRWIN: Was he teaching up there or was that his own studio?

MR. NATSOULAS: He was such a successful artist, he didn't have to teach, so—but he's up there in Regina, Saskatchewan, in the middle of snow, in the middle of nowhere. It's absolutely a desolate place to live. But he loves it. He had a studio at his home.

DR. KIRWIN: Can we talk about the difference between your work and Viola Frey's?

MR. NATSOULAS: I did talk about how we went to her studio?

DR. KIRWIN: Yes.

MR. NATSOULAS: I liked her Grandmother series. After that her pieces got really large and really generalized; I didn't quite like them as much.

DR. KIRWIN: Because yours have a sense of movement.

MR. NATSOULAS: My life-size sculptures were about movement, and hers were about sheer size and color, and so it is quite a bit different. I really respect what she did. I'm glad she was there to do what she did. There's one little story that I could tell.

DR. KIRWIN: Go ahead.

MR. NATSOULAS: When I was first starting to do life-sized figures, I remember Arneson sitting me down and saying, "This is a great direction you are going in and you ought to make interchangeable parts." He thought that it'd be great to do these life-sized figures and make each part interchangeable, and you could have a whole show with 12 pieces. And then have another show with different heads and hands—or the same hands, but changed all around. But I never did it, and I think I should have. The problem is that you have to be patient and you have to make each neck hole exactly the same as the other one. Arneson had the patience to do this and I did not. Maybe some day I will try his idea. I thought that was wonderful that he sat me down and took me seriously enough to give me an idea for my work. I could talk more about him if you want.

DR. KIRWIN: Yes, that'd be great. One thing yesterday – I guess maybe everybody knows the story that he wanted to be packed in clay and cremated.

MR. NATSOULAS: I'm not really clear about the whole story, but there are videos on him actually telling the story.

DR. KIRWIN: Okay.

MR. NATSOULAS: Gosh, that's another place you really need to visit, is the Nelson Gallery at UC Davis. Anyway, there's a video there where Arneson talks about what he wanted done to his body when he died. From what I can remember is that he wanted to be placed on a hillside, packed in clay like a kiln, and he wanted the smokestack to be coming out where his penis was and then fired. He wanted his ashes to be made into a glaze and put on a pot. When I first met Arneson, I think by then he was in his fifties.

MR. BISESE: He's getting younger.

MR. NATSOULAS: He's getting younger? He was born in 1930; I was first at TB-9 in '79, so that would make him only 49. Well, anyway, the difference between us was that I was 21, and he always seemed so much older than me. We didn't have a lot to relate to except for art; we'd go to restaurants, and he'd always want me to drink with him. "Oh, take a drink! What are doing, Tony? Come on, you're not Greek if you don't take a drink—get drunk." I don't like the taste of alcohol at all. I have never had an entire beer or glass of wine or alcohol. He was really into sports, and I wasn't at all. He was kind of this macho guy, and I'm not. But we got along really well.

I remember David Gilhooly had a show at the de Saisset Museum of Art at Santa Clara University. David had written about his relationship with Arneson. He said that he felt like a fifth son. Arneson had four sons. And that's how I felt, too. I don't know if it was the way he felt about David, or me, but he always seemed fatherly to me. He was definitely my hero. Clayton was my hero too, but first it was Arneson. Sorry, Clayton. [Laughs.] On the exterior he seemed to be a really gruff guy. Sometimes he was not encouraging *whatsoever*. He would say, "Oh, that's crap" or, "You don't have a sense of humor." I believe that he was in pain the whole time I knew him from cancer. I'm sure that had a lot to do with it.

At the same time, he would go out of his way to get his students into shows and get us grants. When I was in Baltimore, he wrote me encouraging letters, paid for my bus ticket to come and see him in New York. I think we went to Manuel Neri's show at some big gallery there. He introduced me to all the people there. It was fantastic. I remember walking down the street with him and meeting George Segal. The most out of place and sentimental moment was when he saw me after not seeing me for a year; he kissed me on the cheek, and I was—what—I was 23 or 24. It took me by surprise. [Laughs.] I was really excited to see him, and I remember we were in some dark bar and I was trying to show him slides of what I had done in Baltimore. And, of course, he couldn't see them. He couldn't hear very well, and we were in this noisy bar. He took all of us out to dinner later that night.

DR. KIRWIN: Did a lot of people – people were showing up to see him all the time at UC Davis.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. I remember the day that he installed a sculpture he made of the mayor of San Francisco, who had been shot and killed. Mayor [George] Moscone? Do you know about this?

DR. KIRWIN: I know some of the controversy.

MR. NATSOULAS: He sculpted a big head of the mayor for the new Moscone Center. Bob had portrayed how he died on the bottom of the pedestal. He had also included his entire life in graffiti-style writing along, with graphic images around the pedestal. The new Moscone Center was built as a convention center where millions of people would visit yearly. The mayor at that time of Bob's installation was Mayor Feinstein. She didn't like the sculpture even though Moscone's wife had come to his studio and liked the piece.

I remember the day that it was unveiled, and the news reporters were camped outside of TB-9 in Davis. Bob wouldn't let them in; it was our critique day, the last day of the class. He made them all wait out there all day until 5:00 pm. What was so odd was Bob was really, really shy, but he was macho at the same time. In my eyes, it was a really weird conflict. I remember him barely getting the words out, during the interview, where the press surrounded him in the studio.

He was more than generous to so many of his students. It was really interesting the way he ran the studio. He didn't do a lot of work at the studio by the time I got there. He used the studio at school for years and years as his private studio, but then I guess when he moved to Benicia, he had a studio over there, so he did all the work there. He treated all of us like we were his equals and we were all artists together at TB-9. We weren't students and teacher. It was amazing when you think back, because there are a lot of teachers have the attitude that "you're the students; you do exactly what I say. I can't learn anything from you." Bob was just the opposite.

DR. KIRWIN: Were there women in the programs studying with Arneson at that time?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes.

DR. KIRWIN: And how many graduate students—

MR. NATSOULAS: What I have been describing is my undergraduate and graduate years.

DR. KIRWIN: Uh-huh.

MR. NATSOULAS: So there were women in the graduate department, and then, of course, there were women in the undergraduate. Bob could be pretty brutal with everybody; I think he did like to pick on women. I thought he must have been a sexist, although he picked on me as much, although he never made me cry. He did make a lot of women cry.

But I was talking to Lisa Clague about Viola Frey, who did *exactly* the same thing. Lisa said, "If you were working on a small piece, you make it big. If you're working on a piece with no color, you make it red." Viola was always negative. I think it was a way of teaching back then, but I don't think that Arneson and Viola went to the same schools to learn how to teach. I think it their way to toughen you up.

My point of view of it is, if you could take criticism from this big, famous artist who gets into the all the museums and sells his work for thousands and thousands of dollars and critically acclaimed around the world, if you could take it from him, you could take it from anyone. If I got rejected from galleries or museums or whatever, I have a thick skin because of this experience. Where other people were crushed and couldn't function for days, I on the other hand could just keep going. I'm not talking about him [pointing at Eddie] but—

DR. KIRWIN: You're not talking about Eddie?

MR. NATSOULAS: No, I wouldn't talk about Eddie that way [joking]. I know people that when they get rejection letters, they say, "Oh, my God, I'll never paint again." I look at it as it is just one person's opinion. Some people like spaghetti. Some people like fish. It's all about taste. A lot of people think Bob was a bastard, but I never did. When I was applying for jobs, there were a lot of people who didn't like him. I think part of the problem was that he had broken clay open from being a traditional medium. I remember going to the CAA, and people would say, "You study with Arneson, huh? Hmm," grumbling about how horrible his work was. His art was too brazen for them.

DR. KIRWIN: Any Arneson stories? Was he always around the department then?

MR. NATSOULAS: No, I think he came in two days a week, because he lived in Benicia. I saw a lot of him, though. I used to go down to visit him at his studio in Benicia a lot and see what he was working on. When he was at home in his studio, there were people coming and going all the time. Curators, gallery dealers, and other artists. I don't know how he got anything done. It's amazing. But I guess he had other days that he just wouldn't let anyone in. I don't know. Well, he also had an assistant. That was a good thing.

I also remember in graduate school he really liked this wall piece I made and he wanted to trade me, but he wouldn't trade me any of his artwork for it, so he traded me a ton of wet clay for this piece. I needed the clay. Actually he got mad at me, too. I had made this big theater piece of five figures with clay seats. It was a giant piece. I threw it all out because I wasn't happy with it. After that, he said, "Oh, you've got to start buying your clay" - because they were giving us clay for free. He thought that I was wasting it. But in lieu of that, I guess he felt bad after he said that, and few weeks later said, "Here, I'm going to give you this clay; give me the wall piece." He took the wall piece home, and he put it in his studio bathroom above the toilet. There's a mirror on the wall, so if you were standing up using the toilet, you would be looking straight into my sculpture's eyes. If you were sitting on the toilet, you would be looking in the mirror in front of you, which had him looking at directly you. DR. KIRWIN: [Laughs.] Well, was it just a face?

MR. NATSOULAS: It was from the waist up, and was based on the same character as the piece that's in our backyard—the life-size sculpture that's pointing.

DR. KIRWIN: Oh, okay.

MR. NATSOULAS: I called it *Anthony Baltimore*, about my time spent in Baltimore. Both pieces were of a man wearing a little fedora, and he had a cross hanging around his neck. Both sculptures were a semi-self-portrait. They were of tough guy representing the East Coast, which I felt was tougher than Davis. I thought that was really great that Bob wanted it.

DR. KIRWIN: How do you arrive at the titles for your pieces? Is it something that you think of while you're working on it, or is it a surprise?

MR. NATSOULAS: No, I don't think of the title until after I've finished the piece. I want something to capture the essence of what I was thinking, so that the audience has some reference to what I was thinking. In the Crocker Museum show I included my models' names, along with some attributes in the titles. I also mixed in some baroqueness into the titles as well.

There are other artists that I have friendships with. There's David Gilhooly, who was Arneson's most famous student. My friendship with David started the same way as it did with Clayton. I saw his work when I was a kid and just thought it was the greatest. I became friends with David after showing together. We've been friends for years now. He's a quirky guy who has been really encouraging me to pursue my art. And he's taught me a lot.

DR. KIRWIN: Did any of these people give you advice about showing in galleries and things like that?

MR. NATSOULAS: No, I think they all have contempt for galleries.

DR. KIRWIN: [Laughs.]

MR. NATSOULAS: I was thinking why is it that I am so addicted to comedy and anything humorous. I tried to look back at what happened in my childhood. I remember when I was in junior high school and high school, I was a pretty depressed kid. I was telling Eddie about this and he said, "Oh, well, that's how teenagers are." But I think that's not always the case.

My father and I went and saw every foreign film there was on the UC campus, every single one.

DR. KIRWIN: Swedish—

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh, everything.

DR. KIRWIN: Melodrama?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, well, I'm sure that they wouldn't think it was melodrama, though. Who was the big famous moviemaker?

DR. KIRWIN: Ingmar Bergman.

MR. NATSOULAS: Ingmar Bergman. We saw Ingmar Bergman after Ingmar Bergman. Oh, my God—

DR. KIRWIN: [Laughs.] So you were depressed.

MR. NATSOULAS: It was so depressing. I was talking to my dad the other day, and he said, "I took you to those? I can't believe I took you to those." We saw that one called *The Bedroom* which was a three-hour movie of two people in a bedroom yelling at each other. I think I was 11 or 12, watching this. I'm sure my parents didn't mean any harm by it, but it was just so depressing. Now, I can hardly watch a movie about anything to do about World War II or psychological drama. I remember seeing *The Discreet Charm of Bourgeoisie*. Agh, my God! There's no hope in these movies at all. I remember going and seeing them and feeling horrible. I think that that's why I want to do humorous work, because I don't want to ever feel that way again. It was so painful. Or maybe I am just shallow. [Laughs.]

DR. KIRWIN: But talk about some of the people that you have in your own art collection. It's just phenomenal.

MR. NATSOULAS: What my wife and I are doing is trying to live in a piece of art, and we are. Even our toothbrushes are colorful and fun. Our washer and dryer are painted hot pink. Also we've collected a whole bunch of toys from our childhood. There's a Kelly Detweiler that he sold to me for \$20 when I was just a kid. When I was a student of Bob Brady's, he sold me a small piece for \$20, too. So I've been amassing this collection for a number of years.

DR. KIRWIN: And this guy over here?

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh, yes, Mike Stevens. I've got two incredible pieces of his. He didn't sell them to me for \$20. [Laughs.] And then—of course, then my wife buys me art for Christmas, like the Diehard battery of Bob Brady's. And the Scott Schoenherr-Nash Metropolitan car with the Airsteam trailer—that was commissioned for my birthday and wedding anniversary present.

DR. KIRWIN: How about Paul DiPasqua?

MR. NATSOULAS: Oh, yes, we love Paul's work and have a lot of his work around the house and in the yard. And Fred Babb's work as well.

[End Tape 3 Side A; Begin Tape 3 Side B.]

MR. NATSOULAS: I've been making websites for artists. They're just so stuck, they can't get the idea that having a website's a good thing, and so I'm always trying to encourage them to have one, because I think it is a really good tool.

DR. KIRWIN: You have a really great website. You designed it yourself?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, I did. Thanks a lot.

DR. KIRWIN: And what kind of interaction has this brought you, just through the web? And how has it changed your life?

MR. NATSOULAS: Well, I haven't had to send out any slides for probably three years. When people ask where they can see my work, I tell them, "tonynatsoulas.com." Because sending slides out, you're limited to what? Twenty slides and a résumé. With the website I have a résumé, and within the résumé you can click on links and see more information. There are more than 20 images there. The producer for the *Carol Duvall Show*, which is on the HGTV network, discovered me through my website. They were looking at ceramics sculpture, and my—

DR. KIRWIN: Were you on the show?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes. They were here for five hours, filming me in my studio and interviewing me for a five-minute segment on their show. It's just strange.

DR. KIRWIN: TV is like that. Yes. Well, do you think there's a strong art community here in Sacramento?

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, definitely. And there's a lot of history here. Many artists have made groundbreaking artwork here and have shown in important exhibitions around the world, I think especially for ceramics in the greater Sacramento area, which has been a hotbed since the '60s. And we got this great house here in Sacramento.

DR. KIRWIN: I love the colors in here too—bright green and—

MR. NATSOULAS: That's all Donna. Donna does all the decorating, picks paint colors, and she paints the walls

DR. KIRWIN: And you're wearing Fred's [Fred Babb]—

MR. NATSOULAS: I'm wearing Fred's shirts. I always wear Fred's shirts.

DR. KIRWIN: Fred's shirt yesterday.

MR. BISESE: Almost exclusively.

MR. NATSOULAS: Yes, of course he gave them to me for free, so—[laughs]—no, I love them. They're really great, so—I'm sure there's some other story that I've left out, but maybe I can add to it later.

DR. KIRWIN: And if we think of something, we can turn it on again.

MR. NATSOULAS: Okay.

DR. KIRWIN: Okay, good. Thank you.

MR. NATSOULAS: Thank you. I really appreciate you coming to do this interview Liza. It has been fun reminiscing with you and Eddie.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]