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Oral history interview with Imogene "Tex"
Gieling, 2008 November 21 and 2012 April
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Imogene "Tex" Gieling on November 21, 2008 . The interview took place in San Francisco, and was conducted by Jo Lauria for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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

Interview

JO LAURIA: Jo Lauria interview for the Archives of American Art, interviewee Imogene "Tex" Gieling, November 24, 2008 at Tex's home in San Francisco.

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So would you please pronounce your name so we know how you'd like to have it pronounced on the tape.

MS. IMOGENE GIELING: Imogene Gieling.

JO LAURIA: And Imogene, do you have a fond name?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes, people call me Tex.

JO LAURIA: I know there's a story behind that. Do you want to tell us why you are so named Tex?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: In 1947 I was in Seattle and I got a job in the display department at the Bon Marche department store. They had a system of bells and lights that rang and lighted in Morse code to call us to the office from the windows or the shop. The lights were over the elevators and the bells rang generally through the store. And they had to ring in three and not more than four letters. My name just didn't break into anything that they could use. There was a woman named Ina. There was another woman named Jean. Finally someone said, "Oh, hell, let's just call her Tex." And forever after I've been called Tex [laughs].

JO LAURIA: And could you tell us when and where you were born?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: In Corsicana, Texas.

JO LAURIA: And the year?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Nineteen Twenty-tWEINGhree.

JO LAURIA: So that made sense that you were called Tex, for the state in which you were born. Did you come to San Francisco with any kind of perceptible accent, do you think?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No, I think perhaps by the time I got to San Francisco I'd lost that. But when I went to New York people simply could not understand what I said.

JO LAURIA: Can you describe for us, Tex, your childhood and what your family background was like?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I had a group of older people, grandfather and grandmother and great-aunts and their friends. And they, I believe, were the major influence in my upbringing.

JO LAURIA: Were you brought up on a farm? Was it rural, was it urban?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: This was in a small town and we were at the absolute edge of the small town. Just a block beyond where we were was outside the city limits. We had a whole block of land with the house, the garden, the orchard, the geese, the chickens. And we even had a cow at one point.

JO LAURIA: So would you categorize your upbringing as coming from a sort of hardy farm stock or—

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. No, none of them knew anything about farming. But that was primarily what took my great-grandparents to Texas in the first place, because at the time that they went the banks had failed in Ohio. They took what they could get from the sale of their properties and went to Texas, where it was advertised that you could raise a bale of cotton to an acre of ground. Oh, everything was about the same as the way they

advertised California to get California settled. That was the way Corsicana was settled. But Corsicana was a little bit different insofar as there were two railroad lines that ended there. And where the railroad ended the immigrants got off. That's how my family settled in Corsicana to do business.

JO LAURIA: So what did your parents do to make a living?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: My father was a machinist and diesel engineer and worked for the pipeline, the oil company that had grown up in Corsicana. And Corsicana was the first place where they discovered oil in Texas.

JO LAURIA: It must have been exciting.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: It was quite a boom town in the '20s and then it slowly died. And by now it's hardly noticeable, just a spot in the dust.

JO LAURIA: Do you remember in your childhood or as a young adult, do you recall wanting to be an artist or any art experiences?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And could you elaborate on some of those?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I don't know what my age was but it was below — I was not yet five because I had no baby brother. Someone, either my father, my grandfather or someone in the family saw me drawing and handed me the funny paper and said, "Can you copy this," which I did. And, my heavens, they were all very excited about it. Of course, it was just a copy. It was not anything original. But I had the idea that that was the way to go, you know.

JO LAURIA: So did they encourage you in your endeavors to be an artist?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: To a certain extent. But they were very intent that I should learn to play the piano and I hated that and really always wanted to take art lessons. And finally by the time I was 11 I had talked everybody into the fact that I did not want to play the piano. I wanted to take art. And the only art teacher was a woman named Miss Lutie Ballou. And Miss Lutie had the same kind of shakes that I have now, but she could put pen to paper and draw a perfectly straight line if she needed to, or she could show you how to do anything. And, there again, she handed me things to copy. I got to copy calendar prints. I got to copy [laughs] her own paintings. But at least I was playing with paint, and I thought that was really the greatest thing.

JO LAURIA: And that was during what we would call like a middle school, or was it elementary school? You were about 11, 12?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. That was what they called junior high.

JO LAURIA: Know it well.

[They laugh.]

JO LAURIA: And after Miss Lutie were there other teachers that you found nurturing that put you on this track to be an artist?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: They didn't actually teach art in schools except perhaps in grade school. And in grade school there again I was put to work copying whatever the teacher wanted me to copy. I was very good at it. But it was a great handicap when I finally tried to learn to be an artist because I'd never really looked at anything but a copy.

JO LAURIA: And when did that revelation come?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: That happened when I went to college.

JO LAURIA: And where and when was that, Tex?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: That was in 1940 at Texas State College for Women in Denton, Texas. It was really a wonderful art school, I mean art program. The college had very few men teachers and none in the art department, but the women were absolutely wonderful. And the major teacher that I feel I got the most from was a woman named Toni LaSalle, who came into class in the beginning drawing and she said, "I have 30 students. Perhaps three of you will be artists. The rest of you I will weed out." [Laughs] And she sent us on a trip that just didn't end for a couple of years. We did gestural drawings. We did drawings with blindfolds. We did drawings with our left hand instead of the right. We did volumetric studies. We did everything that I really

needed.

JO LAURIA: And it was all —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: And it was so difficult.

JO LAURIA: But it was two-dimensional art?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: So you were using graphite or charcoal or pen onto paper at this time in the college years?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And nothing sculptural yet?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: But you were learning the basics, the foundation courses of, you know, classic drawing exercises?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. And the design teachers were wonderful because they stressed color and color relationships, mass, structure, composition and all those things that I needed to know.

JO LAURIA: Did you end up being one of the three that stayed?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I was one of the three that kept on doing it, whether I was weeded out or not [laughs]. No, I never got an A from that woman. But I worked very hard and we wound up being very good friends.

JO LAURIA: And this was a four-year college?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: So were you able to take art classes throughout the four years?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: So they became more and more intensive?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. And Toni went every summer to study with whoever the most avant artist who was teaching. And she would come back and then have the person that she'd studied with come and teach at the college. Well, she went off and studied with [László] Moholy-Nagy at Chicago and the next semester we had Moholy-Nagy. That was really an incredible experience.

JO LAURIA: So he came for the entire semester or just to —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes, the entire semester. And it was when he and all of the German immigrants were just coming to this country and they needed work. He was teaching in Chicago at the — I can't remember what the name of the school was but it was a school emphasizing design.

JO LAURIA: I think it was the New Bauhaus School, which ended up being called--

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. What was it called?

JO LAURIA: We'll have to look that up. But it wasn't the Art Institute [Art Institute of Chicago, IL] then.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: It was something different. I know we can find out. We'll write to them.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah, I feel like an idiot not remembering these things because —

JO LAURIA: It's all right.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: — they used to be right on the top of my head, but I haven't thought about them for years.

JO LAURIA: So what about his teaching do you think was inspirational?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: For the first time I realized there were three dimensions and we were able to explore all those three dimensions. And he introduced us to plastic — we'd never seen that before — and corrugated cardboard. And he gave problems that were absolutely wonderful, like design a box for an egg that can be dropped out of an airplane.

JO LAURIA: That's a difficult assignment.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: [Laughs] Well, it was a matter of learning what you could do with this cardboard to make it rigid, to give it strength.

JO LAURIA: And did you find that you had a tendency to gravitate towards the sculptural end of the art field at that time?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes, I did. However, I had to declare a major. My father insisted that I learn something I could use to make a living, and he didn't think painting would do it. But I took all the painting classes I could get and chose advertising design. So I learned something about how to present an idea, you know, the economy of design for posters. A lot of things that have, I guess, made a difference in what I've thought and how I've worked.

JO LAURIA: So were there other teachers that Toni brought back that you found really enhanced your art education?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, Hans Hoffman.

JO LAURIA: She had a great cadre of people to choose from.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I wasn't able to study with any of the others until I was a junior, so in my junior year there was Moholy and then in my senior year there was Hans Hoffman. Actually, he was there part of the time and his assistant, Lanita Manrey, was there for the rest of the time. He didn't speak any English but somehow he made it understood what he wanted. Composition, for him, was absolutely everything in the world, and it had to be underlying everything you did. No matter how beautiful a drawing or how well you used your textures or any of those things, if the composition was not correct, and that was the word, he'd start out by saying, "If the original space division is not correct you can work and you can pray to the Lord but it will never come out right."

JO LAURIA: So did his assistant speak English or was there someone there to translate?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, he knew enough to say that [laughs].

JO LAURIA: It sounds very dramatic.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Oh, yes. And, you know, everything was with big motions. He used a piece of charcoal that was like a piece of stove wood. It was about two inches.

JO LAURIA: Three inches?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Two inches.

JO LAURIA: Oh, two inches, okay.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. And he'd come around and be very complimentary about your drawing and then he'd go, "Ah, iss going [inaudible]," and draw big arrows all over your work [laughs].

JO LAURIA: So could you spell the German word you're saying, because I don't think the transcriber will know it. What does it mean, the thing that he'd say?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, he would make a great arrow three inches wide across your work. "Ah, iss going." Finally by the time he finished complimenting you on your work there was nothing left but arrows [laughs].

JO LAURIA: But that was a very enriching experience?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And probably liberating, too?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes, very much so. And to this day I compose things the way I learned from Hoffman.

JO LAURIA: And when you finished at the girls' college did you think that you wanted to go on in the field of art? Did you pursue it directly?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I went to New York and studied with Hoffman for a year.

JO LAURIA: When he was at the Art Students League?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. No, he had his own studio or he had the place where he taught, his school. It was on 8th Street in Greenwich Village. And we drew from a model. We had a lot of returning veterans and a lot of men were taking art. And it was really very stimulating because in the girls' school, I don't know, I never felt that there was any need for competition or trying really hard to be better than anybody else. But once I started working with these men things changed. I really tried harder.

JO LAURIA: And how did Hans teach in his own school? Was it structure? Was it pretty much the same where you would draw and then he'd come by and —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And give you personal instruction with the arrows?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. However, after a while he wouldn't have to do that.

JO LAURIA: And how did your parents feel about your choice of career, to become an artist, at this time? Did they think you could make a career out of it?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I don't know whether they ever really had very much confidence in what I was going to do. At the time women were only supposed to get married and have a family and run a house. I think they were always disappointed that I didn't do that.

JO LAURIA: Was that a conscious decision or it just sort of evolved because you started to put so much energy into your art?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, you know, I don't know that my parents were very sensitive to what I really was like because I never did intend to do that.

JO LAURIA: That's interesting, because a lot of women artists have said, those who married and had children, that they had to put their careers on hold, for a while, and then they might return to them because it was very difficult to balance both kinds of professions, really--

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: Being a homemaker and being an artist. So you were then free to pursue full-time, full speed, your art right after you got out of college and went to New York?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I had to have a job. I was taking classes at night.

JO LAURIA: At night.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: But the job was not that — I mean, I didn't ever have to carry anything away from the job. I was able to go ahead and study, do what I wanted. I had so many friends in New York. I was incredibly lucky and got a wonderful apartment. It was actually just a studio. And I think the building must have been built as artist studios because the kitchen was no bigger than a cabinet, with a stove on top and an oven hanging on the wall. I guess we had a refrigerator. I don't remember it. But at any rate, the kitchen was nothing. But there was a small bathroom and a large studio with huge windows. Beautiful, right in Greenwich Village, at No. 1 Sheridan Square. And I met a group of musicians and on weekends we'd have parties and dances and that sort of thing.

JO LAURIA: It sounds like —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: That was life in New York [laughs]. It was great.

JO LAURIA: And somehow you ended up in San Francisco.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, and I went to Seattle.

JO LAURIA: Okay, so what was the progression westward?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I decided that I might just go to Japan. And, of course, it was kind of difficult in those

days because Japan was occupied. Our troops were there. But they weren't taking very many others. And I went as far as Seattle because I thought that would be a good jumping off place.

JO LAURIA: Why Japan? What was the fascination for you personally to go, because you had seen work in one of the World Fairs or you read about it or it just seemed like a fascinating journey?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I liked the art.

JO LAURIA: So it was the art that was the draw?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah. I liked the things they made. I'd managed to get a nice kimono somehow. One of my friends in the Army had sent me a nice kimono and some of those socks with one toe.

JO LAURIA: Yes, they were the rage. And I think they're back, too.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I can't remember what they're called.

JO LAURIA: I don't know either. And the wooden shoes with a heel.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: That look like flip flops made out of wood. And what year? Are we talking about 1946, '47?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: In 1946 I went to New York and I spent a year and two months there, then went to Seattle. And I thought I'd go right on over to Japan. I had someone there that I really wanted to see who was in the Army. Well, actually, he had gone back to teach at the American School. The students of the soldiers, you know, children that were going to school in Japan had American teachers. So I thought, well, at least I know somebody there. However, he was very discouraging about coming over. The place was having a lot of tsunamis and the weather was not good in Japan that year. I settled down in Seattle and before I'd been there too many months I decided to buy a houseboat. A friend went together with me and we bought a houseboat for \$1,500.

JO LAURIA: Wonderful.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: And I had never had — we were each going to put down \$500 and I'd never had \$500 in my hands before, never. I never even expected to have that because at the time salaries were very low and also everything else was very reasonable. And \$500, it seemed like the end of the world. But we got it together, got the houseboat. And then within what seemed like days the friend and I were in complete disagreement [laughs] and I had to find another \$500 to buy her out.

JO LAURIA: Goodness.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: However, it worked out and I had a lovely time with my houseboat. First it was in Lake Union, which was the working class neighborhood, directly across from the Fuzzy Wuzzy Rug Company [laughs].

JO LAURIA: I could see where you would remember that.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: The Fuzzy Wuzzy building was a four-story wood frame building, completely ramshackle. They had moved out and a movie photographer had moved in. And I rented a studio in that building and got to know the owner, and even performed in one of his movies. It was a commercial for animal food, animal feed [laughs]. But it was a company called Carnation Albers that turned into Purina. At the time I was supposed to be a wife of another friend who was a Hungarian man. We were supposed to be South American visitors to the Carnation Albers plant. And at the plant they had a kennel of Scotty dogs and they were trying out their dog food on these dogs. Well, I got to play with the dogs. I never got over what Scotties are like, so I've had three in my life.

JO LAURIA: Was this a paying job for you? I mean, at some point you must have had to have a full time job to support yourself.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I think I was still working at the Bon Marche.

JO LAURIA: And you were working as a window dresser, weren't you?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. And I was still doing that, I believe. But before I went to New York I worked in Dallas to--well, I had a job doing illustration for geologists. And all the men, of course, had gone off to war so they had to hire women. But at that time they really didn't know how to act with women and I'm not sure they

even had women's restrooms until way later. I don't think they built them into the Magnolia Company. I worked for the oil company that had been in Corsicana and was put to work doing geologic illustration, and I was taught how to do that kind of work from maps and presentation. And when I went to New York, I mean, they really needed somebody. I applied for one job and that was it. I realized that this is a skill I could do anywhere. And when I left the job at the Bon I went to work for the city and county of Seattle, or I guess it's King County and Seattle Planning Department. And I did their maps and presentations for the kind of strip malls and God knows what that we now have.

JO LAURIA: So it was necessary to have those for zoning and for permits and keep on file with the city planning office. So it was a very, as you said, necessary job, and it was easier to get that kind of work?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I think it's a very specific kind of work and not everybody's got the patience to do it because you have to be extremely precise and do things that are for publication. Not everyone is trained to do that.

JO LAURIA: Did you continue to want to take other types of art classes at night or on the weekend while you were in Seattle?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, in Seattle I'd kind of burned out on painting. I realized that I wasn't going to be the greatest painter ever and I just wasn't getting that much enjoyment out of it anymore. For about a year or so I didn't do anything, but after — I don't know how much of my life you really want to hear.

JO LAURIA: Well, we can progress up to the point where you made a conscious decision to enter sculptural —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: The university.

JO LAURIA: Right, and become involved in three-dimensional art and later, or specifically, in metals.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, one day — and my houseboat was directly across from the university.

JO LAURIA: You're talking about the University of Washington [Seattle, WA]?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. And I could paddle over there in my canoe. I found when I went to register — somehow I'd gotten the call to go forth and be a jeweler. I don't know where that came from. The only thing that I can really think was that I lived with my windows on Fourth Street and two doors down on Fourth Street was Paul Lobel, the jeweler. And as I walked over to Hoffman's I had to pass Sam Kramer. And I never quite had the courage to go into Sam Kramer's place but I did go in to Paul Lobel all the time. I never bought anything but couldn't, you know. But at least they were very sympathetic and cordial when I came in.

JO LAURIA: So you were exploring what was in the store, and intrigued?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: And you probably had conversations —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: — about the work?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. And at any rate, when I went to the registrar to sign up for a class in metal arts I found the prerequisite for jewelry was a class that we called "pot banging". It was actually Metals 1. In that class you had to learn the properties of metal, of non-ferrous metals, before you could ever make any jewelry. And I also found, when I was registering, that I could take four classes for the price of one. Well, I took two sophomore classes, one in exploration in plastics and one exploration in textiles. And it was printed textiles -- not weaving.

JO LAURIA: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: So I signed up for all those classes. Oh, and one other one that was ancient Chinese and Korean ceramics.

JO LAURIA: Those sound —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: With Sherman Lee. Of course, I didn't know who Sherman Lee was but, as it turned out, he was *the* authority on Asian art. I feel I learned at least to appreciate. Later I took a class in ceramics and hated every minute of it.

JO LAURIA: The actual making of ceramics?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: Not the history of ceramics.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: When I got that clay under my fingernails I thought I would go crazy [laughs]. My hands were not for ceramics. And I also took a class in weaving with Ed Rossbach and John Lenor Larson, Jack Lenor Larson.

JO LAURIA: And they were both teaching full time? They were recognized teachers then?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Oh, yeah. Ed was a professor and Jack was his teaching assistant. And I'd been talked into that class because it was supposed to have been something that wouldn't take a lot of time so that I could spend more time on my metal work if I took this class, and it would be a prerequisite for something else and fill in my program. Well, I started off with that and I don't know whether I hated that more than ceramics or not [laughs] but we were given — the reason it was supposed to take such a little bit of time was because they didn't have enough looms to go around.

JO LAURIA: Oh, I see.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: And a person would work for a week and then another person would work on that same loom the next week. Well, we were supposed to pick out a group of threads, yarns, that were all in the same color range but with different textures, and we were to weave six samples with that. The weaving was various patterns. I chose some threads that were beautiful. When I put them on the loom and I pulled the beaters the first time, three of them broke [laughs]. I guess I'd worked up so much strength in my wrist from working with those pots that I didn't realize how hard I was working. I had a heck of a time. Finally, I just had to tear out that whole bunch of stuff that was too thin for me, and put in a whole new batch. This time I chose things that were very heavy.

JO LAURIA: And strong.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: And strong. Then I got them on the loom and it was so difficult to pull the beaters [laughs] because the threads were so heavy and thick. However, I got my samples made. And at the end of the semester, after endless agonies, I was supposed to turn in six of my best samples. So I chose six of them and threw the others away. Afterward, Ed and Jack [laughs] said they fished those things out of the garbage and felt that they were some of the best in the class. And Ed asked me how I had done this one piece, the final, which was supposed to be all one color. I had really just gotten to the point where I could not care, you know, and I made a mistake right away. But I'd gone about that far before —

JO LAURIA: About an inch?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, a ways beyond it. So I decided, what the hell, I'll repeat it.

[They laugh.]

JO LAURIA: So you were repeating the mistake over and over again?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: [Laughs] Yes.

JO LAURIA: And they found that very inventive?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Right.

JO LAURIA: So thus began your experimental phase.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: [Laughs] Yes. Oh, dear.

JO LAURIA: Well, who was the metals teacher then?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Ruth Pennington.

JO LAURIA: So you studied with Ruth Pennington?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And she was known to work with silvers, golds and lots of gems or stones, precious stones — is that correct — at the time?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: She didn't — so far as I know she didn't work with precious stones. I never saw anything that she made with precious stones and I never saw anything she made with gold. But she did teapots, tea sets, wonderful jewelry. And the stones that she used would be something like semi-precious or agates or even maybe some kind of — I know that she had a ring with a pre-Colombian figure of a frog and she had set that like a stone.

JO LAURIA: So you learned from Ruth all of the basic techniques?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: And how many years did they require for your major to complete, to become proficient in metals?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I spent one full year. I don't remember how many credits I amassed in that year. And I never really intended to be a graduate student, but while I was there they had just built the art building and I was really pretty good at printing textiles. And the woman who was in charge of the interior design department wanted one of the patterns that I had done for the student leisure room or whatever it was called.

JO LAURIA: Student lounge?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes, student lounge. And somehow she talked me into doing that as a thesis.

JO LAURIA: So you could get your graduate degree?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. And I did that without ever even applying to the graduate school, but I just went ahead and did that 99 yards of silk-screened, three-colored material. She was a woman who had very great difficulty making up her mind. And she didn't want the colorway that I had done when I made this design in the first place but she couldn't quite decide what color she really wanted, whether she wanted it to go the gray way or the pumpkin way or maybe blue. I mean, you know. Well, I finally got tired of that because I was making all these samples that she could look at and so for the design that I really wanted to do, for the colors I really wanted to use, I got all my friends together and they all came into the hearing with me. And I showed her this and I said, "Now, do you like it this way?" And all my friends said, "Yes, yes."

JO LAURIA: So what do you mean a hearing, an open forum to talk about the design--

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, they were in the room, you see [laughs]. They just happened to be in the room. At my request, however.

[They laugh.]

JO LAURIA: Do you have a sample or photos of the textile print that you did?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes, I think I've got a piece of it. When they took those things down 40 years, 35 years later, someone sent me a piece of it.

JO LAURIA: Was it draperies?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: Okay, because I wasn't sure if you were also using it as upholstery.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No, 99 yards of draperies printed on linen. And it was printed with dye that had to be set with steam and the only way to do that was to use the autoclave at the hospital, and the only time I could use that was after 2:00 in the morning.

JO LAURIA: Oh, my goodness. What is an autoclave, is that —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: That is a steam chamber that was used — well, a small one would be for instruments and a big one would be for mattresses.

JO LAURIA: For hygienic purposes?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: To sterilize?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: To sterilize. You know, and even furniture.

JO LAURIA: So you had to go after 2:00 a.m. in the morning to do your 99 yards?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. Yes, and I had two friends that helped me for three days and we pulled those screens, did those prints, got that stuff down. Well, it had to be wrapped so that the fabric didn't touch another piece of the fabric. We'd truck them down there 2:00 in the morning, and we managed to print up 33 yards every night.

JO LAURIA: It sounds like a limited production.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: It was [laughs]. But I don't know what in the world I would have done without those friends because I had to, or I felt like I had to get it done before Hope Foote, for whom it was being done, could change her mind again.

JO LAURIA: What was her name, Hope Foote?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And did it take away time from working in the metal studio for you? I mean, did you feel like you were being pushed in the direction of being a textile artist?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, yes. But at that point, except for that weaving class, I think I only had three classes and I was literally — oh, and that semester, that last semester Jack Larson asked if I would have a show with him at the Contemporary Craft Gallery in Portland [OR], and that was my first [show]. You know, it was a group show but it was a show.

JO LAURIA: And that's when they were in their old location?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JO LAURIA: But I think that was Jack's first show, too.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: It was. It was.

JO LAURIA: Well, that was a great honor, don't you think?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes, I do. I managed to sell one pair of earrings for \$11 [laughs].

JO LAURIA: So you were submitting metal work, not textile work?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah. Oh, no. No, that was the last time I had anything much to do with textiles.

JO LAURIA: But this was sort of the launching of your professional career as an artist because now you were exhibiting.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: And were you finished with school?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: So you were still in school, graduate school?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.], still in — well, I wasn't even in graduate school. I was just in school taking graduate classes because I was pushed into it that way. After that year I left Seattle and sold the houseboat and came to San Francisco.

JO LAURIA: Let's end this disc there and we'll start disc 2 on the recent, the then — recent move to San Francisco.

[END OF TRACK AAA_gielin08_9278.]

JO LAURIA: Disc two interview continuing with Imogene Gieling, interview by Jo Lauria for the Archives of American Art on Friday, November 21.

So let's talk about your relocation to San Francisco. What prompted it and where did you settle once you settled into, once you came to San Francisco?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I really thought I was going to Paris when I left Seattle [laughs] and the trip brought

me to San Francisco, where I spent three days. And I knew that I would always come back. There was no question in my mind. But, as fortune would have it, I didn't get to Paris. My mother was very much opposed it and she was very ill. I felt that I didn't really want to do that much to make it worse.

JO LAURIA: And were your intentions to go to Paris to see the art?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I had a dear friend who had gone to Paris and he was an artist. And I figured, well, I would do something there, you know. And at the time my toolbox was not so cumbersome that I couldn't take it with me and do something, I felt. And that was what I had in mind, but Texas kind of turned that around. I knew I really wasn't there to stay, in Texas. I just felt I didn't belong there.

JO LAURIA: So you went back to Texas because of your mom's illness?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And what year was that, Tex?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: That was 1951.

JO LAURIA: Did your mother pass away?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. No, she recovered. Not fully. At any rate, I spent a year there and then decided San Francisco is where I wanted to be, so in '52 I came to San Francisco.

JO LAURIA: And you have resided here, as your primary home, ever since?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No intention to ever go and move anywhere else unless it might be back to the northwest.

JO LAURIA: And you do have a summer home that you go to on Lopez Island [San Juan Islands, WA]?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: So you still have connections with the northwest?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Oh, I love the northwest, and if I can spend summers there and winters here I think that's the best of life.

JO LAURIA: And you've been able to do that for many, many years.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: My husband and I first went to Lopez Island because I was in summer school. I had gone back to the university to finish that degree. I wouldn't have thought about doing that except that when I came to San Francisco I'd been here, oh, just a few months and I went together with a group of artists and we advertised a Christmas sale. And one day I got a call from a Winfield Scott Wellington, who said he was an architect from Berkeley and that he wanted to be sure that I would be there if he came to see my jewelry. So, of course, I made certain I would be there and met Winfield Scott Wellington. The next thing I knew, I was invited to teach at the University of California [University of California, Berkeley, CA]. Ed Rossbach was there and he had seen the sign and he had recommended me. And the Duke — that's what we called Dr. Wellington — had come because he was head of the department. And he was also, well, he was certainly looked up to as the authority.

JO LAURIA: And you probably needed to complete your graduate degree in order to teach at that level.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: To be able to teach there. I had taught one semester and I was talked into going back and finishing my degree.

JO LAURIA: In 1953?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Five.

JO LAURIA: Fifty-five, okay.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: And that summer friends in Seattle invited me and my husband, who had come up just to visit, to go up to Lopez Island. We got one look at that place and said, "Okay, we're coming back here forever." So that's exactly what we've done.

JO LAURIA: Well, there's a gap in the story here because I don't know anything about your husband. When did you meet him? Was he an artist? Was he in another profession? And when did you marry?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: He came, I suppose it was probably the Thanksgiving of '52. Yeah, I know it was. One of those friends from Seattle had come down and she had been a roommate for a while when I was in Seattle and she'd always told me that I should meet this friend of hers who was a geologist, an oil geologist. And I said, "Oh, no. I don't want to meet any more of those."

[They laugh.]

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: And she had told him that she had a Texas roommate because he was working for an oil company in the Texas panhandle. And he was looking at the girls in Texas and in that year, perhaps in those years, they wore their hair in pin curls with a bandanna tied under the chin and they never got out if it, you know, I mean, they were always in pin curls. And he said he kept wondering, "What are they getting ready for [laughs]." But he'd seen the Texas women and he said, "No, thank you."

[They laugh.]

JO LAURIA: So he assumed you were going to be a gal with pin curls.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: But she came down for Thanksgiving and he had moved to Sacramento, where they had a government program training people to be photogrametists. Now, that's map-making from aerial photographs. And he had signed up to have that training and get the certification or whatever it was. And he was in Sacramento so he came over for Thanksgiving. During that weekend we also went down to Big Sur [CA]. And I had brought my little Chrysler roadster and he had a brand new TCMG. I took one of my guests, he took the other one, and we drove down and spent the weekend down there, got into some trouble [laughs]. That's immaterial. But at any rate, when my friend went back to Seattle John kept coming to see me.

JO LAURIA: And was his last name Gieling?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: So what is your maiden name?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Frey.

JO LAURIA: F-R-Y-E?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No, F-R-E-Y. German. And we courted for a couple of years and married in 1954. He had trained as a, or gotten his degree as a geologist from Harvard and had enough experience in the oil fields to know he didn't want to be a petroleum geologist. But he was able to use all that geologic information with photogrametry and that was the business that he did.

JO LAURIA: And was he supportive of your pursuit of art at the time?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Oh, yes, and he even did some himself. He did, oh, he did some wonderful little compositions in wood.

[END OF TRACK AAA_gielin08_9280.]

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I don't know where I was.

JO LAURIA: Well, you were just talking about John doing some small wood compositions.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. And we did some pieces for sale, some boxes with these lids that were derived from some of those early pieces. And then later on he did a fountain, six feet high, for a gay bathhouse. It was a beautiful fountain.

JO LAURIA: And when you went back to get your master's degree you did it over the summer. Was it the course of one summer or was it many summers?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Two summers.

JO LAURIA: Two summers. And did they allow you to continue teaching a class as maybe an adjunct professor or a lecturer until you received your degree?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JO LAURIA: So you were establishing — what was the — were you teaching specifically metals or jewelry at the university?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: They had me set up the metals program at Berkeley.

JO LAURIA: So they didn't have one previous?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: So you were the first teacher to come in and build a studio for them?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And then accept students in that particular major?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. It was strange teaching at Berkeley because you could not teach anything that could be identified as a usable object or a commercial object, and that meant that — well, we were under the charter for humanities but that meant that not only could you not make a piece of jewelry or a pot or weave a length of fabric but in the English department you couldn't teach anybody to write a novel. You could teach them the form and —

JO LAURIA: So that was their dictum: It cannot be for commercial purposes. So what did you teach?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Nothing that might be identified as work from a trade school.

JO LAURIA: Okay, or a product, really?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. So what you had to do was to teach, well, you taught the theory instead of the actual production.

JO LAURIA: But they were learning technical skills?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: But you might give them something to solve, a problem?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: On composition, and how they executed that problem was up to them?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes, that's true.

JO LAURIA: And did you have any outstanding students from that period of time that you remember, or did you enjoy the experience of teaching?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I loved it. I absolutely loved it, and I enjoyed the students very much. What I got in the decorative art department were people from architecture or art who really wanted to know something about design and color, and I always taught a design and color class along with the metals class because that's the way they started me there. And it was the only place on the campus where you could get that.

JO LAURIA: And did the voice of Hans Hoffman come resounding through your mind at that time, teaching the —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Oh, sure. Goodness.

JO LAURIA: Or Moholy-Nagy as well?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I called up everyone [laughs], every authority I could think of. Everything that had ever been told to me, I turned it around and gave it back. But I enjoyed teaching and somehow I seemed to be good at it. And the funny thing was I was hired to teach but I thought, "Well, I'll have some kind of an interview at some point where people will tell me what they want me to do." And that never happened. So I went to the man who had a degree — he was a Ph.D. in education and he had also a master's in art. I thought, "Oh, he'll know what I need." I went to him and he said, "Do you mean you don't know what you're going to do and you've never had a class in education? You've never prepared to teach?" And I said, "Yeah, that's me." And he said, "I think that's wonderful. You won't be inhibited." And I thought, "Well, if that's what they want."

JO LAURIA: That's a great —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I can do that [laughs].

JO LAURIA: So he was the head of the art department or the head of the humanities department?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No, no, he was in the Decorative Art Department and he taught some of the same kinds of classes that I was teaching in design. But he had all these degrees, you see. But I practiced that for the rest of my career. I was never inhibited [laughs]. And I really think it did help because I could just make up some kind of problem and try it on myself, you know, see how it worked, then take it in to class and say, "Here's the example. Let's do this."

JO LAURIA: I think that's extremely valid. Now, were you also making jewelry of your own at this time?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: Did you have a studio? Were you exhibiting with anybody? Did you have a dealer?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. There was a shop called Nanny's, N-A-N-N-Y. (pronounced NAWNY, even though it's spelled like nanny)

JO LAURIA: And it still exists, doesn't it?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: No, okay. They were known for selling silver or precious objects?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: Flatware.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: No flatware?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Not that I remember. That was Gump's.

JO LAURIA: So what did Nanny's sell?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: She sold contemporary jewelry and she had a shop first on Fillmore [Street, San Francisco, CA] where she sold crafts, and contemporary crafts, of course. She moved down to Geary Street [San Francisco, CA] right near Union Square and opened a shop where she sold only contemporary jewelry. And she gave a show to a different artist each month who could show in the window for that month. She bought outright and she gave me shows. She got me commissions. She was wonderful.

JO LAURIA: And what was the duration of your relationship with Nanny, and from what year? What bookended your years?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I guess almost from '52 until she closed her shop, and I can't remember when that was. I don't think she went into the '60s. She died, you know, sadly. But at any rate, it ended a great place because she had a wonderful eye.

JO LAURIA: And who were some of the other contemporary jewelers that would show there?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Merry Renk and Margaret De Patta. Byron Wilson. Vera Allison. Names just kind of —

JO LAURIA: Peter Macchiarini?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. No, Peter always had his own shop on Grant Avenue.

JO LAURIA: So he would sell directly?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And do you feel that because of your relationship with Nanny that your reputation was becoming, you were becoming an established art jeweler?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, in those days you had competitions that were held with prizes and plenty of reason to enter them. And I was working on either a competition, a commission, or just doing something new or just working as much as I could. I did have my job — in San Francisco before I started teaching I worked as a geologic illustrator for the USGS [United States Geological Survey], the Alaskan branch. They were wonderful. They'd come back with a fossil mastodon tusk that they'd found up in the ice and in the '50s, you know, ivory was ivory.

JO LAURIA: And you would sketch it, or did you get the ivory?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: They would give it to me.

JO LAURIA: Oh, my goodness [laughs].

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah, they'd give me a great chunk of it, you know, just slice it off and give it to me. I've still got some. As a matter of fact, I have a piece that I wanted to show you.

JO LAURIA: That you're working on now?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No, that I did about four years ago before my eyes went bad, that I made for a friend.

JO LAURIA: Wonderful. Maybe I'll get a treat to see that when we take our break.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Okay.

JO LAURIA: So I know that you left the University of California at Berkeley at some point and went on to the San Francisco Art Institute [San Francisco, CA] to teach.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: No?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: That was, let's see. Berkeley was '55 to '62.

JO LAURIA: It was longer than I thought. So you were there —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I was there up to the point where I was up for a promotion to associate professor, and at Berkeley if you can't make that promotion you're fired. That year I had a sabbatical, I'd gotten a raise, I had a research grant, I had something else, and I was fired. All in one year.

JO LAURIA: It seems like an odd combination of things to happen.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: It turned out that it was a way to eliminate the Decorative Arts Department because if you couldn't be promoted, you see, they couldn't add anybody. And the senior professors were finally sent off to other schools or given a choice to go there or retire.

JO LAURIA: So their agenda was to eliminate the entire applied arts, more or less?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And any kind of class where you were making something or learning —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, it was just a matter of — I think the Art and Architecture Departments were very strong. Decorative Art was very weak. The Duke felt that if you complained they might not like that. You don't dare draw any attention to your department. And so because of that we were never on committees. As a matter of fact, that was such a bunch of renegades in that department. In a way they were wonderful people [laughs] but nobody wanted to be on a committee. And I was advised that, if they ever put you on a committee, screw up on the first day.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs] So you're eliminated?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: So you're eliminated. You'll never have to be on another one.

JO LAURIA: Now, did Ed Rossbach end up leaving at the same time, 1962, around there?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. No, he stayed on and finally retired, I think, maybe three or four years later because they just completely annihilated the department and then tore all the buildings down and built the School of Environmental Design.

JO LAURIA: I see, so that was their plan all along?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: So what did you have the research grant for?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Metal coloration.

JO LAURIA: And where did you pursue that?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Here in San Francisco.

JO LAURIA: I mean, was there industry that was using —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: So it was on your own?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah. And at the time you couldn't find any recipes for how to color metal and there are very, very few books. Craftsmen, including those at Berkeley, were saying, "Don't ever give any of your secrets away because as long as you know and you're the only one that knows then you can always do that and be known for that." Well, I think that's a crock, really [laughs]. But that was the attitude.

JO LAURIA: Right. So when you were fired and they eliminated the entire department and actually even eradicated the buildings were you discouraged of teaching?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: No?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. John was very happy about it. He said I was getting very authoritative and spreading in the seat.

[They laugh.]

JO LAURIA: That's very funny, very funny.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: So I freelanced for three years and then, funnily enough, you mentioned the Art Institute. Ernest Mundt, who was a German art historian, and was the director of the Art Institute hired me to come and operate the store.

JO LAURIA: Was it on campus?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: He hired me to operate the student store in the Art Institute. [...] But that didn't work out. Right almost immediately then I was invited to teach at Berkeley, so that settled that. But that's the only contact I ever had with the Art Institute, very minor.

JO LAURIA: Okay. For some reason that stuck in my mind. Where did you go to teach after Berkeley?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: After Berkeley, three years of freelancing and then I was invited to teach at San Francisco State [San Francisco State University, CA] and come out and set up their metals department.

JO LAURIA: Because they hadn't one either?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. They had a professor who had taught one class there and he was no jeweler, you know, but he taught some little techniques. And they decided, yeah, they would like to have a metals program. There was plenty of money in the state system then. And so I started teaching at San Francisco State. I thought it would be one semester, maybe just one class. Well, they talked me into three classes for one semester. Then they talked me into, well, do another year, you know. And finally I was so addicted to the students that I just didn't want to leave — I stayed on.

JO LAURIA: Was John happy with that?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I think so, because a lot of the students followed me home [laughs]. I started there in '65 and the students in the '60s were wonderful, really. They were well-educated people when they came to college. They were polite. They had a lot of class.

JO LAURIA: And they probably had a great thirst for learning all the aspects, all the components of metalsmithing.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, at the time there was a tremendous need for teachers and a lot of the kids took the education classes that would allow them to get a, you know —

JO LAURIA: Certificate.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: A certificate. And then they'd take enough metals classes to have some kind of a

specialty.

JO LAURIA: And do you recall some of the students that went through your classes who then became teachers other places?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, there are two that I can think of right off that were students: Charlene Modena, who is at the Academy of Art or the Art Academy [Academy of Art University, San Francisco, CA]. I'm not sure.

JO LAURIA: In San Francisco?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah. But she is in charge of their metals program. And Richard Leaf, who is in charge of the Metals Program at the Sharon Art Studio in Golden Gate Park

JO LAURIA: Great. Well, what was your work like at this period of time, Tex, if you were to describe it? What were you doing? What were some of the forms you were working on?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, in the '50s it was good design.

JO LAURIA: Meaning about constructivism, composition? Was it geometric?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Good design and good taste were never really defined as it has to be this or it has to be that, but you were somehow supposed to know what that was [laughs].

JO LAURIA: Okay.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: And it took a certain form where the design was extremely simplified, using new materials if possible. You did everything to bring out the importance of the material, whatever it was, whether it was wood, metal, ceramic. And a lot of the '50s designs are still — you know, for instance, Eames, Sam Malouf. I don't know anybody who is doing what I would call '50s designs in metals. But there was a lot of emphasis on technique. Technique had to be absolutely perfect because the design was so simple you couldn't allow for bad technique.

JO LAURIA: It would be too obvious.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: So is there a piece at the Oakland Museum now that you would say fit that category, or something that people could see?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. There are two pieces. There's a necklace that is in gold, has an opal, and a ring that is in the same form that has an opal. Both of those were prize-winners.

JO LAURIA: And they are emblematic of the concept of good design?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: Simplified design with a mastery of technical skill?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: Okay. So now you mentioned prizes. In this time period of teaching you entered competitions, you won many of them. You were beginning to be collected by museums at the time or in publications or what was that progression like?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, people were coming for commissions. I did a number of commissions. I did an awful lot of work for Nanny. I entered every competition that came along.

JO LAURIA: And you were in "Objects: USA"?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: That was the '60s.

JO LAURIA: I'm just saying as it evolved that was a very important show for visibility.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: Because the show traveled for about 10 years, for one thing, but also you were one of the artists it celebrated for being the top in their field.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: That's true.

JO LAURIA: So that was a very significant evolution.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: And during the '60s [laughs] all that good design just went right out the window.

JO LAURIA: And what came in instead?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Organic. It was kind of a romantic style. The technique of choice was casting. But in '62, I had just finished a piece that I had made to exhibit some of my coloring and surface techniques.

JO LAURIA: Coloring on metals?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: Which harks back to the research you have done?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. And I got that thing out. Well, I finished it and I guess I'd just put it up on a shelf some place. And when I came back and looked at it after a couple of days I thought, "I can't imagine doing that. That's terrible." [Laughs] And I just took a torch and melted the whole thing down. And when it all melted into a big ball I picked up this flatiron that I had there in the studio and I just squished that ball of metal and it splashed out into the most beautiful thing. Well, I developed that into a piece and had it photographed, and that photograph was picked up by the State Department and published it in a magazine called *America* that was exchanged with Russia and Poland and also with India.

JO LAURIA: So did the piece travel to those —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. No, it was photographed.

JO LAURIA: It was photographed.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: And sent around. And I have those magazines [laughs] and had the piece for quite a while but sold it.

JO LAURIA: So that was the beginning of your splash technique?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: Which you then began to incorporate in several of your designs?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And you came to that purely accidentally?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: But you liked what it did and you liked the way it was — well, it was very improvisational.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: Chaotic, actually.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Exactly [laughs].

JO LAURIA: Very far away from your training with Moholy-Nagy.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: [Laughs] And all that — oh, in the '50s I also went to study with Victor Reis.

JO LAURIA: And he was living in Guerneville at the time, or was —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I think he was not in Guerneville full-time because he taught at the College of Marin [Marin County, CA].

JO LAURIA: And he also was a German emigre.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah. He's an Israeli.

JO LAURIA: Really?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: And he worked at Pond Farm.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: With Trude Guermonprez.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: And I know a little bit about his work, but what attracted you to study with him?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, he was the only person to study with, I mean, there was no other.

JO LAURIA: He did blacksmithing, didn't he, as well? No?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: No, I'm thinking of C. Carl Jennings.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah. No, he didn't. He did a lot of gold. Actually he did a lot of work for the synagogue.

JO LAURIA: So you went to study with him because you wanted to learn?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I needed technique. That was before I went to the University of Washington, I mean for my master's. That was after that first year of work. And I really needed to get everything sort of cleaned up.

JO LAURIA: And would you consider that an apprenticeship with him?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. No.

JO LAURIA: Did he teach classes regularly?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes, he taught.

JO LAURIA: Have you ever apprenticed with anybody?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Never.

JO LAURIA: Has anybody apprenticed with you?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. No. I've had people who wanted to, but I don't work well that way.

JO LAURIA: You like to work individually in your own studio without assistants?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: Or distractions, some would say.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, if you're teaching and trying to work you're divided. And I think metals take an awful lot of concentration. With any kind of craft, you do have to concentrate. Where you're constantly having to serve this, do that.

JO LAURIA: Right. Well, it's just a question that we ask because some people do work that way.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Oh, I know.

JO LAURIA: And others don't. But where did you learn stone setting, because I know stone setting is something that not every jeweler does.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, the first stones that I learned to set were with Ruth Pennington. But when I came to San Francisco I began to get commissions and people wanted to have diamonds set. And I really didn't know how to do that, especially pave settings. Well, I took a commission that required that and I went out in town trying to find somebody to do it for me. The first person I went to was really very mean. He didn't like what I'd done. It wasn't right. "You can't work with this piece." He sent me out of there practically in tears. But as I walked down the hall I saw there was another diamond setter named George Stelman.

JO LAURIA: Could you spell the last name?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: S-T-E-L-L-M-A-N.

JO LAURIA: Stellman.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: And he was nothing but a diamond setter. That's all he did. And I took my piece in there and showed it to him and said "I'd do better if I knew how." And he said, "Well, I can teach you how." So during that summer I went down there every day and learned how to set diamonds. And I don't want to do it, but I know how to set it up so that somebody else can do it. Diamond setters have a union and they charge a certain price for a certain size. That's something I didn't know about the jewelry industry. I thought everybody was just kind of an old craftsman, you know.

JO LAURIA: You didn't realize they had formalized.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: Was that the inspiration to starting the Metal Arts Guild [1951, San Francisco, CA]?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Oh, the Metal Arts Guild, I think that was going when I got here. And a lot of the people that were working then and selling I guess had gotten together to start the Metal Arts Guild.

JO LAURIA: But they are an advocacy group, I mean, in a way.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Oh, yeah.

JO LAURIA: If you needed to talk to somebody about pricing or another artist about how to set up a workshop they were helpful in those fields.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I never went to them for any of that.

JO LAURIA: Is it more of a social network then?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. It's always been rather an educational group. You know, they are really trying to teach each other. They have always been that way. They take people who are not metalworkers but just interested in the field. At least they used to. I haven't been — I'm just not knowledgeable about the organization or the group. But I know they used to feel that that was their mission.

JO LAURIA: One of the questions is how do you feel organizations such as Metal Arts Guild or SNAG, the Society of North American Goldsmiths [1969, Eugene, OR], has helped you progress in your field or do you think they have? And if so, how?

[Pause.]

JO LAURIA: Well, you become part of a community and they do conferences where you-

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: That's true.

JO LAURIA: Yearly conferences where you might have a chance to meet other makers. Also they do exhibitions related to the conferences and they have presentations.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: People give papers or give talks. So that is part of their educational mission. So you have belonged to —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I've belonged to both of those organizations for years, and I've been to many of the SNAG conferences going back to, oh, at least 20 years. And the Metal Arts Guild, I've been in that since the '50s. In and out, but mostly in, you know.

JO LAURIA: And recently when SNAG came to San Francisco for a conference you were given a Life Achievement award?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah, that's true. There it sits.

JO LAURIA: Well, we'll look at it to see what the date is [laughs] because I cannot remember.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I think it —

JO LAURIA: Two thousand three, I think it says.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And that was presented to you for your service in the field.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: Well, that's a beautiful award.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: It is.

JO LAURIA: Who makes those?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Cynthia Eid. And she uses that Bonnie Doone hydraulic press for that pattern.

JO LAURIA: So we're looking at a small vessel, about three inches, in silver, on a black marble base, which is your award. It is inscribed, "SNAG, 2003, Honorary Member Award to Imogene 'Tex' Gieling." That's quite beautiful.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I think so. I should polish it. It was given to me with the promise that it would not tarnish, but it does. I mean, not as bad as silver, but it does. It was supposed to be some new alloy of silver that would not tarnish, but I've got to polish that.

JO LAURIA: Well, do you feel or do you think of yourself as part of an international tradition of metalsmiths or one that is particularly American?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Oh, I think American.

JO LAURIA: And in which way, Tex?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, in any European country that I know of when you choose to be a metalsmith — in England I think you have to sign up to learn this when you're 13, and you're stuck with it for the rest of your life because if you get into a program and you decide that that's not for you, you have to go back and get to the back of the line and wait to be chosen for another thing. And I believe that that's true certainly in Germany.

JO LAURIA: And stylistically do you feel that the objects which Americans make have an identity with our country?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes, I do.

JO LAURIA: And in which way? Could you maybe just describe some of the stylistic nuances?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I think they can be more, I don't want to say transient, but they're not as serious.

JO LAURIA: Maybe sober. They're not as sober.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: That's it. That's it. I mean, God knows people like John Paul Miller, craftsmen who produce these incredible masterpieces every time they do anything, you know, they are equal to any craftsman anywhere. But it seems that the things that come out of a European or British tradition are so solid, you know. They're not to be taken lightly.

JO LAURIA: They take themselves very seriously.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: They do.

JO LAURIA: And American forms can have a whimsicality about them but still be executed with tremendous mastery of the craft. They don't see it as a disconnect, whereas you're saying in Europe they would.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, yes. I think that they must think of themselves as taking their work very seriously, and I'm not sure Americans do that. I mean, their work is a pleasure.

JO LAURIA: And do you see any differences in scale or approach or materials? Are Americans more apt to be freer with experimentation or the use of alternate materials? Do you see any of that? I mean, not so recently, though, because the European jewelers now are really on the cutting edge of a lot of the use of alternative techniques and materials. But as the '50s, '60s and '70s or '80s when American jewelers' pieces were being traveled in shows in Europe and European artists' pieces were coming here there were definite stylistic differences.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Oh, yeah. I think some of the European things when they get a little bit off course, it

seems so self-conscious to me. They're in it for the shock value or something else. I think that perhaps the Americans can be a little bit more playful with what they do.

JO LAURIA: And have you seen the course of the market change in your lifetime?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes, very much so. I've been taking the *Jewelers' Circular Keystone* for 40 years maybe, and I've seen art jewelry —

[END OF TRACK AAA_gielin08_9281.]

JO LAURIA: Okay, Tex, you were just commenting on you take the *Circular Keystone*.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Oh, yeah.

JO LAURIA: For many years, and you've noticed a change in the market for jewelry. You were going to expound on that.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. Commercial jewelry has moved closer — I mean by tiny increments — towards art jewelry. And they even have a column now for art jewelers. You know, when I first started looking at that magazine it was for jewelry stores. But I enjoyed reading it because they always have good articles about where the stones come from, how you identify them, what's good in the market right now. And I've just simply watched that happening. But what was the other part of that question?

JO LAURIA: How has the market for American craft or in your case jewelry changed in your lifetime? How do you perceive the acceptance of what you do? Have you seen an arc go towards more people are aware of art jewelry, more people are wearing art jewelry, that the respect, the validation of art jewelry has become over the years increasingly moving towards looking at art jewelry as part of the fine arts traditions?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I can't say that I have seen people wearing too much art jewelry currently. I think perhaps in the '40s and '50s when it was really a new thing more people wore it then than now. Of course, there are so many more people now. But at the same time I think, in comparison between then and now, it was a more acceptable part of your costume then than it is now.

JO LAURIA: On that note we're going to end disc two.

[END OF TRACK AAA_gielin08_9282.]

JO LAURIA: Disc three, continuing the interview with Imogene "Tex" Gieling at her house in San Francisco on November 21, 2008, interviewed by Jo Lauria for the Archives of American Art.

[END OF TRACK AAA_gielin08_9283.]

Tex, while we continue on I realize I should have you finish up the section on your teaching at San Francisco State because we left sort of midstream. So if you could just complete that circle for us.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I started there in '65 and very soon I seemed to be in charge of a program with graduate students, with a lot of really marvelous people. And at the time I think education was a little bit different, particularly art, because artists wanted to know about history and philosophy and the ancient world. They were a lot more intellectual. Well, it was kind of an easy ride, I must say, right up to '68. Then the campus began to respond to the condition that was happening at Berkeley and other schools, the disruption of all the old and trying to bring in at least some kind of acknowledgement of minorities and black people.

And it came to a real crash, I guess, over Thanksgiving in '68. That was when [Samuel Ichiye] Hayakawa went to the governor and became the president [of the University]. And until then we had always been able to select the president from the faculty so that the president at least was on our side. It's never been the same. After that weekend, we were dealing with 600 police on the campus and police in the classroom and in our faculty meetings. I mean, we felt like we were in a police state. And a very large number of the people in the art department went out on strike. Well, it began with the art department putting themselves between the police and the students because the police were literally beating these students for no reason and they'd come back to class bleeding and have to be sent to the clinic. It was really an impossible condition and we felt perfectly justified in going out on strike.

The union came along, of course, and they were supposedly going to take our cause and tell us what to do, you know, give us their support. We really began to feel that the union had done us in after a month or so because they could only insist that we wanted more money and fewer hours and the kinds of union things that none of us cared one thing about.

JO LAURIA: What you were fighting for was to get the police out of your school grounds.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah. Yes, that's exactly it. During that time, though, I set up a cooperative workshop for my students and first we rented space in a building, so that we could all have some kind of work space and share tools and keep on working.

JO LAURIA: So they wouldn't have to go to the campus?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah. It was impossible.

JO LAURIA: And take their lives in their hands.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: And we were on strike. We weren't teaching. So the Truesilver Union was formed and we worked in this basement for about a year and a half, I guess. And in '71 my husband and I bought a complex of old buildings for our Truesilver Union and moved it into, what finally became my studio. A number of those people stayed with the Truesilver Union until they were graduated or out of school. But, of course, one by one they married and moved away or things were resolved in various ways after the strike was settled and school was back in session. But I've always kept my studio at that same location and it's been a place where I've tried to attract other artists to live. It has four artists and two non-artists who are actually as much artists, I guess, as we are. One is a clown [laughs], almost professional. She goes to Wavy Gravy's clown school every year. So it's a rather interesting group.

JO LAURIA: And what is the location, Tex, so we can have that on the —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: That's at 24th and Hoffman Avenue. [San Francisco, CA].

JO LAURIA: So your original vision when you did the cooperative workshop, did you also have sales where you'd announce maybe studio sales or was it just a place to work?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, it was primarily a place to work. We took over what was originally a bakery showroom or salesroom and I guess living quarters behind. We made that into a casting room, an enameling room, a library, kitchen, and the big studio.

JO LAURIA: And did every member, because it was a cooperative, have to take over certain duties of running the workshop, or only in the sense it was proffered that it was communal?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, we paid in a certain amount and out of that we got the rent and we built a fund that would buy a cooperative casting machine, say or some piece of equipment. Then when the last person left we sold a lot of that. But that was primarily the only sale from there. We had our clients who came there, you know, but we never held any real cooperative sale.

JO LAURIA: And during the course of your many years of teaching how many students do you think went through your classes? I mean, just as a raw number if you started out teaching one class and then it went to three classes a semester.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I had about 60 students every semester. And in later years we had a chairman who had me teaching history classes and all kinds of things other than my studio classes. But I would say between the beginning in the '60s and the end of the '70s I had at least — goodness, that's a hard one.

JO LAURIA: It's about 20 years of teaching or more, and about 120 students every year?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah, I think so.

JO LAURIA: Okay, so we can do the math later.

[They laugh.]

JO LAURIA: Were your classes one of the very few places at San Francisco State where people could learn metalsmithing in this area?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Exactly. Yes, they were.

JO LAURIA: Okay, so you were really training future jewelers and [inaudible] makers.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: Future metalsmiths. And what did you observe over that course of time, some of the ways in which

the — we were talking about this a little bit before, the ways in which the whole craft market changed? I mean, you talked about how art jewelry began to seep into more commercial jewelry but what changes did you see in the craft market over that 25-year period?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I think that there were probably more galleries and more individual craftsmen. I mean, I'm speaking now about metalsmiths and the places where they could go to sell. Some of my students sold at Saks Fifth Avenue. They had a case of necklaces that had quite a few of the pieces made by two of my students. But it was a time when, or at least at that point, Saks has always seemed like the kind of gaudy end of high end and they went for lots of fuss around the neck. And a lot of these things were things that I would have tried to discourage my kids from doing in class, but I guess the dollar is —

JO LAURIA: A strong motivator.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: [Laughs] Right.

JO LAURIA: So what year did you end your teaching career and what were the circumstances related to the ending?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: In 1980 my husband came down with cancer and in 1982 he died. And during that year I went on early retirement, which allowed me to teach one semester on and one off. So I was teaching half a year and still being paid full salary for half a year. And that went on through '91 and at that point I had people who were teaching, trying to hold things together until I got there in the spring. There were some wonderful people teaching for me and the last one was Dawn Nakanishi. She really was absolutely the best and she's now in charge of the program at Cabrillo College [Aptos, CA]. But the programs and the monies that came through the state dried up very seriously because we were out on strike. Because of that strike San Francisco State has never recovered.

JO LAURIA: The strike of 1968?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Right. They've been cutting that budget ever since. And, well, you see, Reagan has charge of the budget both for UC and for all the state colleges. And it is my feeling — no, I shouldn't say that.

JO LAURIA: In any case, you found that it was getting more and more difficult to offer the types of programs you thought were necessary for the students to learn metalsmithing?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: And eventually did the whole program just sort of fizzle out?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: The entire program was canceled two years ago.

JO LAURIA: In 2005, 2006?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Two thousand six, I think it was. It was really tragic because the first thing I was asked to do when I went to San Francisco State was to design the kind of workshop I would want in the new art building that we were supposed to have gotten. It never happened. Never ever happened. And even when we got a new dean who went to the chancellor and got plenty of money, what was built instead of the art building was the media building. And they gave us a gallery in that building but that's all. The workshop was remodeled and the workshop was put into absolute, OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration]-approved in every way kind of condition and it was exactly the design that I had done 25 years before. And it was used for two years and then the program was completely demolished or abolished and every bit of that workshop was torn out. All of the hoods, the piping, the venting, the gas to every bench [laughs]. So all that expense just went for nothing.

JO LAURIA: It sounds so wasteful.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Absolutely. And it was, I think, a terrible decision on the part of the chairman of the department.

JO LAURIA: So it wasn't an institutional priority to keep the metalsmithing workshop going?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. It was her decision.

JO LAURIA: We talked about how you saw the galleries sort of expand as well as the numbers of craftspeople during that period of time. Did you see a proliferation of magazines that would pay attention to American crafts and to metalsmithing and were there any in particular that you thought were worthy of covering the area that you were in? And some of the writers — I know that you said you can't remember at this moment some of the

writers that you feel really advanced the field but you can write that in when you get the draft back. But what were some of the magazines that you think had a great effect on advancing the field? Or journals, any publications?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I really liked *Craft Horizons*.

JO LAURIA: Which subsequently became the *American Craft Magazine*.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, didn't it become *Metalsmith*?

JO LAURIA: Rose Slivka was the editor of *Craft Horizons*, wasn't it?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah?

JO LAURIA: Wasn't she, I mean. I think that became what is the *American Craft Magazine*. It morphed into that. But we can check that fact.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, at this moment I cannot remember what the old, old magazine for metal smiths was called. I have plenty of them over in the studio.

JO LAURIA: Well, we'll look when we go over there. But that was also one that you would read and subscribe to?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: The former *Metalsmith*, whatever it was.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah. There have been other magazines. There are magazines coming out all the time, but I don't know that there's really any more information available from magazines. There are all kinds of things that you could, I guess, count in, like *Ornament* or *Lapidary Journal* or some of those. But for magazines in my field I don't think there's been a whole lot. I got something the other day for a subscription to something called the *Jewelry Artist*, but I didn't subscribe.

JO LAURIA: I think there's one now also called *Art Jewelry*.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Really?

JO LAURIA: Yeah, there is. I'm not sure what the content or the focus of it is.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, it must be art jewelry.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs] That would be a good —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: It would be interesting to see what they think art jewelry really is.

JO LAURIA: Well, let's start there. What do you think art jewelry is? How would you describe it?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, in contemporary terms it's — and what I think about it generally, not specifically - I mean, there are a lot of jewelers who still make things to wear but it seems to me that the art jewelers really don't understand the concept of wearable jewelry, of making wearable jewelry. They make art in the form of jewelry, but to try to be comfortable in some of that takes quite an effort.

JO LAURIA: Well, then what would you title your work?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Mine is wearable.

JO LAURIA: Okay, and who else would you cite as an example of who makes wearable jewelry?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I think Margaret De Patta did. I think that a lot of the people that came out at that same time.

JO LAURIA: Modernists?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And then —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: And even the [Alexander] Calder jewelry is completely wearable. That's why it was

made.

JO LAURIA: So you see a disjunctiveness really between — when people think of art jewelry they think that one artist making a piece of jewelry in his or her studio, but under that umbrella you feel there are two categories. You may have an individual studio artist who is an art jeweler because they're making individual pieces which are unique, even though they may also be limited production or not designed for mass production of one design.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: But then you see there's a split between those studio artists working in their studios individually who make wearable art jewelry and those who make art jewelry that you feel engages more of, well, it's jewelry that makes a statement about art but not necessarily is wearable.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: That's right.

JO LAURIA: And recently, as I'm sure you know, two very large jewelry collections have been acquired by major museums, one being the Helen Drutt collection at the Museum of Art in Houston, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston [TX].

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JO LAURIA: And the other being the Daphne Farago collection which is now at the MFA Boston [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA].

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And, you know, the Farago collection is, I think the focus is American in a certain time frame, whereas the Drutt collection really is international, a lot of European jewelers represented. But the fact is that now there's these two very large collections at public institutions and there are catalogs for both of these gifts and there are traveling exhibitions. What do you think about that? Is that astounding to you that we have reached this point where art jewelry is collected in such a wide breadth of time period?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. No, I don't, because from what I've seen of both those collections there are really wonderful pieces. And anybody who loved art, and especially jewelry, would want to buy if they could. So I don't find it the least bit strange that a lot of people would want to be making for those people. I had a client that I worked for for 30 years until she died and she would take anything I made, and she wore them. But I've never made anything just to make it.

JO LAURIA: Well, I guess what I was trying to get at, the heart of the matter, the core of my thought, is that the general public is fairly unaware that there is a whole category of art jewelry. It seems very specialized. Not that they don't appreciate it, but they may not be educated about it.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And I think now with these two large shows which are traveling nationally and the catalogs that go along with it, it has had a tremendous impact on the general public going to museums to be able to see that there's this whole area of jewelry that had, you know, in essence engaged a lot of the formalistic thoughts that go into other kinds of fine art. You know, line, scale, mass, volume, sculpture.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: But with the limitations and sometimes not, but mostly that it has to be wearable on some platform. Yes, there are pieces which you can wear but difficultly. So I think it's really a huge leap in the field. You know, it's almost like the field has now chronicled itself for the last 25 to 30 years by establishing these collections. Do you find that inspirational on any level?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, yes. I mean, certainly I love to look at jewelry and thank God we're going to get some good shows. But I do think it's been happening all along. I mean, we're very lucky that it's all come into these two big collections that have been given. But it seems to me that after, well, what is it? It's 40-something years, you know. It doesn't seem unlikely.

JO LAURIA: Well, other disciplines under the rubric of craft or studio art have also gone this way. You know, being collected by museums, large collections given, catalogs having been written. I do think that art jewelry was kind of the holdout. You know, there were really none to speak of in major museums until quite recently. So for the field it's very exciting. For a student learning about the field of studio or art jewelry that's a tremendous resource now that did not exist five years ago.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, Boston, though, has always had a good collection of contemporary jewelry. And, of course, San Francisco, forget that.

JO LAURIA: You mean the de Young or the Palace of Legion of Honor [Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, CA] or the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art [CA], none of them collect art jewelry.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. Or show it.

JO LAURIA: Or show it.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. That's craft. But there are other museums. I think — I'm not just sure about this but I do think that the Dallas museum has. And Seattle is a very vital jewelry town, too. And you see all kinds of things in that museum that you wouldn't see here.

JO LAURIA: The Seattle Art Museum [Seattle, WA] as well as the Tacoma Art Museum [Tacoma, WA].

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: Yeah, Tacoma has been very active of late collecting.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah. Yeah, they've got Ken Cory's stuff. They've got, well, they've got a whole museum for just jewelry, I think.

JO LAURIA: Now, Tex, over the years where have you gotten your ideas? What have been your sources of inspiration for your jewelry and have they been long-seated or have you seen a change in what you've been using as inspiration for your own work?

[Pause.]

JO LAURIA: Or have you reviewed a lot of your jewelry? I can see there's a lot of historical and ethnic, you know, associations.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: You might want to talk about that.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Okay. I think that that's exactly what the inspiration has been for most of my stuff. I became interested in the Dark Age and Bronze Age jewelry of northern Europe, and in '58 made a trip to England, France, Scandinavia, Scotland. The university sent me over with a letter that said, "This woman is our honored faculty and anything you can do would be very much appreciated." It had a big gold seal. I could flash that and actually I did, flashed it in the British Museum [London, England] and they let me go behind the stacks — back into the collections and handle and look at and feel and see exactly how those pieces were made. I was concentrating on the Viking and Celtic and some of the German pieces from that period. And I think that probably a lot of the forms that my jewelry took were very much in that inspiration. And even the surfaces, because I was trying to make it look like you couldn't tell whether it was being worn out or whether it was eroding away or whether it was being built up. I worked with that for a good number of years. Also, the kinds of techniques that were used were interesting enough to really try to see if I could do any of them.

JO LAURIA: And you determined what those were by just looking at how they were fabricated in the storerooms of the museums or did —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes, and in the museums they would maybe even have molds that these pieces were cast in.

JO LAURIA: And did you look to the African continent as well at any time? I know a lot of jewelers found great inspiration, especially —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, in the very beginning. I think the first piece I ever made was probably inspired by looking at some African sculpture.

JO LAURIA: Well, that's what I mean. There was a certain period of time when African sculpture was introduced here in the United States in traveling shows and earlier in England, of course.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, it was the '40s for me because my friend had gone to Paris and was sending me back books of African sculpture. It was so exciting.

JO LAURIA: And I've seen some of your early work and there is an interesting use of materials that I don't think

other people were using, like amber, at the time. And different kinds of beads in between these blade shapes, which probably hark back to the Bronze Age tools.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I got a collection of Pre-Columbian stuff. There was a shop here in San Francisco that I happened to find and he had wonderful things. I bought strings of Pre-Columbian beads that I used in some of those early pieces.

JO LAURIA: And I remember seeing and I thought at the time it was unusual or uncharacteristic, seeing a couple pieces that had cord wrapping and other kinds of textiles as materials. And now, knowing your background, it makes perfect sense that you would integrate those two disciplines together. I'm thinking primarily of a piece I remember that was red, red cording over a neck wrap or something, a hanging, almost like a rectangle. But in any case, I do remember, you know, fabric or cording fiber and I thought, that's very unusual for the time, you know, to be able to mix metals with fiber. But since you took metalsmithing and textiles it is a perfect integration for you.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I'm so pleased that I was able to take everything, you know, get a taste of what all those techniques and practices were like, all those crafts, because it gave me a great deal of understanding about what were good ones and what were bad ones.

JO LAURIA: And have you taken that influence as a common thread throughout your jewelry-making career? I know that you have gone back into the studio now after you had your eye surgery and you feel like you can, you know, go back to making jewelry. Are you still looking at the same things for inspiration or has that changed in any way?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I'm just trying to find out what I can really do. Some of the techniques I don't have the eyes for or the steadiness for. So I think it's the technique that has really determined the inspiration.

JO LAURIA: All right, that's fair enough. You know, as painters get older too and their eyesight is not as keen, or the stability, they paint less tight is what they say. But you probably are still utilizing your whole vocabulary. I mean, your work has — there doesn't seem to be any exclusions. I mean, you haven't said, "Okay, I'm only going to work in gold. I'm only going to work in silver and pearls or I'm only going to do enameling." I mean, if you look at the 40 years of your work it covers not only different techniques but a total array of materials. Although I don't know any of your work that I'm aware of that has used what I would call not industrialized materials but — because I know you've used plastics. But, you know, some of this new jewelry coming out consists of gum that people have chewed and then made jewelry out of it, or plaster, or detritus off the street, you know, or just sort of performance pieces. And I don't know, I'm not aware of any jewelry that you have made in that way.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. It goes against everything I believe in.

JO LAURIA: Which is? Could you comment on that?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. I don't make jewelry to be heirlooms necessarily.

JO LAURIA: To be heirlooms?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. But I make it to have intrinsic value. You can always sell it for what's in it. I just feel that it's got to be more lasting than chewing gum and trash off the street.

JO LAURIA: And would you relabel that kind of jewelry? Would you say that that is of a specialized category or that it's just different from the category of jewelry that comes from precious materials?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I think that it's a nice exercise. I think that, you know, if it makes those people happy to do it, do it. But I don't think it will go very far or last very long. I think it's probably no more lasting than it is valuable.

JO LAURIA: Because I know in the currency of today's concept, high concept jewelry, the idea of anti-worth is very high. You know, it's not about the value of materials, it's about the value of the concept.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well [laughs], I can understand what they're saying but I don't —

JO LAURIA: It isn't something that you want to make?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. And I don't. I can't say I don't respect it but I don't give it much credit either.

JO LAURIA: And there's another movement that I'm somewhat aware of where people want to think about not using precious materials because it depletes our resources.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: How does it?

JO LAURIA: Well, I mean like mining, mining for gold or mining for precious stones.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Oh, I see.

JO LAURIA: And they started a movement of recycling old jewelry parts or using — I know there was a show Donna Schneier did called "Zero Karat," Z-E-R-O. That was all about jewelry made out of things which were not precious, although I don't think it was philosophically based. I think it was more about stylistically based, although I could be wrong on that. Maybe it was both. So there are these different streams, and I think the field is big enough to absorb all of them. But you would consider yourself a little bit more traditional in the sense of working with traditional precious materials, looking to history for inspiration, but yet doing it in a very individualized way?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes, I do. I cannot see myself wasting time on something that is so ephemeral, so unworthy.

JO LAURIA: Okay.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Time is really more important, it seems to me, than anything you have. I mean, it's something that you spend a heck of a lot of your life trying to get.

JO LAURIA: There's only a limited amount.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I know it.

[They laugh.]

JO LAURIA: Can you consider some of the motivating factors that may have made you shift your forms, techniques or materials in your career? Has it been through study, finding different streams of inspiration? Has it been moves, relocations? Have there been things which have really kind of made you turn a corner?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I think wanting to try new techniques always makes you turn a corner.

JO LAURIA: And what might some of those new techniques or how has technology affected —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Like photo etching, electroforming, even some of the new techniques of forming metal with a hammer.

JO LAURIA: And have you ever utilized things like laser cutters or —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I don't, because, you know, they weren't available. I never got used to them. And to pick them up at this point would just be having to learn how to use them and then trying to figure out what I would do with it and why.

JO LAURIA: Spoken like a true teacher.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well —

JO LAURIA: To ask the students. No, that's what often teachers say to students: Why do you want to use this material? What is it about the material that motivates or inspires you? And I think it's a very valid question.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Oh, yeah.

JO LAURIA: And you ask yourself that. Sometimes people just want to use it because it's new, and that's okay too.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, it is.

JO LAURIA: It depends on what they do with it.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: But that probably costs quite a bit of money, a laser cutter.

JO LAURIA: I'm not referring to that specifically, but any new technique that comes out. A lot of people now are using a computer as computer assisted design, CAD [computer assisted design], CAM, and computer assisted manufacturing, where they feed a program into the computer and then it lays down the design in a form of wax or plastic. It's actually a plastic. Have you ever had a desire to learn that?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: Because it would be too hands-off?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, it's time again, you know. I'd rather put the time to doing some of the ideas that I've already got, things that I really know I want to do, rather than just experimenting with something because it's new. And I can enjoy it from other people, if it's good, and I can be terrible about it if it's bad [laughs]. I can be embarrassing, as a matter of fact.

JO LAURIA: Well, do you want to share some of the ideas that you have that you want to spend your time doing now?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I've got three rings that I want to finish, and get done. I'm just still trying to see how much I can do, you know. I've brought them up to a certain point, and whether I've got the eyes to do the kind of incredibly minute gold soldering, I'm not sure. But I see nothing that would be too bad about just farming that out to somebody, getting the pieces ready and saying, "Do this."

JO LAURIA: It would be like having an apprentice, actually.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: Then, let's see, I want to at least get some of these questions answered that they give us. What are the qualities of your working environment?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: The qualities?

JO LAURIA: Well, I mean, describe how you — you did mention that you have a workshop and it's in town and it's very close by so it's convenient. Is it fully equipped?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, there are pieces of equipment that I'd like to get. It's equipped as fully as it was when I quit working. And I've spent time getting things back to where they were when I quit working because during that time there was a leak in the roof and metal just doesn't put up with that, you know. You get all kinds of rust. And so I've got most of that back together. And, no, the studio is not in the shape that I'd like to have it but it will be by spring.

JO LAURIA: And I guess what they mean is also that you like — and you've already said this, that you like to work alone.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: So that is the quality of your environment is that it is your studio and you control it and you're the only one that's working in it.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I invited April Higashi to share the studio. And I love April and April was a wonderful studio partner but I realized I don't want to work with anybody.

JO LAURIA: You want that to be your —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I want that to be my place. And I'm still just trying to get back to something pre-April because she bought a wonderful building over in Berkeley where she has her own gallery and workshop. Her husband has his workshop just a few doors down the street and they live there. So, you know, I'm so pleased for her.

JO LAURIA: And was she one of your students?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. No, she was a tenant and she could just walk from her apartment across the back yard into the studio.

JO LAURIA: All right, we're going to end tape 3 and go to our final disc.

[END OF TRACK AAA_gielin08_9284.]

JO LAURIA: This is disc four, continuing interview with Imogene "Tex" Gieling on November 21, 2008 at Tex's home in San Francisco, interviewed for the Archives of American Art by Jo Lauria.

So we're going to hit some of these questions that we have not addressed yet in quick order.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Okay.

JO LAURIA: So we leave enough time for you to discuss, you know, some of your thoughts that you may want to expand upon at the end.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Okay.

JO LAURIA: What is the content of your work? Do you overlay your jewelry with any sense of politics, social commentary? Does it have a relationship to religion or spirituality?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Only rarely. [Laughs] Only rarely. I have very little interest in doing statements anymore. As a matter of fact, I've only done that once, I think, for that ecumenical congress.

JO LAURIA: And that was in 1976 when you were invited to submit a work to the Ecumenical Council exhibition?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: All right, but what are your most important commissions and can you describe how your commission work might be different from other work that you do in your studio?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I think the most important commission I ever had was for "Objects: USA."

JO LAURIA: And you're speaking about the exhibition that Lee Nordness put together with an accompanying catalog that traveled throughout the United States and continued traveling internationally?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And that was sponsored by the Johnson Wax Company.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. And I understand it's being exhibited now in New York at the new Craft Museum.

JO LAURIA: But the American, no, what is it, the Museum of Art and Design [New York, NY].

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I guess.

JO LAURIA: They're reconfiguring the show. Oh, that's interesting. I didn't know that.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, Mike Holmes said that he saw my piece there.

JO LAURIA: Because were they given those pieces from "Objects: USA" or were they dispersed amongst many museums?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I don't think they were given. I think the collection is still together.

JO LAURIA: Oh, okay.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: But it was their opening show.

JO LAURIA: And then after it traveled it ended back at the museum?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I don't know. I didn't see it. I don't know whether Mike has a catalog on it or not. But as I understood it, it was pieces from that collection that were shown in the new —

JO LAURIA: Building.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Building.

JO LAURIA: Okay, so what was so important about that commission for you?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Just for what it did and what it continues to do. And I think it may have been one of the best pieces I ever made. I'd like to see it again. Generally speaking, I would finish a piece and deliver it and then wait until I saw the person again and ask them if I could take a look at it to see what it really looked like [laughs] because when you're working on something, you're working on spots of it, little areas. And it takes a while for you to quit doing that.

JO LAURIA: And for it to register.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: Because of the —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: As a piece.

JO LAURIA: --holistically as a piece.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: Now, how did that commission come about, Tex? Did Lee Nordness know you personally? Did he know of your work?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I had my work in his gallery in New York and he had sold several pieces. And he was from the northwest and I guess that's how it came about.

JO LAURIA: And were the artists who were selected sent letters of invitation and then when you say the work was commissioned was it purchased upfront? Did you have to discuss with Lee what type of a piece you were going to make or was the artist left to freely decide on what —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Freely decide what you wanted to do.

JO LAURIA: And then they purchased the pieces?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: And did you ever get to see it on view at the time?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Oh, yes. Oh, yeah, I did, but not for the last 30 years [laughs].

JO LAURIA: That's what's so wonderful when these pieces go to public institutions is they end up on view again. And do you feel that that was one of the best pieces you've ever made? What about it, was it the technique, was it the surface treatment, or was it just everything met your expectations?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I think it was first of all about the grandest thing that I had ever made. I don't know, it's the kind of piece that I really wouldn't mind having back. I'd like to wear it.

[They laugh.]

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Some things you send out in the world, you know, you could care less.

JO LAURIA: Well, I remember —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: However, I always managed to see to it that my clients were satisfied and happy with what they got.

JO LAURIA: I do recall seeing — in slides, not seeing the piece — but another very grand object that you made for a woman. It was a commission piece. It was an Egyptian scarab.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah. Yeah, that was that client that I worked for for 30 years.

JO LAURIA: And she had given you —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: She went to Egypt and got those beads and —

JO LAURIA: Gold scarab beads.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: They were glass beads that had been buried for thousands of years. It was a lot of problem-solving about how you get those things to string because the holes in them were huge. You can't just put them on a string like that, so I had to make special plugs for them.

JO LAURIA: But that was a challenge and probably something you would not have done had it not been a commission?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, true. I wouldn't have spent that much for gold and for everything else.

JO LAURIA: So sometimes commissions are a way to have artists aesthetically stretch the limitations?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah, and you get to work with the most beautiful stuff.

JO LAURIA: Because she also gave you intaglio seals from Roman times that you made rings for her, I think.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, that was a necklace too.

JO LAURIA: That was a necklace too.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah, with the impressions of the seals in the chain and also on the piece, and then the intaglios hanging underneath.

JO LAURIA: And have you had a chance to see these lately?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: About a year or so ago the lady died. She lived over in Belvedere [CA]. Her daughter inherited everything and she liked everything and she wasn't giving it up [laughs].

JO LAURIA: Well, and I can tell from your inflection that you were just as happy having seen them all these years later and probably coveted them just as much.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, once something went out it was never mine and so I never grieve for anything that ever went away. But sometimes you make something and you think, "Gee, you know, I'll bet that would look good with this outfit."

JO LAURIA: What would you say are the most powerful influences in your career, be it teaching jobs or other people or art movements or technological developments? What do you think has propelled your career over time?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: That's hard to answer.

JO LAURIA: Well, you've been —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I think the thing that's propelled my career is just my German work ethic that makes me feel like I'm not worth a damn if I'm not working [laughs]. And that certainly has kept me at the bench for years, but I'm really happy when I'm there.

JO LAURIA: Well, there have been dealers who have kept you motivated —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Oh, yes.

JO LAURIA: — to work over the years. I know you mentioned Nanny.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Nanny.

JO LAURIA: Nanny, excuse me. Nanny, one of the first dealers or shops that, you know, had an interest in your work so you had a retail outlet, so to speak.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: And a reason to keep producing. And then you just mentioned Lee Nordness. Have there been other major —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. Kay Eddie was another one, and her gallery was in Greenwich, Connecticut. Oh, my goodness, what is her name? She was another one. Elaine Potter.

JO LAURIA: And where was her gallery?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Her gallery was on Bush Street.

JO LAURIA: Here in San Francisco?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Here in San Francisco. I'm not sure she was there much more than a year. She had cancer and died. It was very sad, really. But she was somebody who kind of pushed me along by giving me shows and things like that. And Kay Eddie was the same, and she had a gallery in Greenwich, Connecticut and another one in Tribeca, in New York. I guess, well, that was back in the '70s.

JO LAURIA: And just so we can get this on the disc, Tex, when did you stop working? I know you formally retired I think you said in 1991 from San Francisco State.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JO LAURIA: And then when did you actually have to stop working because of your eyesight?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: That was in '05.

JO LAURIA: Okay, 2005. And now you have —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: And the things that I made before, looking at them I see they're not good.

JO LAURIA: Because your eyes were deteriorating.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah, and I didn't know it. But in 2005 I had no idea that anything was wrong with my eyes. By the time the doctors got through with me I'd had five operations on one eye and it's just gone.

JO LAURIA: Well, it's great that you're back at the bench again.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And trying to regain.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I'm pleased to be there.

JO LAURIA: And you can probably figure out ways of getting around some of these limitations.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I'm trying [laughs]. I don't know whether I can be successful, but I am trying.

JO LAURIA: And we talked a little bit about your travels, specifically the trip that you took in I think 1958.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: Going and looking at collections in the museums in Europe and Scotland.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: That was an incredible trip.

JO LAURIA: Was that on a research grant or —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. Well, it was on sabbatical and I had chosen to study those things while I was on sabbatical and went to places where I knew I could see them. And in the process I got to see Lascaux caves, where you can't go anymore. And I got to see Stonehenge before they put a fence around it and you couldn't get up to it. And I got to see all kinds of wonderful primitive burial sites and learned a lot about prehistoric Britain and prehistoric Scandinavia. And very strange, the little horses that are painted in the Lascaux caves, which are supposed to be 25,000 B.C., are still alive up at the very top of Norway, up at the north cape. We went through Sweden up to Finland and then all the way up to Lapland and, lo and behold, here are those little, Ice Age horses.

JO LAURIA: Miniature horses.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No, they weren't miniature. It's just that they have short necks, big bushy tails and bushy manes and small heads but a big body. And they're adapted to ice and snow.

JO LAURIA: That's great. Well, you were just saying, a little closer to home, that you had taken a trip to Yosemite and that served as a source of inspiration for you.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I think it would be for almost anybody. I mean, if you like landscape that you don't see every day.

JO LAURIA: And you think you could transfer that to some sort of motif in your jewelry forms?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I've been trying. The rock formations, if you really study them they're wonderful. You can isolate off parts that would be marvelous little pieces of jewelry. Sometimes even the way the freeways cross the landscape. I love road trips [laughs]. Just this last summer we came home from Lopez and went up Mount Rainier, stayed in the lodge there. That's a wonderful, wonderful trip, too. But I have tried some little landscape pieces.

JO LAURIA: Well, the one for the Ecumenical Council, if I remember correctly, has a sheep.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: And a landscape in gold.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And you really get the sense of the terrain. So it's not a recent source of inspiration for you. It's been a long time.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Yes. I have a piece at the Mobilia Gallery [Cambridge, Massachusetts] that I've got to get back. You know those people?

JO LAURIA: Yes.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: I kind of thought of this as a bit of a landscape piece. Now, don't look at the necklace but this little piece.

JO LAURIA: Oh, right. It has the —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Kind of a cataract.

JO LAURIA: Right. I'm looking at a photocopy that Tex just gave me of a small piece built on a composition of a rectangle protruding out of a square with an organic surface that looks like a landscape. But so, Tex, what do you think has been — you know, as a summary to your career here what would you cite as some of the high points?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, I had a lot of high points at the very beginning [laughs] when I didn't recognize them as high points. But the State Department picked up some work and sent it around the country and then sent off those pieces around the world. And I just had a lot of demand for my stuff.

JO LAURIA: And in some very important exhibitions. Like you mentioned, "Objects: USA" and being in those publications that, you know, people in Russia got to see what your jewelry looked like.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

JO LAURIA: And do you think your teaching was — if you look through the lens of hindsight — really a high point? Not necessarily to promote your career as an artist but as a life enriching experience?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Oh, I think so, yes. I got as much from my students as they got from me, I'm sure. I even taught [laughs] a little funky three-day workshop on Lopez last summer and enjoyed every minute of it, and the people said they did too.

JO LAURIA: So you've never lost interest in making jewelry?

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No. No.

JO LAURIA: You've never said, "Okay, I have now made my last pendant. This holds no more excitement for me. I'm going to start welding steel."

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: No [laughs]. No.

JO LAURIA: So it's an endless —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, you never quite get through, you know. There's always another idea. You've still got material you can use. Somebody wants you to do something for them. Right now I've got three commissions that I'm supposed to do for Christmas. Now, whether or not I can do that, I don't know, but I'm going to try. We'll see.

JO LAURIA: So it's a perpetual challenge for —

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Well, there are so many things about it that are so stimulating. When you take a piece of metal that's been soldered and pickled and all that and it looks terrible, and you polish it up and it's a jewel.

JO LAURIA: I think we'll end right there.

IMOGENE "TEX" GIELING: Okay [laughs].

JO LAURIA: Thank you.

[END OF TRACK AAA_gielin08_9285.]

JO LAURIA: Interview for the Archives of American Art; interviewer Jo Lauria. Date of interview is Saturday, April 28th. And I'm interviewing Imogene Gieling in her studio home in San Francisco. Imogene likes to be called Tex,

T-E-X; that's her nickname.

[END OF TRACK AAA_gielin08_9275.]

JO LAURIA: So Imogene [laughs]—Tex, we want to pick and continue your interview, which we did for the Archives of American Art, I think, last year—

TEX GIELING: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JO LAURIA: —because you wanted to add some additional information about your work. How do you—you know, how did you work, what materials you worked with, what was your aesthetics? So I'm going to let you just tell us a little bit about your philosophy in working and the way that your series progressed through the, you know, the 40 years that you were making jewelry.

TEX GIELING: Let me start with that and then develop my philosophy as I go along.

JO LAURIA: Okay.

TEX GIELING: Because I think that the experiences that you have in the learning process—[phone vibrates]—make your objects what they are.

JO LAURIA: Okay. Okay, continue.

TEX GIELING: I think that my experience, when I lived in New York—and I went there just as soon as I could get away from Texas because, during the war, there was no way to get out of there. Everything was reserved for the servicemen, as far as transportation was concerned. So in '45, when the V-J Day was declared and everybody went crazy with, you know, glee—

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: —I left Dallas for New York City in February; I guess that must have been '46. So in New York, I managed to find a place in Greenwich Village. And I'm sure had it been someone's studio because it was in the—a building. I guess the building was built as studios for artists because the rooms were huge; the windows were enormous; the kitchens were like closets—

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: —and the bathrooms were adequate.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: It had marble lobby and a doorman and an elevator. And it was right at number 1 Sheridan Square. So then I could walk to the Hofmann School where I thought I would be a painter. And what I learned from Hofmann was that, no, I really didn't have the vision of a painter. But I got every other thing from Hofmann in terms of composition and all of the elements of the—excuse me; I've just had a brain freeze.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: But [laughs]—

JO LAURIA: Elements of design or—

TEX GIELING: [Laughs.]

JO LAURIA: —color?

TEX GIELING: No, the Abstract Expressionist Movement. And I've worked with those tenants as—all my life they've been the foundation of any design ideas I have brought to mind. And they've been my idea of what would be a well-constructed, absolutely hold-together kind of design. And that's what I've always tried to do, something that I knew I wouldn't have to work on again once it left my hands [laughs]. I wanted it to stay together. And—

JO LAURIA: So at the—at the Hofmann School you were learning painting then.

TEX GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: Exclusively.

TEX GIELING: Yes

JO LAURIA: That's what they—that's what they taught.

TEX GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: And when you left there, you were certain that you didn't want to be a painter or—

TEX GIELING: Absolutely certain.

JO LAURIA: Okay.

TEX GIELING: And I went from New York to Seattle. New York was a tremendous influence, especially with jewelry, I think, because I got to see Calder's work at the museum.

JO LAURIA: At the Museum of Modern Art?

TEX GIELING: Yes. And there was a show of jewelry that was made from anything but precious material. And there were necklaces of safety pins and other things worked from some kind of objects like—well, anything that was produced en masse and from found objects. And as far as I know, it was about the first idea that anyone ever had that jewelry could be anything other than precious, or at least trying to be precious.

JO LAURIA: Do you remember the year? Was this also an exhibition?

TEX GIELING: Well, this would have been 19—early 1947.

JO LAURIA: And it was also at the Museum of Modern Art.

TEX GIELING: Yeah. Yes.

JO LAURIA: And was—was this the one that we discussed that Anni Albers had a necklace in that was made of the safety pins or the—and she also—

TEX GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: —had one in paperclips and—

TEX GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: —hair, bobby pins.

TEX GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: Okay.

TEX GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: So this was a great inspiration for you.

TEX GIELING: It was.

JO LAURIA: Or at least revelation.

TEX GIELING: [Laughs.] Yes. But I think it was for the whole art world, too, because it really opened up the whole train of thought about, you know, what you could do to produce art.

JO LAURIA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

TEX GIELING: Of course, the French had been doing all kinds of assemblage. But it was mainly from paper or some kind of materials that could be painted or used with paint. I went from New York to Seattle. And I had my name changed to Tex because I went to work first as a window display artist. And to call us to the office, they had a system of bells that rang over the—through the store, and lights that came on over the elevators. And you had to have a name that was short enough to put into Morse code.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: So that [laughs]—so that they could ring you, *ding, ding, ding, drrrt, ding*—[they laugh]—or otherwise. And since Imogene wouldn't work, because they had one woman that was named Emma [ph] and

another woman that was named Jean [ph], and somebody just said, "Oh hell, let's just call her Tex."

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: And that's what everybody called me. And since I was new to [laughs] Seattle, the few people that I knew then all called me Tex. And as I collected friends and acquaintances, they also called me Tex. I went to the University as Tex. And—

JO LAURIA: So when you sign or stamp your jewelry pieces, did you stamp them as—

TEX GIELING: I never stamped anything.

JO LAURIA: Okay.

TEX GIELING: I never put my name on [laughs] any of my work unless somebody honestly requested it. And then I used a—I used to try to engrave it or I'd do something—

JO LAURIA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. If it—

TEX GIELING: —to satisfy—

JO LAURIA: If it was a commission, they might have requested that you—that you sign the piece. And if you did, you would have signed it "Imogene."

TEX GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: No, you would have signed it "Tex."

TEX GIELING: I think so.

JO LAURIA: Okay. Well, I know we discussed your years at—in—at school in Seattle on the last tape. But I think where we left off is we didn't get into any specifics about your actual work. I mean, how did you come to use, you know, these precious metals, gold and silver? And I know you also integrated stones, many stones, and some of them were Roman coins, I believe you mentioned.

TEX GIELING: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JO LAURIA: So I think if you want to bring us up to the—that timeframe of when you started to work in metals, that would be terrific.

TEX GIELING: I don't know how, but somehow I got the call, and it was like go forth now and learn how to be a jeweler.

[They laugh.]

JO LAURIA: And how old—

TEX GIELING: I think because—

JO LAURIA: How old were you?

TEX GIELING: I must have been, at that point, I guess I was about 23. I went to the university to take one class in jewelry. And I found out that I had to take metalsmithing before I could take jewelry. There was no way I could get out of this prerequisite. But I also found that I could take four classes instead of just one because they all—I had four classes for the price of one, so I took four classes. And there were two that were introductions to plastics and also two textile techniques. I did very well in both of those things. And I'd also taken a class in Chinese potshards as a—well, that's what we were doing, was analyzing the pieces of pottery to determine what these prehistoric peoples had made. It was a very interesting class.

But the second semester I had the metal—the jewelry class. And I was ready, I tell you [laughs]. I got an assignment, and I made it in a day. I got another assignment, I made it over the weekend. And I managed to figure out how I could hook my soldering system, which then was a blowpipe, just like the Phoenicians or the Egyptians or any of the primitive peoples used to heat up the metal. And I hooked that to my gas stove—

[They laugh.]

JO LAURIA: Sounds dangerous.

TEX GIELING: [Laughs.] —and I could do my soldering in the kitchen.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: So my—

JO LAURIA: And this was while you were at the University of Washington?

TEX GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: And first year, freshmen, or was that when you took your—

TEX GIELING: No, I went over, and I just started taking classes as a graduate. I already had my B.A. So I simply took enough classes to, you know, fill my time.

JO LAURIA: And you were answering your calling because—

TEX GIELING: Yes, and I was trying to learn to make jewelry. Well, the teacher was very strict and very good. If you hurt any of the tools, you—you were ostracized. [They laugh.] She kept every one of those hammers just in such pristine condition that—you know, but you learned that that's the way you had to do it if it was going to come out the way it should. I'm glad for that because, at this point, it's such a, you know, habit that it's easy to just put everything away so that it stays the way you know you have to have it.

JO LAURIA: So she was teaching good working practices.

TEX GIELING: She was teaching that but she was also teaching us to be very competitive. We were encouraged to send to exhibitions. I remember in '48, '47, I guess, I—yeah, sent to my first exhibition. And it was the Wichita Ceramics Guild or something of that—some—something like that anyway. But they had accepted jewelry. People hadn't been doing jewelry, they had been doing ceramics. That was a very popular craft. But jewelry was brand new as far as the universities doing anything to teach jewelry. And I think the university was probably one of the few that had that. Well, I did very well. After my third quarter, I was invited to have my work along with Jack Lenor Larsen and one of the other graduates, Winnie Anderson [ph], in the Portland Ceramics Guild—well, they had a gallery.

JO LAURIA: I think you mean the—oh, it's the—I know what—it was in the district—they showed ceramics; they showed jewelry; they showed Jack Lenor Larsen had his first show there. The, oh my gosh, what is it called? The Craft—the Craft Gallery; I mean, now, it's the Museum of Contemporary Crafts. They've—they've changed their name. But for 37 years, they were the Gallery, I think, of Contemporary Craft in Portland. And that's the place where you had—you could—

TEX GIELING: That's true.

JO LAURIA: Okay.

TEX GIELING: That was—that was the first major exhibit that I ever got to see of my own work.

JO LAURIA: And what year was that, Tex?

TEX GIELING: Well, that would have been '48.

JO LAURIA: Okay.

TEX GIELING: After that, I came to San Francisco. I worked in Seattle until 1950. I guess maybe that show must have been 1949 because, very soon after that, I came to San Francisco. And in San Francisco, I, yeah, set up my studio in my apartment that cost me \$32 a month.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

JO LAURIA: What area of San Francisco?

TEX GIELING: This was between—well, it's—I believe they call that Polk Gulch.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: But it's up hill from Polk Street anyway on Austin between Franklin and Gough and Pine and Bush. And it was a funky little building that had been exploded—[they laugh]—or shaken, at least, from the explosion next door when somebody came up from Van Ness where they were dynamiting—

JO LAURIA: Oh my goodness.

TEX GIELING: —all of Van Ness Avenue as a fire stop during the '06 earthquake. And they dynamited the house next door, which made this little thing just kind of tip—

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: —forward and sideways.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: And it was noticeable on the street [laughs], yeah, because it was outstanding.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: I got to know everybody I ever wanted to know within the first couple of weeks. My teacher had come down from Seattle, Ruth Penington.

JO LAURIA: Oh, Ruth Penington was your teacher?

TEX GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: Okay.

TEX GIELING: And Imogen Cunningham had been an alumna of the University of Washington as was Ruth. And they were good friends. So she, you know, Ruth, took me to see Imogen. Imogen and I became pretty good friends right away. And I invited them to come to dinner. My apartment must have been made for Chinese because the bathtub was about half size, and the sink was about half height. [They laugh.] I changed the sink, but I couldn't change the bathtub. I just painted it. And Imogen Cunningham sat and looked through the hall where I had a big bowl of very large pussy willow and into the bathroom where there was this bathtub. And she said, "I'm coming over here on Sunday to take a picture of you in that bathtub." So the [laughs] next thing I knew, Sunday, here I was stripping down to get in the bathtub.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: The pictures were taken in the bathtub, then out onto the floor [laughs]. And I found myself posing for several lovely pictures.

JO LAURIA: And you have these photographs.

TEX GIELING: I have these photographs.

JO LAURIA: And she was shooting you nude standing in the bathtub through the pussy willows—

TEX GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: —from the hallway. I think I've seen that photo; it's glorious.

TEX GIELING: [Laughs.]

JO LAURIA: It's a glorious photograph.

TEX GIELING: It's in the book, *The Body*, and my brother [laughs]—this is sort of an aside. But my brother wanted to give me a present for my birthday. And so he went on and plugged in—I mean, Imogen Cunningham and the picture came up and it was about oh half-inch by half-inch. And he said, "That looks like Imogene." And then he blew it up, and he said, "Yes! That's Imogene."

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: So he rang me up, and he said, "Genie [ph], I think you're naked on the internet." [They laugh.] And at any rate, San Francisco was such a gas. I put it all in my speech to the—

JO LAURIA: That's right.

TEX GIELING: —Goldsmiths. And I would simply plug that in from here on—

JO LAURIA: Okay.

TEX GIELING: —except that I really have tried to assess what it is that I love so about trying to make jewelry. And first of all, it's being able to handle all this incredibly beautiful material. It's inspiring just to know that you have this to work with.

JO LAURIA: What is your—

TEX GIELING: But—

JO LAURIA: —favorite material to work with? Is—are they—is it—

TEX GIELING: Gold.

JO LAURIA: It's gold. Okay. And silver would be second or not even a close second probably?

TEX GIELING: No, it is. The reason, I believe, is that to work with gold is a real achievement. And you realize that what you do in that material should be something that is equal; the idea should be equal to the material itself. And your position as a jeweler is to enhance this material.

JO LAURIA: What would you say is your favorite piece you ever made in your career? Be it of gold or another metal. What piece are you most—I guess you feel it is the most representative of your skills, your talents, your concept?

TEX GIELING: That's really hard to say.

JO LAURIA: Well, what piece are you particularly proud of?

TEX GIELING: Well, it could be a number of things, each for a different reason.

JO LAURIA: Okay. Well, we have all the time [laughs].

TEX GIELING: Some things just make themselves. And it's true, you know? When you're really in tune with your work, it just flows. And it's almost as though it directs you. I feel that that's happened a number of times. And I can't remember what those pieces really were. One I know was a ring. I was having a show in Reno, and I had one of the Chatham emerald clusters, beautiful, beautiful green. At any rate, I started to encase this bunch of crystals and sat all night, happy as I could be, just making that ring. The next day I packed it up, went to Reno, and it was sold. I really couldn't tell you what it looks like. But I think my jewelry [laughs] is always recognizable. A man came to me to ask me if I had made this piece of jewelry. And since I never stamp anything, I will say, yes, I have. And it needs to be polished. [They laugh.] But he was afraid to disturb the patina and oh shoot, you know? It looks a lot—it would look a lot better and be more what I really intended it to look like if it, you know, had been kept polished.

JO LAURIA: So it must have been silver because—

TEX GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: —gold doesn't tarnish. Well, you also—you have these wonderful—you have a wonderful sets with necklaces, those of yours that I—that I've seen, where they are repeated forms that are like links that are—you know, that are out of sort of a chain arrangement. And I think that it's—it has a great sense of harmony. Do you often sketch your—

TEX GIELING: Hardly ever unless it's for someone. You know I've done an awful lot of commissions. And if someone really wants to know exactly what he's gonna get I usually just say well, I don't know exactly what you're gonna get.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: But it should look something like this. There was one funny [laughs]—I don't mean to stretch this out. So I just wanted to say that I really would like to be called a goldsmith because I think that, as you work, you're constantly bringing yourself up the ladder to do better and better and better. And when you finally reach that really best point, you can call yourself a goldsmith. And I do feel like I've been there.

JO LAURIA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, that's well put. And I know that, you know, in the—in the European Guild System, you couldn't call yourself a goldsmith unless you could, you know, pass a certain test of skills.

TEX GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: And it's a very difficult system to, you know, to rise—to rise in. But there are those who achieve the

goldsmith title.

TEX GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: I don't know if we have the same thing here in the United States. But—

TEX GIELING: No, we don't have anything like that. But there is a Jewelers Board of Trade that keeps the business clean. You never hear of, you know, dirty jewelry dealers, certainly not the ones that are with the Board of Trade. And you have to maintain a certain professional standard. Of course, schools require that, too. You have to keep winning prizes, or you don't get promoted. And—

JO LAURIA: You mean if you're on the faculty.

TEX GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: And you were on the faculty at the San Francisco—

TEX GIELING: I was on the faculty at the University of California for the first seven years of my life.

JO LAURIA: Right, the University of California at Berkeley.

TEX GIELING: Yeah. I was invited because one of my professors from the University of Washington recommended me. And everybody on the faculty had to approve of me, so that I could join the family. And the University of California was more or less like that. You had dinner with the—some faculty member having the dinner every week. There was—but it was a good, very friendly, helpful group of people. And every one of them was admirable in every way.

JO LAURIA: Were—was jewelry or in the metalsmithing program within the art department?

TEX GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: No. It was—

TEX GIELING: This was the decorative art department. And they had me set up their metals program. I guess that, from the second year, I had that program running. And it ran for, I guess, five years. And they—everything was going just wonderfully, I thought, and so did everybody in that department. I had gotten—that seventh year, I had gotten a research grant, a raise, a citation from I can't remember what—

JO LAURIA: You—

TEX GIELING: —a sabbatical and fired.

JO LAURIA: Oh my goodness. [They laugh.] All of that in the same year?

TEX GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: Did they give you a reason for the firing?

TEX GIELING: No. It's just that, if you cannot pass the committee, and it's a committee of completely unrelated people on the faculty. I don't mean the art faculty, but the faculty at—as a whole. If you can't pass that to be an associate professor, you're automatically fired.

JO LAURIA: Wow.

TEX GIELING: And the letter came the 26th of December. It finally reached the chairman when she came back on the 2nd of January. And at that point, they finally put it together that they were eliminating decorative art.

JO LAURIA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

TEX GIELING: And they were doing it by firing anyone who came up for the tenure track.

JO LAURIA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

TEX GIELING: And then the ones that were left either were able to retire, or they were sent off to Davis or Chico or some other place.

JO LAURIA: So they strategized just to eliminate the decorative arts department altogether at the—

TEX GIELING: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JO LAURIA: —University of California Berkeley.

TEX GIELING: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. There were many departments that they eliminated. And the—well, I think, on the whole, it was supposed to have been more or less directed towards graduate work instead of undergraduate. I don't know whether that is still true; I don't know.

JO LAURIA: But they don't any longer have a decorative arts department. I mean, since that year, they—

TEX GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: —haven't reinstalled another—

TEX GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: —department because sometimes, that also happens, is they'll eliminate a department. I know that, at UCLA, they eliminated the glass blowing program, but that's never come back. And now the philosophy is to enfold all of the, you know, material-based classes under, you know, under the rubric of sculpture, instead of having separate departments for ceramics or, you know, textiles. It's all going to be under, you know—

TEX GIELING: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JO LAURIA: —bigger department heads. But—

TEX GIELING: Well, I think San Francisco State is doing that, too.—

JO LAURIA: That's probably—

TEX GIELING: —if it can't be under sculpture, get rid of it.

JO LAURIA: Yeah. It's probably a budget issue for the regions of California. They've—

TEX GIELING: Well, so far as I—what I felt when I taught at San Francisco State was that metal arts was always a budget problem for them. And I think the reason was that San Francisco State was a combination of various areas. But there was no common thread. There was no common doctrine, anything, that held the whole thing together, so everybody was out for himself. And the strong departments, of course, got all the money.

JO LAURIA: And they were strong because they had the most—they had the greatest numbers of students that would enroll in those particular classes?

TEX GIELING: And the oldest professors, you know.

JO LAURIA: And they might have been required classes, as well; whereas, metals might have been an elective.

TEX GIELING: Well, it was an elective, but it was required by dental students or for them. And also the education department, at one point, we had numbers and numbers of people taking metal arts to be able to teach in high school.

JO LAURIA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And you were one of the faculty members. How many teachers were there in the entire metal arts department?

TEX GIELING: One.

JO LAURIA: One [laughs]. That was you [laughs].

TEX GIELING: Yes. And as it went along and grew, and I had a graduate program, the whole business, then they hired other people to help because we had a large enrollment. And the trouble was, with San Francisco State, that [laughs] they had such a limited number or limited amount of money—

JO LAURIA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

TEX GIELING: —for craft—

TEX GIELING: [Laughs.] —that, actually, a lot of stuff had to be bought from educational surplus.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: And also, it had to be bought by the men. The women didn't know what they were doing with shopping, so, you know—especially tools. And I got some of the worst—[they laugh]—judgment about buying tools for metal arts. For instance, I asked for a vise. That's not much to have to give to metals. They went to educational surplus, and they brought me four ski vises.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.] Ski?

TEX GIELING: Ski.

JO LAURIA: Like S-K-I.

TEX GIELING: Yes.

JO LAURIA: To—for your skis to—

TEX GIELING: Yes. So you could clamp your skis and wax them. And that—that's what I had to plug along with or bring my own tools to class.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: And I did that. Another thing: I needed a casting machine. And I wanted a centrifugal casting machine. Everybody had one; everybody needed [laughs]—I mean, every other school, every high school, you know, come on. So they ordered the best; however, it was a machine to cast platinum, instead of gold and silver, which meant then instead of circling horizontally or around, this one was vertical. And I was scared to death to let anyone try to use that, even me because, if you're heating metal, and you've got it right at that point, you want to be able to let go, but you don't want the thing to come around and hit you in the head.

[They laugh.]

JO LAURIA: No. Well, plus, wouldn't it—buying platinum as a material is so very expensive.

TEX GIELING: Nobody would ever use that.

JO LAURIA: Right. So—

TEX GIELING: Nobody. It never—

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: —ever got—

JO LAURIA: —used.

TEX GIELING: —used.

JO LAURIA: Well, let's just say there were many challenges that [laughs] you had to deal with. But you stayed for 25 years, yes?

TEX GIELING: Twenty-three.

JO LAURIA: Twenty-three.

TEX GIELING: Twenty-three.

JO LAURIA: And during that time, did you have any students or adjunct faculty that you think were really—you know, or went on to be very credible, formidable metalsmiths?

TEX GIELING: There are several teachers. There is one of my students who's teaching at the Art Academy. She has charge of the metals there. Another one was teaching the Shannon Art at the Shannon Art Building in Golden Gate Park. It's a city program. And then there were some students—well, and I have one that's teaching up in Alaska. You know, there's—there are several who make jewelry and have trunk sales or house sales or whatever or put things on consignment. I don't know. I tried to teach jewelry as an art form. And the ones who were really the best at that probably never became very famous—

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: —because sometimes, even though the solutions were absolutely, wonderfully exciting and very well done, they captured a period which is no longer that period.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: Or they went off on some personal tangent that only they and I could understand.

[They laugh.]

JO LAURIA: Well, you weren't teaching necessarily jewelry in the commercial market, how to, you know, do multiples. It was—

TEX GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: Right. So—

TEX GIELING: No, I never taught that. I gave them all kinds of study material if they wanted to do that. But I tried to do that myself [laughs]. I can barely make two earrings I like.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.] Yeah, that's funny.

TEX GIELING: But [laughs]—

JO LAURIA: Because the—it's—you mean because of the hand process, that getting the second part of the pair of the earrings to be exactly like the first one is a—

TEX GIELING: [Laughs.]

JO LAURIA: —real challenge.

TEX GIELING: Well, and it's a bold [ph]. [They laugh.] I took a—I took a commission to make a bracelet. And I was supposed to make a dozen. And this would have been, oh heavens, quite a lot of money for me at the time —

JO LAURIA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

TEX GIELING: —I was to do this back in the '50s. And I barely could drive myself to make six. I delivered six and never did that bracelet again. [They laugh.] I didn't even keep one for myself.

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JO LAURIA: Imogene Gieling, tape number two, recorded for the Archives of American Art, Saturday, April 28, 2012. Interviewed by Jo Lauria. And we are going to continue the conversation. I'm going to ask you the question.

TEX GIELING: Okay.

JO LAURIA: We were just talking about how, in life, art historians, museum curators, tend to categorize artists' work. It seems to be a convenient way to identify the artists and what era they've worked in. So now we have the advantage of seeing the Margaret de Patta exhibition, which is currently on display at the Oakland Museum of California, and her book, which is the book of the exhibition's catalog; it's called *Space, Light, Structure*, and it talks about Margaret de Patta in the sense of being a constructivist. And I wanted to hear your thoughts; if you were to be—if your work were to be categorized, what would you say would—would be sort of the overarching aesthetic of your work? And what would you say about Margaret de Patta's now sort of importance in the American studio jewelry movement?

TEX GIELING: As far as my own work is concerned, I think probably almost everything has some kind of influence from the fact that I've looked at so many prehistoric pieces of jewelry and metalwork. Given a choice, I will look for that, rather than anything current or whatever. But even when you—when I'm not trying to make it look [laughs] that way, people will say, "It looks like it's been dug out or something." [Laughs.] And I think—I'm glad that's the way people see it, if that's—and I think that certainly the piece that's at that museum of design and craft in New York—

JO LAURIA: The Museum of Art and Design.

TEX GIELING: Art and Design.

JO LAURIA: The one in New York City, yes.

TEX GIELING: Yes. They have a piece that was in *Objects USA*, and certainly that piece is as close to the kind of influence of archaic art. And I was really trying for that then. I was trying to do a technique that was—you could

see it as being built up, or you could see it as being worn away.

JO LAURIA: And if I recall, that piece is made in gold and it has amber beads or some—

TEX GIELING: It's silver with a gold wash and amber beads.

JO LAURIA: And doesn't it have a pendant that hangs below or—there's something that reminds me of Neolithic tools.

TEX GIELING: There's a great big chunk of amber that's kind of amorphous shape.

JO LAURIA: So I know that there are also pieces of your jewelry, though, that I have seen that were using very technologically advanced processes, such as photo etching. And that would not necessarily relate to the sort of classical archeological feel.

TEX GIELING: Yeah, but the only piece of that that I have in any kind of a collection is in Oakland. And the form is photo etching, all right, but it's in the form of a Viking of—[laughs]—well, bracelet.

JO LAURIA: So you were studying all the—

TEX GIELING: I went on that search grant to study dark-age jewelry in northern Europe. And I got to see some of the most incredible stuff: museums in Scandinavia that had rooms of gold torques and huge armbands. And even things like the most prehistoric where they beat gold into a wire and then wind it as spring and wear it on a finger, but then they could break off a piece if they wanted to trade for something or—

JO LAURIA: Oh, so it was a—

TEX GIELING: That was their wealth.

JO LAURIA: Right, that was their currency.

TEX GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: That's wonderful. Do you know the jewelry of Breon O'Casey? It was an Irish jeweler. He's now passed away, but his work also has—he studied Celtic and, you know, Neolithic. And his jewelry always feels—has an echo of prehistoric artifacts.

TEX GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: So—well, that's very interesting. I didn't know that about your jewelry. I mean, as I said earlier, I feel it was—to me, it was related to some other cultural sense. It never seemed to be coming out of, you know, American contemporary trends.

TEX GIELING: Well, I haven't really blended into those trends very well. When jewelry became smear-kunst, we called it—[laughs].

JO LAURIA: What—could you spell that? [Laughs.] What are you—is it a German word?

TEX GIELING: It's smear art.

JO LAURIA: Oh, S-M-E-A-R, A-R-T? Okay. So you're just making it a German word by putting "kunst" on it. Okay. And this is a term that I don't know. Tell me about it.

TEX GIELING: Well, it's when people used wax and kind of drip system, you know, Sam Kramer was very good at that back in the '40s. But he used it for effect. These people, that's all they did with it. They just let it, you know, do whatever it would do and got what I called smear-kunst. So [laughs] it—

JO LAURIA: It's a freewheeling kind of casting, is that where the wax just melts and then it—you—

TEX GIELING: Well, Bob Winston, for instance, that school—

JO LAURIA: Okay.

TEX GIELING: — Mercifully, I've forgotten most of the people that were doing that, but it was very popular when wax casting first came on. And I never let any of my students do that; however, I did try to encourage them to experiment. And a lot of the things that happened by accident, I suppose somebody else—some other jeweler would say, "Well, you know, that's just an accident," or "That's just a this or a that," as far as something that's not acceptable. But if you let an accident lead you to a really finished work, and you think about, you know,

where you're going with it, it can be a new direction. It can—it can actually lead you into other ways of thinking. And I did encourage that.

JO LAURIA: Well, would—how would you say that when—the time that you were really active making jewelry, who were the leaders in the field? And who—if you were sending your work to exhibition competitions, who would be the other jewelers that your work would sit next to? Who was important in the late-'40s, '50s, and '60s?

TEX GIELING: Okay, let's see; '40s and '50s, I was still working with silver. And I think, in a way, a lot of things that I did then were on that learning process. However, I did enamels then that were—well, I was in a show that was sponsored by the State Department that was sent all over Europe. And I was in several enamels—

JO LAURIA: —exhibitions?

TEX GIELING: Yeah, even their shows, you know, where there was nothing but enamels. But it—I guess—because—well, at any rate, I was still learning my techniques and trying to get everything so that I didn't have to do it two or three times to make it right. The people that were influential in the '40s—Calder, Falkenstein, Bertoia, Margaret—though I didn't know anything about Margaret in the '40s. But those people, and Eames, were the people that really, you know, carried the torch.

JO LAURIA: They set the benchmark. Everybody knew who they were. Or, not everybody, but I mean, people in the know. And all of those that you mentioned were also working with jewelry as abstraction.

TEX GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: So why do you think they call Margaret de Patta a constructivist?

TEX GIELING: Well, that's what the school of design in Chicago would call that kind of work. It fitted in with what Moholy was teaching, and they just come out of the period where every kind of painting had to have a school or a following or at least a manifesto. And I think that constructivism is as close to what was being presented then by Margaret and others—was all you could call it.

JO LAURIA: That's fair enough, and the way in which she collages her pieces based on geometrics does seem very similar to Moholy-Nagy approach. Did you know Margaret at all early on or later? Or did you work with her on any level, like at the Metal Arts Guild? Were you friends?

TEX GIELING: I don't know that I was ever—I could be called a friend of Margaret, because I did not know her that well. We would meet at Sperisen's. He was her lapidarian. He was also mine. But she was always so much better than I was as far as her work. She'd been at it longer. She was older. And I was always kind of in awe, so I never really was more than just really friendly, because I could be. But —

JO LAURIA: Well, they say—

TEX GIELING: — I was never close friends.

JO LAURIA: But the curators of this catalog say that one really interesting quality of Margaret's work is that she used stones—she cut them, and this would be because of the lapidarian, in to— a way where the light can change the way the stone is faceted; whereas before, stones were always cut to get the maximum amount of light reflection. And they credit her with the idea of the way that the stone is being cut, that the light moves with whatever way the stone is moving. And I did not know if this, I guess, was a new breakthrough. Did you—do you feel this was a great innovation? I guess this is what the curator, Julie Muniz, says: "Previously, the goal of gem-cutting had been to enhance sparkle and brilliance. De Patta broke with that convention. She wanted to manipulate the optical qualities of stones so they would change in different light as the wearer moved."

TEX GIELING: Well, she must've gotten that from somebody. You know, some printed word. But Sperisen was kind of a modern lapidary, like Margaret was a modern jeweler. And she probably dictated the size of the stone and what she wanted to do with it. And he would cut it for her in that size and that—and she used the material many, many times: rutilated quartz. It's quartz with tourmaline crystals. And it can be quite an interesting stone because, very often, the tourmaline can completely change the way the light hits the stone. And there are probably other stones with inclusions that can cause that kind of light change. But the tourmaline also corresponded to the straight line and the sort of mathematical—well, the constructivist concept, you see.

JO LAURIA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Because I know that the rutilated quartz is something that I associated with Margaret de Patta's jewelry; I've seen several large rings using that stone, pendants. merry rank also uses that stone. But for me to characterize her work, I would have said first that she was the first jeweler that I knew who actually used pebbles in a way that nobody else had previously. And I thought that was really interesting. Why

go from using precious materials and precious stones to then elevating beach pebbles to the same level? I mean, what was that kind of thought process? Were there—

TEX GIELING: Well, before I ever saw any of Margaret's work, Ruth Penington was doing that, too. And she lived right above Rosario Beach and invited me to go to Rosario with her for a weekend. And we went to the beach in the morning and picked beach rocks.

JO LAURIA: Can—yeah, can you see these?

TEX GIELING: Oh, yeah. And—I made them up. I made up rings and other things from my beach gleanings [laughs]. I think that, more than anything else, the '40s and the fact that they had microscopic photographs of things that bore this kind of organic form, and things like the drop of milk—we'd never seen anything like that before. Those were all brand new shapes to work with. And artists at that time did that. That's what produced some of the kind of kidney bean shapes and all of the things that really identified that period.

JO LAURIA: Right. Well, also the atomic age is what they call it, where artists start using molecular structures in their work as a design element. You know, it becomes very important. And I see what you mean about the rutilated quartz, because the lines—what you were trying to say is the lines are very much the way they transverse through the stone—are architectural almost —

TEX GIELING: Yeah, they are.

JO LAURIA: —And you know, they're straight or perpendicular, and then they run at angles. So in and of itself, then, the stone becomes constructed. And then it becomes part of an overall composition.

TEX GIELING: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JO LAURIA: Now I know a little bit about Ruth Penington's work, because I included a beautiful bracelet she had made in the Craft and America exhibition, and it was rather large, over-scaled, and it had a lot of weight and also had a resonance with prehistoric jewelry. So did you learn from her the idea of, you know, looking to other cultures for inspiration?

TEX GIELING: Well, there was a lot of influence about that time from the excavations that were going on in Peru and Ecuador and anywhere they—the Mayans or any of those peoples were living. And those were, I think, also a lot of the influence, because just like in the '20s when King Tut was discovered, all the jewelers started on kind of an Egyptian craze.

JO LAURIA: Right, they call that the Egyptian Revival, and it happened in furniture and in textiles and everything else because it was, you know, the newest motifs, you know, that people had never seen before.

TEX GIELING: And it simply went on with all these discoveries in South America, Central America, Mexico. And those things were the collectibles of that period.

JO LAURIA: Right, like we collect differently now. But I'm sure we will have a—the next thing now is computer jewelry. I mean, that's been around for a while but, you know, jewelry that incorporates motherboards and circuit boards. And that's the kind of, you know, gadgetry that no one had seen before, either.

TEX GIELING: What will it do?

[They laugh.]

JO LAURIA: Well, some artists' jewelry—or some jewelers actually use computer parts that, you know, run a program, you know, on a—I guess they're battery operated. But others just use the beauty of the circuitry, you know, for computers.

TEX GIELING: Well, there's a woman that is in Phoenix. Do you go to the SNAG Conferences at all?

JO LAURIA: Yes, sometimes.

TEX GIELING: Are you going this time?

JO LAURIA: I don't think I'm going to go. It's like, in two more weeks.

TEX GIELING: Well, at any rate—

JO LAURIA: It's going to be in Phoenix.

TEX GIELING: —She has made jewelry from circuit boards only.

JO LAURIA: Only, okay. I'm sure I can look her up.

TEX GIELING: Yes, you can. I can't think of her name. But she's been a SNAG natural—you know, regular.

JO LAURIA: Well, the Metal Arts Guild that was influential, and I think probably still is here, did they have frequent exhibitions where the members could show their work?

TEX GIELING: Yes, they tried to have one every year.

JO LAURIA: And was it in a certain venue, or did they change the venue?

TEX GIELING: They always showed at the art festival.

JO LAURIA: And the art festival was in the city of San Francisco?

TEX GIELING: Yes. One year, the first years that I was here, it was at the old Palace of Fine Arts inside, and then it was in Union Square one year. And the other day, I ran across a picture of me advertising the art festival, and I was wearing pedal pushers—

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: —which were not seen in 1952. No, you didn't wear those. But I had on a skirt to go to work with pedal pushers under them to go to the Union Square to work. And while I was in college, I always worked in dungarees that I bought at the Navy store. And people thought I was perfectly disreputable, running around in pants.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.] Dungarees, that's like Levi's. Is that what a dungaree is?

TEX GIELING: No. They're kind of bell-bottomed sailor pants.

JO LAURIA: Oh, okay. Well, that must've been a shock.

[They laugh.]

TEX GIELING: Yeah, way into the '50s, people were shocked to see anything other than just perfectly normal.

JO LAURIA: Well, when you participated in these exhibitions at, you know, at the various venues, would you say that the work that you exhibited was always eminently wearable?

TEX GIELING: Yes. I never tried to make anything except wearable. And as I'd say, you know, it was made so that it would not come back to me. [Laughs.] I made it to the very best of my ability.

JO LAURIA: So you wouldn't have to repair it.

TEX GIELING: To be durable, yes.

JO LAURIA: That's interesting. Why didn't you stamp or sign your work, Tex?

TEX GIELING: I just never got around to getting the stamp.

JO LAURIA: Oh. [Laughs.] So it wasn't anything—a philosophical about it? It was—

TEX GIELING: No, no. I just [laughs]—and, you know, after years and years, I said, "Well, Chiellini [ph] never signed anything either." So, you know. And with my commissions, I thought, "Well, they know who did it."

JO LAURIA: And that's true.

TEX GIELING: It was interesting. Last summer, because I was protesting having a road graveled on Lopez, and a picture of me appeared in the paper. And I was in front of a truck that was at least a foot and something more than the top of my head to the hood of that truck. And it came out in the Seattle paper, saying, "Imogene Gieling of Lopez Island standing Tiananmen Square-style in front of the construction [laughs], the gravel truck." Well, that prompted an article by the editor of the Seattle paper. And a man called, and he said, "Are you the Imogene Gieling that made jewelry in the '60s in San Francisco?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, I bought this set of your wedding rings from a gallery in Portland, and then came down to San Francisco to get you to make the engagement ring." And I said, "Well, are they still working for you?" And he said, "Oh, yeah, we haven't had them off for 43 years." I said, "I'd love to see those." So he brought them up.

JO LAURIA: Oh, how nice.

TEX GIELING: Along with a couple of bottles of wine and a bag of goodies, and we had a party.

JO LAURIA: [Laughs.]

TEX GIELING: Came with his wife and his sister-in-law and another couple of people. And it was just a lovely time.

JO LAURIA: And did you remember making the rings?

TEX GIELING: Yes, I did. And I even remembered where he lived in Seattle [laughs].

JO LAURIA: That's great.

TEX GIELING: I guess I wrote it on the thing, invoice or something. But I remembered that he lived near Green Lake.

JO LAURIA: Well, were they made as companions, his—

TEX GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: The his and the her. And so what were the engagement rings like? Did they have a diamond in them?

TEX GIELING: It has three little diamonds. And she said, "Somebody said that they look like they just grew there." And I said, "I think that's what I said." [They laugh.] That's what I said I was trying to do.

JO LAURIA: Right, that they looked so organic, that they had just sprouted. Well, I know that you've gone to see this show of Margaret de Patta, the exhibition. What do you think of the retrospective? I mean, what did you walk away feeling after you saw the show? What did you learn about Margaret's work that you maybe had not known before? What was the feeling that you left with?

TEX GIELING: Well, in fact, I felt that the museum did a very poor job of showing that work. First of all, it's dark. The room itself is dark. And then they put it into a very dark kind of background material, like velvet, like that kind of maroon velvet that they used. And I felt that the exhibit where they tried to do some kind of geometric—whatever that was—

JO LAURIA: Display?

TEX GIELING: Display. It was so crude compared to what the jewelry was that it really detracted, I felt, as far as the jewelry. I'd like to have seen it more, well, in a setting that would have been a little lighter, a little brighter, and really made it sparkle. Instead, it's just, you know, there.

JO LAURIA: Well, did you think the decision to include her photography and her photograms along with the jewelry was a good decision, or do you think that muddled the exhibition?

TEX GIELING: No, I thought that was a good thing. You know, people were involved in photograms then; it was part of the whole teaching experience. And photograms were really a brand new art form, as far as what they were doing with them; that's the same way.

JO LAURIA: This is one of my favorite series of flatwares that Margaret de Patta actually did. And I thought that was—

TEX GIELING: They're very nice.

JO LAURIA: And I thought the use of the—I think it's copper?

TEX GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: — shows that she was looking, I think, to Mexico. I mean, Mexican flatware at the time was beautifully hammered out in copper. I don't know how many, you know, Americans were using that material. It was certainly less expensive. But I love the design on the flatware. Did you ever make flatware?

TEX GIELING: Yeah. I did. Not a whole lot. And I didn't do sets of anything.

JO LAURIA: Well, you probably would've thought it would be boring [laughs] because if you have to make a service for eight, you'd have to repeat that eight times. You could make a serving spoon and fork. That would be

okay. [They laugh.] Well, I haven't seen the exhibition yet, but I intend to see it tomorrow.

TEX GIELING: Well, I'd really love to know what you think of it.

JO LAURIA: Well, I mean, I guess, as you know, being—

TEX GIELING: This kind of thing, I think, is really wonderful, what she did.

JO LAURIA: Right, it reminds me a little bit of Claire Falkenstein, but much more refined than Falkenstein. And you're referring to the necklace that has very beautiful—I guess it's almost like latticework out of a gold wire. She had a very deft hand. Her pieces always seemed very finished.

TEX GIELING: Yeah.

JO LAURIA: And I don't know about her, you know, her fittings on the back because I've never been able to, you know, hold one in my hand, but they look extremely well-constructed.

TEX GIELING: Well, they are.

JO LAURIA: And the fact that they've lasted so long is also a testament to her skill because jewelry that is not well-crafted does not survive.

TEX GIELING: No.

JO LAURIA: And I would love to see some of your pieces that you used stones, because I don't think I've ever seen pebbles—that you've incorporated pebbles into your work.

TEX GIELING: Well, I don't know that I've got—

JO LAURIA: Maybe that's why I haven't seen it [laughs].

TEX GIELING: —much like that now.

JO LAURIA: So you think that was sort of, like, in the air? You know how certain things happen, everybody tends to do it, you know? It just seems to be, like—I noticed work from the '60s, there's a lot of use of piano keys, a lot of ivory and ebony.

MS GIELING: [Laughs.]

And this must've been, someone got the idea and incorporated, you know, carved piano keys. And then you see it showing up in other people's work.

TEX GIELING: I think that—well, no. It was after the '60s when they prohibited the sale of ivory. I think it was way up into the '70s, '80s. And they should, for God's sake. We don't want to lose those elephants.

JO LAURIA: Right, cut their tusks. But I mean, it just seemed to show up in jewelry a lot. And this jewelry, though, of Margaret de Patta's and also of yours, seems really—the scale is suitable to wearability. And also the materials are—although there are some found objects like pebbles, I'd say that, primarily, we're using traditional jewelry materials.

TEX GIELING: Oh, yeah.

JO LAURIA: Beautiful stones, beads, silver. You know, the valuable metals. But now, today, these things have been exploded. Jewelry is of every size and shape and out of every material.

TEX GIELING: Oh, yeah.

JO LAURIA: And, I guess, without, you know, you and merry rank and Margaret de Patta and some of the pioneers, if you hadn't have gone to that next step, then we wouldn't have what we have today, which is, you know, much more freedom because the artists, I think, feel like they have to find new ground. And it's like a pyramid; you build on the people who came before you.

TEX GIELING: Yeah. I mean, every civilization does that.

JO LAURIA: Right. But the work—Margaret's work does look very much of her time.

TEX GIELING: Oh, yeah. And she didn't work through to another style ever. I think she just ended it before she ever got to any other step, you know?

JO LAURIA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That's a good point. So we always associate her with this particular style because she doesn't evolve into another one.

TEX GIELING: Mm-hmm [negative].

JO LAURIA: Well, there's a beautiful photograph in there where she had a show, a retrospective from 1930 to 1950 at the Pacific Gallery here in San Francisco [ph]. And when I look at that photograph of the display cases, it brings to mind what you just said about lighter, brighter. I mean, it's just a perfect, you know, background to display jewelry in. And I would certainly have followed that as my model.

TEX GIELING: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I'm sure when they were working with those things, you know, with the exhibition, that they saw something like this and tried to copy.

JO LAURIA: Oh, I see. You're referring to the photograph and the catalog of the jewelry setup into this abstracted grid of—

TEX GIELING: Yeah. And I'm talking about, you know, that exhibit in Oakland.

JO LAURIA: Well, I will look at it, and you know—because if—you know, there are lessons to be learned on every level. And the show is going to travel to New York, so it will have a different space entirely.

TEX GIELING: It'll look entirely different.

JO LAURIA: It will, and it's going to be a bigger space, I've been told. So, you know, that will be another consideration. There's going to be more work in the other show. Okay.

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