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Oral history interview with John Cederquist,  
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**Contact Information**

Reference Department  
Archives of American Art  
Smithsonian Institution  
Washington, D.C. 20560  
[www.aaa.si.edu/askus](http://www.aaa.si.edu/askus)

# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with John Cederquist on April 14-15, 2009. The interview took place in Capistrano Beach, Calif., and was conducted by Mija Riedel for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project For Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

John Cederquist has reviewed the transcript. His corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

## Interview

MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel interviewing John Cederquist at the artist's studio in San Clemente, California, [actually in Capistrano Beach] on April 14, 2009, for the Smithsonian Institution Archives of American Art. This is disc number one.

I think I will start with a brief discussion about the new work, the *Dollar Bill* series, that we just started. And when did this begin?

JOHN CEDERQUIST: It was pretty much inspired out of the economic disaster, and a lot of it had to do with the fact that up front now I've got Gary [Zuercher], who was an image reproducer and works with an inkjet printer and has a good scanner and all of that stuff, so we were just playing around, wrinkling up a dollar bill and scanning it. And then I started realizing the potential of what we can do with it.

I mean, the dollar bill is very graphic, and it's interesting how it hasn't changed that much. They've changed the 20 and all the other bills, but the one [-dollar bill] they kept. I've become quite familiar with the image. All the little flora and fauna, there's a lot more on it than you realize, especially when you have to start reproducing it, so.

MS. RIEDEL: And as images go, it's especially potent.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and, you know, I just started realizing how many visual metaphors you can make with it and just started doing that. You know, you'll see the one with the scissors cutting it in half and one of them that's burning up. And the other one, a lot of people don't realize it, but the first one I did is just sort of sitting there with a screw holding it up and the George [Washington image] is distorted and the bill is wrinkled. But I also played around with enlarging segments of it and reducing segments of it, and I don't know if people are going to pick up on that until they really look at it.

Some of the flora, the leaves and berries and stuff, I increased the size of those and the ones, and all the other things involved, and took stuff out because it just got to be too much. And as always, I see the image and start seeing all the different potentials in terms of making it into a chair, making it into a bench; and, just recently now, I'm looking at making it into a chest of drawers. So that's the fun thing about the process, is that you can make a lot of different forms with it.

I've always thought or seen the forms as being nothing more than a very complicated canvas.

MS. RIEDEL: So the image really does suggest the form to you?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: The beaded chair venture.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Right, and the interesting part of it is, is that you have to somehow make both of them work. One has to work in relationship to the other, and I can show you some instances of that, especially with the earlier work, the larger chest of drawers, and especially the piece that was in the museum in Boston, and playing around with perspective, too.

That's really the underlying thing for all of it, is having an awareness of the perspective and how it fits in in relationship to one another; where in a lot of cases it doesn't make any sense, but people still have that sense and feeling of dimension, even though it isn't absolutely correct.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: This is what I was teaching in my two-dimensional design classes, is if you put the linear

perspective together with a light source and shading and you combine all of them, it's amazing how reinforced — it makes something look dimensional. So the dollar bill was perfect. It set it up for being the back.

If you go back into early work you can see where — I've always been interested in tools and I have a big pair of scissors right there in my chest that I can show you exactly the model for the scissors that I'm using there. And the other thing that is suggested, too, is the fact I know that this particular kind of maple, when you bleach it and stain it with grays and blacks, it can look exactly like metal.

The thing that's going to happen with that pair of scissors is — wait til you see when we start staining it and getting all the highlights and so on in the dark areas, the high contrast, you realize, oh, boy, that does look exactly like chromed steel.

MS. RIEDEL: The dollar pieces are interesting too because I think a social commentary as a thread that runs occasionally through your work at a level, and this seems one of the more overt.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, it's pretty blatant, and it's pretty much of a cliché. The metaphors are really pretty cliché, but I think they make for some very interesting imagery. And, certainly, I don't know how many people have seen it in terms of a piece of furniture.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, the interesting thing to me about that first chair we were looking at was I didn't notice that the proportion was off, but just the overgrown plant imagery had a sense of just the dollars would be overgrown.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, yeah, and see, that right there. Well, one of the things I did — and this was after I had actually produced the chair portion of it, I went back in and had to rout out, because I realized, oh, I can take that vine and put it into the wood and really integrate both of them. And one of the pieces that I'll eventually do is if the vine is going to eventually just grow right off the dollar and physically grow onto the chair and just choke the thing.

You look at it, and I don't know what source it is, if there's really a vine and a berry that they used or if it's made up, but it's an interesting visual image and it's really fun to draw the leaves and the berries and the vine part of it. So, yeah, that is one of the things that I want to do next — is actually start getting that vine to multiply and choke out the dollar.

MS. RIEDEL: Taking the place of what the rope has done occasionally in the past.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, and that's how you see one thing leading into the other. The chest of drawers that I want to do — with the large rope wrapping around it, and I'll wrinkle the dollar up so it looks like it's being constricted by it — was actually first done as a steampipe. And that image of the spiral really originated in the idea I had; to make a chest of drawers and it has to be segmented. So I thought, well, how can I segment it? And then I realized, oh, if I just wrap it around several times it will create a layer and each one of those sections, that then can be a drawer. So there's a situation where the image influenced the form.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And I don't know if that's really what happens all the time.

MS. RIEDEL: It seems that happens frequently.

MR. CEDERQUIST: It goes back and forth.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, there is that back-and-forth between the two and three dimensions constantly.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Exactly.

MS. RIEDEL: Shall we just jump back to the beginning and cover some of the early material now?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Sure.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. We've oriented ourselves with it. You grew up not too far from here. You've been in Southern California most of your life.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, all my life.

MS. RIEDEL: You were born in Altadena?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Born in Altadena.

MS. RIEDEL: 1943?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Forty-six. I'm not that old. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Sorry. Three years.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, it gets real important at this point [laughs]. That would make me 65.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, we're going to give you back those three years. Sorry.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, I know when you're a little kid it's important, and then when you get old it's important.

MS. RIEDEL: It's true, isn't it?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Okay, so Altadena.

MS. RIEDEL: This was August?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, August seventh, and then there was the early part of living in Alhambra, but I don't remember that.

MS. RIEDEL: That's in California too?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, that's right near L.A. It's right next door to L.A., East L.A. area.

MS. RIEDEL: What did your father do?

MR. CEDERQUIST: He was a banker, and came out after — no, during the war.

MS. RIEDEL: Came out to California from?

MR. CEDERQUIST: From Jamestown, New York, and his father was a farmer. And he got a job as a banker, long time ago.

MS. RIEDEL: His name was?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Ken Cederquist. It was funny, because just before he died he talked about his job was — and this was something I didn't realize. This has to do with money.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, exactly.

MR. CEDERQUIST: That each bank printed its own money. Did you know? This was in the '30s, and so his job was, you collected the money and you sorted it depending on what bank it came from. Then you took that to the place where they sent it to distribute it back to the original bank.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. CEDERQUIST: So there was all this engraving being done of all this money that looked different.

MS. RIEDEL: That's extraordinary.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and I didn't realize this, and it wasn't that long ago.

MS. RIEDEL: No, it wasn't. Do you know when it changed?

MR. CEDERQUIST: I don't know. He was a little fuzzy. He couldn't tell me specifically when it got to the point where the federal government printed all the money. So that's a weird aside.

So he came out, worked for the Bank of America. You know, when you worked for one bank and you had a job, and you stayed with it, and eventually became a manager of a bank.

But I lived in Arcadia, which was very close to El Monte, and then when I was 12 moved to Covina, which was one of those rapidly growing communities that once was a sleepy little town that was orange groves, and then they took the orange groves out and made housing developments.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you have a strong recollection of that, I mean pre- housing developments, when it was still orange groves? Do you remember that?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, by the time we got there, it was about half orange groves and half houses, and then you could see them taking the orange groves out. One of the memories though is in the spring and the summer when the orange blossoms were out. Man, it was heaven. There's nothing like the smell of an orange grove.

MS. RIEDEL: I had the opportunity to smell that once. I know what you mean.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and especially if it's just pervasive, you just go outside and there it is. And it's strong too.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. I used to think lilacs were good, but oranges just take over.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, yes. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And what was your mother's name?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Lillian.

MS. RIEDEL: And did she pretty much stay at home or did she work herself?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, it was the classic '50s family situation. I had an older brother that's seven years older and he was, by that time, sort of out of the house. But by the time that we moved to Covina he was in and out.

MS. RIEDEL: So you moved when you were 12, you said?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: So you went to junior high there.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, I first went to the sixth grade there, and went to a junior high and high school there. And then after that, I basically went right to Long Beach and pretty much stayed there, but two or three summers I came back and worked at a Sears, and this was a deal that I had with my dad. He said, "I'll send you to school, but you're going to work during the summer."

So I had a great deal. There was somebody at the bank that was putting money into the account, so I was pretty frugal. But I really had no problem in terms of — they were good about that, you know, [me] going to school and doing what I wanted to.

MS. RIEDEL: That's great. And when you were in elementary school, junior high, or even high school, did you take any art classes?

MR. CEDERQUIST: You know where it really started? It was really funny, and this was something very local. It was because my brother was older and had a car. There was the whole Southern California car culture that is pretty well-documented. There was a guy and I can't remember his name. It wasn't [Ed] "Big Daddy" Roth.

You'd go to a car show and he'd be there air-brushing a sweatshirt, freehand, and I was just amazed that he could do that. And they were those awful, goofy, little figures. It's, I don't know, it's almost an embarrassment thinking about that's how you started into art, but I mean, it was huge in Southern California.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely.

MR. CEDERQUIST: There were people that now are there taken very seriously like Von Dutch [Kenneth R. Howard] that was involved in it. So that's what was the introduction.

MS. RIEDEL: Was really through the car culture.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: That's fascinating.

MR. CEDERQUIST: I had a good high school art teacher, Ms. Wiern.

MS. RIEDEL: Ms. Wiern?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, and there were the two classes. There was the class that was taught, I think, her name was Rasmussen, and that was all the bad kids. And that class was chaos. And then there were our art classes that were very serious. So we would be the serious art students. And I don't know if that's just the way it came, but I remember one time going over to Ms. Rasmussen's class, and it was just chaos in there. I couldn't stand it.

MS. RIEDEL: And so was she teaching you drawing? Did she teach you perspective?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, she did. You know, it wasn't the most intense. I'm sure they have better high school art classes, but I was taking two art classes towards the end of my high school career.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and I don't have even a notion of how they were divided up, but I think there was one that was a commercial design class, and then there was just general drawing and art classes.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you get into 3D design as well as two-dimensional drawing?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No. No.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, so it's all still 2D?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. Yes, pretty much. Yes, I don't remember it at all, really, just vaguely.

MS. RIEDEL: And you started surfing in high school, right?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, oh, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And you're spending a lot of time doing that?

MR. CEDERQUIST: A good portion of the time. A lot of us were involved. Of course, we lived an hour from the beach, so it was really difficult to go surfing, but it was, like, the next evolution of the car culture in that it got real big.

MS. RIEDEL: Was anyone making their own boards?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, my brother did. He made this disastrous surfboard. Well, it was a kit that he bought, and the guy that sold the kit, he didn't know what he was doing. He wasn't using the right materials, and it's very technical. It has to do with a kind of resin and the foam, and just the whole process of the way they made it.

MS. RIEDEL: It was completely nonfunctional?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, it worked, but it looked terrible. And the shape of it was awful, but it's only because he lived inland. He didn't really get into the surfing thing that much himself. It started to be a big thing, and you could buy a surfboard, naturally.

There weren't that many makers, but they were down at the beach. Then he saw this guy that was selling this kit for, I don't know, \$20 or something like that. And I remember him making this board.

MS. RIEDEL: And after you saw it, you decided you were not going to do that? You were going to just buy it?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, well, yeah. It all evolved into the point where, yes, I knew I was going to buy one. I remember going to Greg Noll and buying a used eight-foot, 10-inch pintail. [Laughs.]

So yeah, that's how it went. And when finally you get the freedom of having a car — and I had friends that were older and they would end up driving. We'd go down to the beach, and really, one of the places we used to go is real close down here called Poche Beach and San Clemente area, so it was interesting to get the job teaching and realizing that I can come back into this area and still surf.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly. So you went to school in Covina, high school in Covina, and you were taking art classes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and then I went to Long Beach, which was the huge, big opening. I went to Long Beach because it was down to the beach and I remember trying to get classes in the morning, but it was so full that you couldn't, and then realized, oh, I can get classes in the afternoon and spend the *morning* surfing.

MS. RIEDEL: And had you already decided at that point to major in art?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, I was getting involved in graphic design; even as a freshman, I worked driving a truck for a clothing company and talked to a guy into letting me do a brochure for him. So early on, I did a brochure right through to the printing it and everything like that.

You know, I realize now that I took on something pretty involved, especially not having that much of a background in it. And as I did it, realized that I wasn't that interested in it. It was too much like work. There were clients and people you had to interact with, and they had attitudes I wasn't real happy with. And I wasn't doing that well in graphic design. We had an instructor by the name of Van Eimeren, and he was really a taskmaster. And I wasn't that neat and clean. We used to talk about before we'd start working, we'd "Van Eimerenize"

ourselves.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Oh, dear.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Which meant we'd just wash our hands and put on clean clothes, so that when we actually did the work it wasn't that dirty. He was a little bit of a snob. But I also had another teacher; it's funny, I was just trying to remember his name, George Turnbull. And my second or third semester into graphic design I was also involved in crafts.

MS. RIEDEL: How did that happen?

MR. CEDERQUIST: It was just a required course or an elective that you could take, but I was, oh, that sounds good, and so I took it, and realized I was down there much more than I was up at graphic design. And I was just doing a terrible job. And George Turnbull said, "John, I'm going to give you a B in class, and he says I'll only do it if you just quit doing graphic design and concentrate on the crafts. [Laughs.] So he was a nice guy.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah. What was he teaching?

MR. CEDERQUIST: [Laughs.] Graphic design. He said, you don't want to do this.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. And who was teaching craft? And what was it, a particular media?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, at Long Beach they had a lower-division class that, after you took your basics, you know, 2D design, 3D design, and it was taught by students. And a real good friend, John Snidecor, was the teacher.

MS. RIEDEL: Taught by students?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, grad students.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: He taught actually half and half. Long Beach was going through a huge — student population doubled. So they were really having a hard time managing that, so that's why we had a general crafts class, and John taught wood and metal. And then I went over to another room for the second half of the class, and there was a guy that taught leather and fabric.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you remember his name?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No. I don't. Not now.

MS. RIEDEL: And John taught both wood and metal?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: And he was teaching technique?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah. I mean, we made a ring. We soldered a silver ring, and then we carved a bowl.

MS. RIEDEL: On a lathe?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, hand-carved. And Long Beach, you go into that program — it wasn't that professional. Long Beach was a teaching school for teachers, so there was somewhat of an emphasis on you learning a lot of different techniques, and then the possibility of getting a teaching job.

John's father was a well-respected speech teacher at Santa Barbara. So John had a real understanding of what it was like being a teacher and, he said, yes, it's great. You don't really have a boss and you teach 18 hours. And, I mean, you're so interested in this, it's not like work. So that was what I had in mind when I took these classes, but the big thing was whether you would try to go for a credential and end up teaching high school, and I knew I didn't want to do that.

MS. RIEDEL: Why not?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, I didn't want to teach at that level.

MS. RIEDEL: Gotcha.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And so I didn't do that. I just got a master's degree, and most, like John, got a master's degree and a teaching credential, but I stuck it out for two years after I graduated and finally got a job at

Saddleback, which was good. So I started pretty young at Saddleback. I think I was only 23.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, and you had just gotten your degree, I think, in '71.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, so it was really pretty quick that that came about.

MS. RIEDEL: And what sort of work were you doing at this time? Because in 1971 you were working in leather, primarily. Right?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, that was basically what my graduate show was about, and it was a process where you bought this very special leather used for making prostheses and related to that. And you'd wet it, soak it, and mold it over a form and then let it dry. I was coating the inside of it with white glue, so it would be very stiff in making these tubular forms.

MS. RIEDEL: Purely sculptural?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Were you painting them as well?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, just staining them. It was very crafty, and then integrating them into the wood. And usually these things ended up hanging on the wall.

MS. RIEDEL: So it was a leather tubular form?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and if you looked at it you'd go, oh, here's a tube coming out of the wall with this sculptural form and then the tube going back into the wall, very industrial. I've always said that a lot of it had to do with just driving around Long Beach at night and looking at the refineries and all the industrial kind of stuff happening there.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. And you were in one of the Pasadena design expositions?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, they had a couple, and I was in those.

MS. RIEDEL: And very early on, I think, 1971?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, and that was one of the nice things. You didn't get a job teaching at a college unless you had a résumé and some interesting work. I guess I was doing that as a graduate student and enough so that people started noticing it, and I was in the Pasadena design shows.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you have any recollection of those at all? Did you go to the shows?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, I went to the shows, and like I said earlier, no. I don't know, I blotted that stuff out. I remember going there and helping them put the show together, and they had a great catalog.

I can't remember if I took the photography for the catalogs, but that was just an aside that I did. After college, after I graduated — I don't know what it was, I didn't connect; so I ended up working in a trailer factory making trailers.

MS. RIEDEL: This was in 1971?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, '72. And that was, I don't know. And then finally I started working at a store that sold materials, craft materials, in Anaheim. And during this whole time I was teaching part-time at different places, and one of the schools was at Fullerton.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And I taught actually two classes a year, two classes, so I was like two-thirds. And then finally it evolved into getting the job at Saddleback, and luckily I had that experience at Fullerton, and at Long Beach, and at L.A. State. I taught at L.A. State.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. And this all happened fairly quickly. You graduated in '71. You started teaching at Fullerton in '73. Right?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Actually, I probably was teaching at Fullerton in '71 or '72. I can't remember exactly.

MS. RIEDEL: So the trailer job must have been very short.



MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, yes. That was an eye-opener.

A guy would be hitchhiking at work there and I'd pick him up and he was Hispanic. And I said, well, how come I'm picking you up here? And he says, well, if you want to know the truth, I'm at the maximum-security prison here in Long Beach [laughs] down on Terminal Island. And I'm out working. I have to go back there every night. And he says, I'm a two-time loser, and if I go back again they'll bury me there.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, my gosh. Wow.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So that's the kind of — what I was doing. It was pretty amazing; I had all kinds of jobs. I worked at the Toyota distribution center, and that was horrendous, because those guys were pretty smart, and they were mean. And they'd do terrible things. You went around this huge warehouse, picking up parts and putting them on a cart, and they'd steal stuff off of your cart if they needed it. And that was awful.

I finally quit; or, no, they fired me, because I wouldn't work. [Laughs.] I don't know if this is making it important, but it was during a strike, a longshoremen strike, and so the parts were coming in from Japan, and it was just over. And nobody had parts, so we were working seven days a week, 10 hours a day, and I couldn't take that. And I told them that I'm not going to work Sunday. And they said, if you don't work Sunday, we'll fire you. So they fired me.

MS. RIEDEL: And academics was easy after that.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, yeah [laughs]. And then the other that really motivated me to get involved in all the other stuff. I bought my house in '75, and I know I worked a year — so I started at Saddleback in '74.

MS. RIEDEL: And you bought your house is in San Clemente?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No. It's in what they call Capistrano Beach.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, Capistrano Beach. And so how far of a commute was that?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, it's only two down. You know the street that we were on for the lunch place?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: You just go down to the ocean.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, okay. So it's really close.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: And you said there's been a real back-and-forth between your teaching and your own work, really from the start?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, I continued to work, not real diligent at times, but I continue to work. One of the great things that happened was that I got a sabbatical right away. Boy, I taught seven years and immediately went to get a sabbatical, and it involved doing my own work. They were pretty liberal in terms of giving you a sabbatical, and it was pretty good pay. It was two-thirds pay.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Sue [Cederquist's wife] was working, and so for a year I just did my own work and had a show at the Egg and the Eye.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, did you really?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. I think you have a catalog. It's that first black-and-white catalog.

MS. RIEDEL: No.

MR. CEDERQUIST: I thought Franklin sent you some.

MS. RIEDEL: He sent me some, but they're all more recent than that. What was that like?

MR. CEDERQUIST: I found some slides that I'll show you. You can have them, of this early work, but it was the first perspective work.

MS. RIEDEL: And was it also still leather or had you gone into wood?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No. No. No, it was into the perspective finally.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. These weren't the Michelin?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Was it after that?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Those I did while I was probably the late part of, my graduate work, and then about three or four years, in the middle there, that I was doing leather work without doing the perspective.

MS. RIEDEL: So that was what was being shown at the Pasadena Art Museum?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, I don't know if the Michelin Man series was, but the Pasadena thing was all the leather and wood.

MS. RIEDEL: And then in the mid '70s still you were — what was the work like in the late '70s? This was where I have a blank space.

MR. CEDERQUIST: I do, too. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: You were showing some in England?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, that was leather work and that was an interesting time, because I connected up with — he came out here — his name is John Makepeace. He's a really well-known woodworker in England and he was starting up a school [Parnham House, Beaminster, England]. The second year that they were going he invited me out there to put a show together.

MS. RIEDEL: This is specifically a woodworking school?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and so he had this 15th-century manor house. I mean, it was Toad Hall. It was.

MS. RIEDEL: Both a gallery and a school?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, it wasn't a gallery. He had a show space, but the whole thing was really an enterprise, because it was one of those deals where people could come out to see what an old country manor house looked like. And he had a store and a gallery space. I guess you'd say it was a gallery, although it didn't sell anything.

MS. RIEDEL: Where was this located?

MR. CEDERQUIST: It's in Beaminster. It's in Dorset, and it's eight miles inland from the coast. One of the places you could drive pretty close that's pretty famous is Lyme Regis. Anyway, that whole coast there really has a bunch of neat little towns that people retire to. And Dorset's really beautiful. It's the classic English countryside.

MS. RIEDEL: And how long were you there and what were you teaching?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, I'd only go there for about two weeks, but it was fun, because there were some really dedicated guys who were going to the school, and John really did it up right in terms of getting about 12 to 15 students. It was a two-year program and I would go there. And the first time I went there — and I actually went three times. Two times I was really active in terms of giving them a program and showing them the leather forming, and John did some and did pieces with it. So that was really an eye-opener in terms of really seeing traditional woodworking. It was the source.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And especially seeing all the old stuff and visiting other woodworkers. And Parnham House was just amazing. The building is incredible, had 90 rooms.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, my gosh.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. I remember we'd go into the attic and it had rough-hewn timbers that ended up being the rafters and everything. They weren't straight. Nothing was straight. And they supported slate shingles that were at least two to three inches thick and were about two feet by three feet. They were huge shingles, and you could see through them because they organized them so they would just shed the rain and it wouldn't leak. But light would come through.

MS. RIEDEL: Extraordinary.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, those old buildings are amazing, and they added on to it so you saw the 15th-century stuff that actually had stained glass windows that were in honor of Henry VIII, and the great hall, and a huge fireplace that you could walk into.

MS. RIEDEL: So a whole new sense of craftsmanship?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, yes, yes, it was amazing. I was really impressed, and John was really high-digit. And then the school, they would only get the best students and they were really dedicated and funny. It was great. What an environment, especially as opposed to the way they educate here. I mean, those guys were doing it morning, noon, and night. They had a dining hall that you went to for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and it had a cook that bought all the stuff from the local farmers.

MS. RIEDEL: And this is the mid-'70s.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So there were these bowls — just this huge gob of butter and five different baked breads that you could choose from. And the soups were just incredible.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow. Way before slow food.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, yes, and it was good. And really very civilized.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative], but it sounds like they were long days. You taught morning and afternoon and in the evening.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, yes. Yes, and in the evening they were in the studio working. And a lot of them are very successful now. In fact, Lindley, Snowdon's son, who is the big woodworker, he went there.

MS. RIEDEL: And was it an accredited school? Or a very respected art school?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, I think. I don't know how they do it there. You paid pretty good bucks, although a lot of it was government-subsidized or funded individually. And it was, like, people were, well, John, I was made redundant. And I went, what's that mean? Have you ever heard that term? [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: No.

MR. CEDERQUIST: It means you're fired. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, dear.

MR. CEDERQUIST: You know, and they had all the problems in England in terms of keeping people employed, so they would be made redundant and they'd get a grant and they'd go to John's school for two years.

MS. RIEDEL: And you were teaching leather forming because nobody else was doing anything like that?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No. Well, he saw it and he said, let's get the guy that does that out here. They had a lot of different people come out. I wasn't the only one. What's the name of the guy that does turning? Turnbull? I can't remember. There's a famous guy that does turning that was there from America.

MS. RIEDEL: Bob Stocksdale?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, a young guy, and I think it starts with a T. I can't remember his name. That was just really interesting to go there and see that.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you ship pieces over to have an exhibition there?

MR. CEDERQUIST: I did one time. It was very difficult. I realize how naïve I was about doing it and how much it cost and what we did. And, yes, I shipped them over. He had the show, and at that time you weren't selling anything. You had all the stuff laying around, and then he shipped them back.

So that was nice. It was a pretty good show. I think it only had, like, seven pieces in it.

MS. RIEDEL: How did that school compare with what you were seeing at Saddleback and what was going on there? Was it strictly an art school?

MR. CEDERQUIST: God, I can't remember. Yes, it was strictly woodworking, very specialized; and, you know, I had a course curriculum. I guess it was accredited. It didn't need to be, because when you came back the second year, what John required of the students is that you had to have a commission. And that's what you were working on when you started your second year.

And no matter how you got it — like there were some rich kids that went there and one of their family members said, I need a — so why don't you make it for me? And that kind of stuff. Other kids got legitimate commissions and some worked in relationship to industry and stuff like that, so it was very specific and you were on your own. The school became well-known internationally and they started getting Americans in there.

MS. RIEDEL: And did that experience affect your own teaching?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, because, see, what was happening with me at Saddleback was that I was teaching basic courses in design. I started there teaching all 3D stuff. I started teaching jewelry and crafts and 3D design. And as time went on and the school evolved, I ended up just teaching jewelry and design.

Then eventually I realized that I didn't want to maintain a studio at a school. There was another guy that was hired and I sort of turned the jewelry thing over to him. And I just really concentrated on 2D and 3D. The school needed it. It was expanding and we needed to have the classes going.

[Audio Break.]

MS. RIEDEL: And you said, I believe, that that teaching, going back and forth between 2D and 3D, really got too involved.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, yes, it really eventually evolved into what I was doing now.

MS. RIEDEL: Can you talk about that a little bit, how that came about?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, I don't know if there's that much to say, but I got interested in perspective and then realized I had to teach it or I wanted to teach it, and that wasn't a simple thing to do. You get stuck sometimes trying to figure out, oh, am I doing the wrong thing?

Or a student would ask a question and you wouldn't be able to answer it and you'd start sweating and getting nervous. And, you know, my credibility as an instructor on that, and then it evolved to the point where I knew how to manage and teach perspective.

I developed a whole course curriculum that I was very comfortable with. Like a lot of students said, you know, you should put this on a disk and sell it and that kind of thing. So that was fun. And doing that started affecting what I was doing in terms of 3D and starting to see the two come together.

It was one of those weird little things at my house. I started playing around with some cardboard. I remember the afternoon when it happened and I was doing perspective drawing on it and then I cut it out.

That was another thing that was real sort of major, was to cut it out. I was holding them up and I said, oh, well that could be a table, and there's an interesting illusion happening there, and I have the table around here somewhere. *Number one*.

MS. RIEDEL: The little piece, the little cardboard?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, the actual finished piece that I did in relationship to that.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, the cardboard is gone. That got thrown away.

MS. RIEDEL: You made the piece.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, I made the piece and so that's how it evolved. And then I saw the potential in that. Actually, if you look in the catalog, *Number One* is in there I think, and I don't know if you brought it.

MS. RIEDEL: I did, but I don't remember seeing that.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Maybe not. You know, and while we're on the subject, we can go on to the next one, too.

MS. RIEDEL: We wanted to discuss briefly the Egg and the Eye, because that was such an institution, and not many people have first-hand recollections of that.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. Eudora.

MS. RIEDEL: Welty? No, not Welty. [Laughs.]

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, Eudora Moore.

MS. RIEDEL: Moore, ah, okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So, yes, I'd gone there. You go to the L.A. County Museum. You can go across the street to them and you can have an omelet, because it was a restaurant.

MS. RIEDEL: Was it really?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, you didn't know that?

MS. RIEDEL: No. I didn't know.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, it was a restaurant, a really good restaurant where they had all these different omelets. That's the name.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And then a good store, and it was the only source of stuff down here in California that was real craft. And then, being at Long Beach, you'd get a sense of connection; oh, okay: I understand what they're doing here. I can't remember exactly how it got going, but I talked myself into it with them.

MS. RIEDEL: You had a sale.

MR. CEDERQUIST: They had a show. We had a show and they produced a catalog.

MS. RIEDEL: That's great. No. I didn't know that. And so that would have been the mid-'70s, late '70s?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Gosh, let's think now. I don't know. When I see you tomorrow, I'll see if I can find the catalog in the lab and maybe it will have a date. A lot of times I don't have dates in my catalogs and so you don't even know, but it was sometime in there.

And I had these pieces and I can't remember exactly what the inspiration of those was, but I'm pretty sure I had most of them made by then and we did some photography and put on the show. I remember driving up to L.A. several days, helping put that together. They had exhibition spaces. They had rented a building next door and it was getting to be pretty involved. So I had the show.

MS. RIEDEL: And this you said was the first perspective work?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. And what was in it? Was this table that was just looked at?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, we can go through. So the table was in it. This was in it.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, the *Game Table*.

MR. CEDERQUIST: The *Game Table*.

MS. RIEDEL: And so it already was the '80s, jumbo dresser, because it's rated too.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and this was in it. This was one of the first chairs. It came from an Olive Oyl cartoon.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. What year was your daughter born?

MR. CEDERQUIST: She was born — oh, God, you're asking that now. Oh, Tera was born in '71, late '71, almost, like, December twenty-eighth or something like that, so it makes it confusing. And here is the first one that went absolutely flat, this chest of drawers.

MS. RIEDEL: Art deco, yes. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. Oh, and this one was in it.

MS. RIEDEL: Lowboy.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And this wasn't. This is.

MS. RIEDEL: '84. So it was '84. Okay. Because the cartoon images began happening after you'd been watching cartoons with Tera, yes?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, Tera, yes, and that little chest of drawers that you see there was actually a tiny little sketch. The thing that I realized then was the fact that what I drew came out exactly the same as what I finished with, because both of them are two-dimensional.

MS. RIEDEL: Which one have you got here? Are they here?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No. You do a drawing and it's a two-dimensional drawing. And then it's interpreted into a three-dimensional form, and it just loses something. There's so many other factors that change it. What was great about this was that when you did the drawing, that was it. I mean, it didn't change, and I have that drawing, I think, somewhere.

MS. RIEDEL: And how did the title for this piece [*Auntie Macassar Goes West*] come about?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, it's really —

MS. RIEDEL: Does it have to do with that little doily that used to go on the back of the chairs?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and a lot of the people say, well, it's only for the back of the chairs. Well, no. They sometimes would take that same doily and put it on the chest.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And I really thought of this as being my aunt.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, I had an aunt that was sort of prim and proper, so "Auntie Macassar." And then when I did this portion of it, it really looked like the Southwest with tumbleweeds.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly, those buttes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, exactly.

MS. RIEDEL: And this to me just has so many of the different levels and layers.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, there's a lot of things in here, like these dovetails were a reaction to the — people from back East were seeing this stuff and having a hard time with it, because if you see here, you can see in the back here. If you've got another situation, you wouldn't be able to see this back porch, and so the illusion is much better. They were just having a hard time with that. That just was freaking them out.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] How so?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Because it wasn't a form, and there were parts of it meant to be seen and parts of it that weren't meant to be seen. Consequently, the whole idea of a piece of furniture of being this form that you walked around and all of it was integrated in relationship to what the visual was. And the idea that form followed function, that was a big deal.

Well, I put that on there and said, well, wait a second, there's a whole other aspect of this. There's the visual part, which is really the way we see it or perceive it. And "form follows function" never really got involved in that aspect.

So I did this. I pulled the drawer out, because I wanted people to be amazed at the fact that this was totally flat. And when you do look at that in real life, for a second there you think that that drawer is out. And then you realize, no, it's not. It's all two-dimensional. And then these dovetails, you know, I tell people it took me 10 minutes to make those dovetails as opposed to making real ones.

So that whole concept of — they were having a hard time with the fact that I was also using plywood.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly.

MR. CEDERQUIST: See, and that was a real strong aspect of design at that time, woodworking.

MS. RIEDEL: What was?

MR. CEDERQUIST: That you created forms. That image didn't have anything to do with it.

So that was a little bit of the East Coast/West Coast "rub," so to speak, that doesn't exist today. There were a few people back there — they wouldn't have an electric motor in their shop kind of attitude. So, you know,

what's this guy doing? A lot of it had to do with the fact that I wasn't interested in trying to follow what was happening back East, because I really wasn't as good as they were. [Laughs.] They were so good at it.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, that was not your intention, and it doesn't seem an effort to make that, to be a fine woodworker. There was none yet.

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, but I tried to do the best job I could in making them. They were finely made.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly. Exactly, but the focus is completely different. The intent is completely different.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Exactly. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: This piece to me, really, I think, is the first that I've seen that so fully embodies a sense of humor.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And a little bit of a significant art influence.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And the other thing was, no matter how hard those guys tried to do something organic, and a lot of people were really trying to do organic stuff out here on the West Coast, it always seemed to me it was a little bit on the stiff side. So that was what was so great about, as I said, you do a drawing, and you could reproduce it exactly.

MS. RIEDEL: The color too, in this piece, feels really strong, one of the first strong color pieces.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, yes, that's the whole story.

MS. RIEDEL: Good.

MR. CEDERQUIST: This had to do with Workbench, and the people that ran the promotional part of that saw that the Formica people had hired these guys, these professional designers, to create this furniture from this new material they were putting out called Color Core.

And so she said to them, well, I've got some people that might do even better. And so they had a show.

And, so, this is perfect. They said, "Okay, well, pick out some colors and we'll send you some Color Core." And so I picked out 10 colors and they sent me 10 sheets, four foot by ten foot of this Color Core. It was really expensive. And so that's what the color comes from on this.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. So this is actually Color Core.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. And what's ironic about it is that the material ended up cracking a lot and they discontinued it.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Right. And was that related to the humidity or lack thereof?

MR. CEDERQUIST: It related to the fact that Color Core — Formica is the brown paper that's impregnated with glue, with one layer of white paper that's dyed. But they said, okay, we're going to take the white paper and just make it solid. And the fact that this particular kind of paper that was impregnated with the glue just wasn't as strong as — and having the two layers as opposed to a solid layer.

MS. RIEDEL: So did you do a lot of work with Color Core?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, I did quite a bit. I didn't even use close to what I had. So I've got a bathroom in my house that's Color Core. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: How is it holding out?

MR. CEDERQUIST: It's fine. Just as long as you just have small sections of it, it's fine.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: I'll show you the banister that I made using Color Core. [Laughs.] So that's where that show came from, and it was the Workbench in New York. And that's one of the things that got me going, one of those pivotal pieces that get you going.

MS. RIEDEL: And that was a group show that you were in. Was that with Garry Knox Bennett too?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And somebody else was in that.

MR. CEDERQUIST: A lot of big people were in it. Wendy Maruyama, I think, was in it. It's documented somewhere.

MS. RIEDEL: And was that your first big exhibition on the East Coast?

MR. CEDERQUIST: You know, I can't remember. I don't think so, because I remember I packed up the show that was at the Egg and the Eye, the perspective stuff, and sent it to Workbench. And I think I even sold some pieces out of that.

MS. RIEDEL: Really? So was the work received fairly well then on the East Coast too?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, the Workbench was interesting, but it wasn't a museum.

And, as I said, the problem with the space was it was right next to the subway and it was really hot and dry. And that's not very good for my work. So I always had a problem sending it to them.

And, as always, I don't know what happened with Workbench, but any kind of a promotional deal, if there's a financial problem, the promotional stuff goes away. And I was too far. I was 3,000 miles away. So it was really difficult for me to stay connected to it.

But people on the East Coast saw some stuff, and that's when I started; and I think that Ned — what's Ned's name? He was at Boston. You know who I'm talking about?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I do know, but I can't remember his last name either.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Ned Cooke, C-O-O-K-E.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, right. Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: I think he saw it.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And then a John — not Sebastian — but Jon[athon]. He was at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. He was pretty well-known for being there. They finally — I don't know if they fired him — but he's gone from there. Anyway, he was a student of perspective. We would talk about perspective a lot. It was interesting.

MS. RIEDEL: So did the Workbench exhibitions lead to the Boston exhibition?

MR. CEDERQUIST: I think so.

MS. RIEDEL: And just before we progress too much further along, there was a little bit early on a bentwood work that you did.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, that was a chair, Tera's chair, and I think that's up there somewhere. I was involved in bentwood, and there was a show that Sam Maloof judged and gave a critique of. And I remember Wendy Maruyama was in it. Then there was a couple other shows that had ended up being at. Oh, boy, there was a show in Oakland.

MS. RIEDEL: At the Oakland Museum?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. That had some pretty heavy-duty catalogs that had bentwood in it. This was all previous to it.

MS. RIEDEL: Was this *The Eloquent Object* or [inaudible]?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, yes, both of those, I think.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative], so, big, national traveling shows, right?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, I got into both of those. And — I can't remember — I think one of them had the bentwood in it. The other one had a perspective piece in it.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.



MR. CEDERQUIST: So, yes, I was managing to get into those pivotal shows.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. It seems like the '80s was very much an exploratory period where you were doing work that was based on more traditional furniture. I think of the lowboy and pieces like that and then more the perspective and illusion pieces.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, the whole thing started with copying; and the first pieces, really, this whole 2D-3D thing was really interesting and I didn't want to design, so I was copying, and I was specifically copying images.

MS. RIEDEL: And why was that?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Because I had no original source or original ideas related to it. I was just fascinated with being able to make these things look like they were two-dimensional. And people were amazed that you could take a picture of it, or you'd stand there and look at it. And as you walked around, the thing just started to warp and go crazy. I mean, I had people telling me they got sick walking around them and looking at them.

So that's what these were all about. These came out of Thonet's catalog. This one didn't. This one came out of a traditional woodworking book. That's a lowboy, and that one I designed.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And that was the first one that went absolutely flat.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. CEDERQUIST: But this came out of a Popeye cartoon. This came out of a Thonet catalog.

MS. RIEDEL: The jumbo dresser came out of a Thonet catalog?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and this came out of a Thonet catalog.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And he, Thonet — everybody thinks it's "Tonay" — but it's "Tonnet."

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: He hired or bought furniture from other makers and put it in his catalog and the catalog was one of those Dover book reprints.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And I'd go through it and I'd go, ooh, can I make that? And oh, can I make that one? And ooh, look at how I could do that. So this is a parallelogram, the top of this, and those door pulls are flat.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So that was the kind of stuff that I was — this is flat. And this is, if you look at this from any other position it's all caddywampus. This is actually a trapezoid and this is a parallelogram, and that's a parallelogram. So they photograph this way, but they are really sort of strange.

MS. RIEDEL: It's true you have the reverse problem when you see it in a photograph, trying to see what it really is as opposed to how it is in 3D.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and that's one of the reasons why I abandoned this.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I can understand that.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Because people were going, oh, a chest of drawers. You know, that looks an awful lot like something.

MS. RIEDEL: Because they're so successfully translated into two dimensions.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. And, you know, then you start thinking about the fact that most of what we see is actually two-dimensional and your whole education is two-dimensional. You can get into a whole, long — I was always collecting phrases. I think it was — what was it? Remember when the tennis guy was doing the Canon camera,

“image is everything.” There were all these quotes that you’d go, wow, it seems like imagery is much more important than the real thing.

MS. RIEDEL: You said something about that. If I’m going to make a three-dimensional object it’s going to be reproduced as a two-dimensional object or a two-dimensional image.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, yes, you make a three-dimensional object and ultimately whoever sees it, it’s two-dimensional. I mean, more people see it as being two dimensions.

MS. RIEDEL: So, why not make it two-dimension to start with?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Exactly, and the other thing that’s interesting is that most people confuse it. They look at a photograph and they think that they’re looking at a dimensional object and they refer to it as being dimensional. Even to the point where there’s a brain surgeon that’s getting scans of the brain and they’ve been able to interpret that it looks like it’s three-dimensional. And I’m going to the guy, it’s still two-dimensional.

If you really look at animation today, people don’t realize it, but there’s this huge thing that’s happened, especially since they’ve been able to computerize it in terms of making the animation look more three-dimensional. It’s only through the fact that they were able to put in shadows.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: What I do with an airbrush.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly.

MR. CEDERQUIST: But it’s still two-dimensional.

MS. RIEDEL: How did your whole concept of two-and-a-half dimensions come about?

MR. CEDERQUIST: It was just, you know, you start thinking about it and you realize. What I was doing, I was getting these things as close to being three-dimensional without them being three-dimensional. The chair, Olive’s chair, I fully intended that you could sit on it.

It was structurally sound enough that you could, but then to make it visually correct, the seat is shorter. So when you try to sit on it, it just isn’t very successful, so I abandoned that. And it’s unfortunate, but I did. Okay, this — you cannot sit on at all on this, and it would break. I mean, it’s only that thick.

MS. RIEDEL: What, an inch? Half an inch?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Half an inch, and then it really got complicated, because there’s a two-dimensional curve here.

MS. RIEDEL: This is the 2D Thonet chair?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. There’s a two-dimensional curve here, but it also comes out this way and it just sort of broke me in terms of trying to figure out how it would work and everything. You see what you perceive as being the side of the chair?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And the top bending around? That’s all vertical surface.

MS. RIEDEL: It seems so much of your work is about carving out that space between two and three dimensions and just making them much more porous, that boundary much more porous.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and then you realize how much as a society we’ve really, it’s two-dimensional, especially with the advent of the computer.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely.

MR. CEDERQUIST: I mean, so much communication has gone on, and being able to photograph, the camera helped a lot. That created a whole sense of, oh, it’s real, but it’s not, that you started thinking about, well, if we didn’t have the two-dimensional image, we wouldn’t have the computer.

And it’s so basic that people, I don’t think, really take the time to think about that.

MS. RIEDEL: Or how we so readily and easily translate two dimensions to three.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Right, and as I was saying, there were experiments that I would do with my students. This gets a little goofy, but I think it's an interesting thing to consider. We live in two realities, so you think about somebody that was born blind. What do they perceive as a cube? They would see it through their hands.

MS. RIEDEL: Of course.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And I think that you could convey the fact that there's 90 degrees, that there's six sides, that each side is a square. You can feel that dimension.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. CEDERQUIST: You can feel the edge, but how often do we see a cube as being what it really is, as opposed to — and maybe a table top is better. If you're looking at a rectangular table top, what you're really looking at most of the time is a parallelogram or something that's close to a parallelogram. So for the longest time I'm sort of wondering what that was about, but then you realize that the instrument that we use to see with is essentially showing us that through two dimensions.

It's the back of our eyeballs, and that image is being tattooed back there as a two-dimensional image. It's got perspective. Now, there's a certain amount of stereo that's involved, because we have two [images] of them, and we can get a little feeling of sense of depth, so you try to convey that to somebody that's been born blind. You give them a cube and then you say, well, what do you see?

And what I did was I gave students — I blindfolded students and I gave them a block with a hole in it, a rectangular block with a hole in it. Then I made this Braille surface. It was just a raised surface of the block in perspective.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Okay. I mean, that was the only way. I gave it to them. I said, this is almost like a Braille surface. It's the little raised thing that you see there — or feel there — is a line. And a couple people started seeing the relationship between the two, but most people couldn't figure it out, because the hole ended up being an ellipse. It wasn't round.

And the angles aren't right angles.

MS. RIEDEL: In terms of the form that you cut out or the form you gave them, the raised form?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, because that raised form was. But if they took the blindfold off and looked at it they go, oh, of course, that's *that*.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: This is a two-dimensional representation of the block, but if they don't see it and they just feel it, they have a much better feeling or understanding of what the block is.

MS. RIEDEL: Of course. And you'd just give them these two objects blindfolded and see if they could discern a sort of relationship between them.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And it's not that some people didn't, after a while. It really took some time to go over the raised image to figure it out.

MS. RIEDEL: They're just so visually oriented for starters.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and the fact we have two different kinds of perception of dimension.

It took me the longest time to figure out: Well, why do we relate to that as opposed to — more so than we do the actual form? And that's because, well, we perceive it as two dimensions, essentially.

MS. RIEDEL: How so?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Because the back of our eyeballs are flat surfaces. So the thing is, try to imagine life — form — if you've been born blind. The concept of standing there and holding onto two rails of a train track and explaining to them, you feel those rails. And they'd say, oh yes, they feel parallel. They'll feel like they're the same distance apart as you walk along. But then say, oh, okay, now you realize when you see them and you stand there and look down at the horizon they come together. And they go, what?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: I don't get that. How could they come together? How could you perceive them as coming to a point?

MS. RIEDEL: That is really interesting. Yes. And so you would teach this in class?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, we'd talk about it and it was with — God, I can't remember that guy's name — the guy at the museum in Boston. You know, these are the kind of discussions we'd get into.

MS. RIEDEL: And this was part of the curriculum at Saddleback?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, well, I made it that.

They didn't teach a lot of perspective. A lot of teachers didn't teach perspective because it's hard to teach. But in that interest of trying to figure it out and especially explain it to students, it seems odd that they have a hard time understanding it, because that's what they see.

So now, you know, you talk about the railroad tracks, and they go, well, wait a second. How come they can come to a point? I think that that's why it's difficult for people to understand perspective, is because there's a conflict between the reality of it. This block has parallel lines. Well, when you draw it, you make the lines get narrower as they go back.

So you have to, I guess, make them aware of that. But then what you do, especially in teaching, is you end up setting up these rules and tell them that they're pretty simple rules. And you can play around with them a lot, but there are certain things that — as we start out with — and what I would teach would only show them how to create a block and then eventually a sphere and a cone, and all these other very simple forms. And that's what they had to do, was eventually create a composition using these simple forms.

MS. RIEDEL: But this also makes perspective seem ideally suited to playing with illusion.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Which is then the direction that you've taken it.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, exactly.

MS. RIEDEL: Because once you understand that, then you can distort it and play with it.

MR. CEDERQUIST: You fiddle around with it, yes.

Here, I can show you on this. Now, if you take a look at this, what happens with perspective is that this leg and this leg, this has to get shorter as it goes back that way. This is in two-point perspective. The eye-level is here. You can see how these are angling down and these are angling up.

MS. RIEDEL: This is the *Missing Finial* .

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. And so I had a problem with this leg, because the floor is flat, and if I made this shorter, then it won't reach the floor. So I just simply put a box underneath it [laughs] so that it would reach the floor.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So there was the intersection between, like you say, between the two-dimensional world and the three-dimensional form — it was really a fun thing to play with.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. And cubism seems especially well-suited, in that kind of fragmented image, to playing with perspective and illusion.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, yes. There is a lot of perspective in cubism. If you want to, we can go into a whole thing about how this got going.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely, yes, because this was one of the major pieces. This was shown at the Boston show in the Museum of Fine Arts, and this was '89.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So what happened —

MS. RIEDEL: Which one are you looking for?

MR. CEDERQUIST: I am looking for designer crates.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, exactly. This feels like definitely the precursor to that.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, what happened with this is that I knew that this show was coming up. They really planned this, like, two years in advance. It was like a year before we went to Boston and fiddled around in the museum, and then they gave us another year to finish the piece.

MS. RIEDEL: So first you went to Boston and chose something that you were going to make your piece based on?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Right, yes, a spin-off. So I got involved in this and this was actually going to be covered in Corian.

MS. RIEDEL: Which was sort of a version of Color Core is it?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, it's a various thickness of plastic material that they make tops out of, countertops out of, but Corian is designed so that nothing sticks to it, and I couldn't bond it to the carcass, the plywood carcass. And I was throwing it against the wall. I was getting all upset and I was talking to people, and one of my friends said, don't you get it? They design this stuff so that nothing would stick to it. [Laughs.]

So I said, okay, I give up. And the reason I was going to use Corian is because I was going to make it look like a piece that was marble columns [laughs], because that furniture and all those elements that you see in that furniture are based on that. What is it — what the Capitol building is. It's Roman architecture. Is it revival? It's not revival. I can't remember what the term is.

Anyway, so I wanted it to look marble-like and Corian did that. So I ended up doing designer crates and you can see the wood's going all over the place. And I started developing patterns.

MS. RIEDEL: And this is really the most drastically fragmented piece by far at this point.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. So then the illusions were really working good. People were really freaked out thinking, oh, that's a flat — no, it isn't. You can stick your hand in there — and stuff like that, and these are actually folded along this edge.

So that naturally the light is darker on that side than on this side because it's lit from over here. So I went to Boston and I knew I wanted to do one of the highboys and I had done this and I realized, oh, my gosh, I can take and segment the highboy.

One of the other reasons I did is because I didn't realize those finials come off. And they talked about how one of the finials didn't come back after they lent the piece out. And so that's what the name *Missing Finial* came from. So it was perfect. I mean, I really liked the idea that I could put these different façades inside of a crate and then stack the crates up.

So some you can see in and some of them you can't, and so on and so forth. So that was the inspiration for doing the piece.

MS. RIEDEL: I know there's that wonderful book about Japanese esthetics, *How to Wrap Five Eggs*.

MR. CEDERQUIST: *Five Eggs*, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Had you seen that book yet?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, yes, *How to Wrap Five Eggs* came from maybe the Egg and the Eye. They had that book there.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, that makes sense.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And I didn't see that in terms of what I was doing at this point, but I was just aware of, oh, isn't that neat: six little sardines wrapped up in rice straw. Have you ever seen that book?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, it's beautiful.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Just amazing stuff, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: It's extraordinary, but the whole concept of wrapping, packaging, and framing, reminds me so much of your work.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. Yes, well, the idea that you've got, you know, this crate with this thing inside of it — I

said, God, the potential for that is incredible. And making the different boxes and stacking them up, and it's all in perspective. What happened was — I can't remember if I got the image, the official black-and-white photo, of this particular chest before I went to the show, but I certainly got it after I went to the show. And it's really based on that. I mean, I used the photo and blew it up. You can tell that the eye-level of the camera is where it is just by these lines going along the side here.

MS. RIEDEL: And is this the first time that crates appear in the work?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, there's that.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, but the actual appearance, the image of a crate.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. Then it was really nice to figure out the drawers. The drawers are actually not square. They're a parallelogram, so they come out at an angle, like that. And again, this is bent, too. It's bent right along that edge there. So I thought the show was going to be really important and I really felt good that I was able to pull this off to send to them.

MS. RIEDEL: And is this all painted? Is it partially inlaid and partially painted?

MR. CEDERQUIST: This is all made out of either Honduras mahogany, which is the piece itself inside, and this is Sitka spruce.

Sitka spruce has a really linear pattern and it looks like a crate, so that was what was so great about doing that. So, yes, it's inlaid. It's the epoxy and it's stained. So it's got all the bells and whistles.

Another thing that people don't realize is it's the flat surface. Some of these drawers, you can't pull them out. So there's a little lever, like that particular panel right there actually has a hinge on the inside, and you can push it in and pull out the drawer. You get a little bit of a fingerhold. So that does that. I think that swivels, and one other one swivels.

MS. RIEDEL: Are there any secret compartments?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, other than the fact that some people are stumped on how to open that up.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So that was the show and they really got a lot of press. Went back for the opening. It was fun the year before going to the museum and being with all the other woodworkers. There were only three of us from the West Coast.

MS. RIEDEL: You and Garry .

MR. CEDERQUIST: Garry and Wendy. The rest of them were from there. And then there was this thing, and it was interesting, because this was the first time it got noticed and they said that part of the contract for this thing is they had the right of first refusal, and all of us, and I don't know if we want to put this in or not. This is one of the places where you might want to off-the-record on this.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

[END MD1 TR1]

MR. CEDERQUIST: —it happened.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, so here's another funny thing.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So, you know, that's in the past, it's been going on, the piece is out there. I don't know if it showed—it might have shown somewhere. So, two summers ago, Sue and I go to New York because I think I had an opening.

MS. RIEDEL: You saw *The Missing Finial* a couple places you're saying.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, hold on.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So two summers ago I'm having a show at Franklin with my latest stuff and before we get there we're at a friend's house and we're having a look at the *Sunday Times* and there's this big article by Robert Hughes about John Townsend who was an eighteenth century furniture maker who was probably, a lot of

people consider the quintessential, you know, furniture maker of that period. You know, a lot of woodworkers think that that was the ultimate in woodworking. It's downhill from there. And it was Townsend this was copied after.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And I really like Townsend's work because it wasn't over the top. His forms were very pure and I've since learned that their Townsend isn't as good as other Townsends. And so, they say that there's this Townsend show at the Met, and I go, "Oh exciting, I can go see this Townsend guy and a lot of it." And so the last day—and we almost didn't do this—but the last day we're there—God it was hotter than hell too during the summer—and we go, "Oh, we can just go to the museum and cool off"—[laughs]. So, we can't find the show, it's sort of hard to find it, but it's there, we know it's there because Robert Hughes is a big furniture guy, a big woodworker. Didn't know that, I knew that but didn't—I mean, here he goes with this article in *The New York Times* Sunday paper which is, that's a thick book that they put out and they have good articles. So, we find it, and we come in the back door, sort of. It's set up so that you start here and you go through the rooms and you finish up here. And so we came through the back somehow because we couldn't find it. And you know how the Met is set up, you've got your viewing rooms and you've got your hallways.

MS. RIEDEL: Right

MR. CEDERQUIST: And sometimes in the hallways they'll have stands and they'll have something in the middle of the hallway, you know. It's outside the exhibition. And so there was one of those there and I didn't look at it, I just kept walking and I had my back to what was out in the hallway and Sue says, "Turn around." I turn around and this piece is there. And it's there because of that reason—it's there because it's part of the Townsend—it was based on a Townsend thing and they said all that stuff. And it just freaked me out. They didn't tell me so it was like this left-handed compliment.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: That I didn't know that this—and it wasn't part of the exhibition and it wasn't in the catalog and they did an extensive catalog. But as you're walking out of the exhibit—

MS. RIEDEL: There it was, *The Missing Finial*. [Laughs.] And so, that wasn't now part of the Met collection [inaudible]?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, so I went "Wow." And I don't know who I talked to but they said "Oh, they need to know you're here." So the guy that did the show came down and I think he was a little embarrassed because he didn't contact me.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And he went through the whole thing and he gave me a book and all of that stuff. And I went into the offices and the other gal that was involved with it said, "It's so nice to shake hands with a living artist."

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. CEDERQUIST: And they've since really tried to get more, you know, living artists going in that place, but generally it isn't—

MS. RIEDEL: And do you know where the piece is now?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No it's—he knew the guy—he knew the collection and the people involved in the collection. And I said, "Well what happened here?" And he said, "Well I knew the piece existed and I thought it would be the perfect thing to put at the end of it so I just called him up and he said sure." I mean they'd do it for the Met.

MS. RIEDEL: So it's part of a private collection someplace?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah. I can't remember where—what the name of the guy is. I mean if you call up the museum, you'll—

MS. RIEDEL: I would think you'd want to know too.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Eh.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. CEDERQUIST: It might be written down somewhere. It's gone.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: I'm more involved in what's here and now.

MS. RIEDEL: To the next thing, right, that makes sense.

[END MD1 TR2]

MS. RIEDEL: Is it fair to say that a lot of the early work was inspired by the history of furniture?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. You know, a lot of it is really immediate in terms of I got a hold of the catalog and realized, oh, these are really neat images. They're not photographs. They're etchings.

MS. RIEDEL: Which catalog, John? Sorry.

MR. CEDERQUIST: The Dover reprint of the Thonet. I think it's the 1904 catalog.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So I just started thinking of furniture as image, more than form.

They were simple images and a lot of them were looked at in terms of oh, can I do this bamboo thing? And like the little jungle dresser — I mean, the original is turned wood to look like bamboo. So now I am taking it a step further and making flatwood look like bamboo.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And can I get the drawer to work? And how do I handle the top, and, oh, there's this mirror. So it was just trying to deal with that two-and-a-half dimensions, and as I said, I wasn't really concerned about an original design source. It was just the idea, can I interpret it?

MS. RIEDEL: A variation on a theme.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, so that went on.

MS. RIEDEL: And you're looking at [Thomas] Chippendale's book, too, right?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and being able to look — and interestingly enough, the business with the Townsend piece had to do with Chippendale in realizing all that furniture was made by different guys, and it was called Chippendale because Chippendale — I think he's English — they put out the catalog and sold that to the furniture makers, who then took them to the customers. And they said, oh, I want this leg and that finial, and this front façade.

It became compartmentalized. And I said, that's a pretty contemporary feeling about design, and realized, oh, I can segment all those pieces, and that's how that started.

MS. RIEDEL: Were you looking at a lot of cubism at the time, too?

MR. CEDERQUIST: You know, the cubism thing sort of just happened afterwards, and I didn't think of it as being cubism, but somebody did. And so that's what inspired the *Ghost Boy* piece.

So a lot of it had to do with taking a look at the photograph and people saying, well, that looks like it's just a regular chair. It looks like you copied something, so I knew I had to do something different to it.

Hence, you know, it slowly evolved into using sources and then putting my own little idea on it; and, really, the show in Boston really pushed that part of it.

MS. RIEDEL: And by that you mean taking the highboy as a jumping off point?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And then working again in cubism and, for example, a little box, something like that.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And really, for a lot of the people that were involved in that show it was, I think, an interesting exercise and realized the potential of that.



MS. RIEDEL: It's interesting, too, and I think about that, because that strikes me as you mentioned you like Masami Teraoka's work. And it makes me think of the historical context of this highboy piece, the history and tradition of furniture. And you're bringing it into the 20th century and giving it new content, really, and new form.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: But there is a going back in history and using almost the dissonance between the historical form and the contemporary content to create.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, one of the things that I was also striving for, and it was something that struck me, I don't know when, but I guess it was when I was looking at slides of old furniture, and I said, oh, that looks so '60s. And I'm going, well, it's unfortunate, because a lot of design — and you'd look at woodworkers and contemporary woodworkers, and you could date it because of the way it looked.

So I was going, well, you know, I want to get out of that and I want to make something that's timeless. So if you can take, historically, instead of copying a piece of furniture; if you can put it on a two-dimensional surface and inlay it, yes, it's something from the 18th century. But there's something else happening there, and it doesn't have anything to do with style.

And I think you can use that word, style, because I think it lends itself to — well, there's the style of the '60s, and there's the style of the '70s. And one of them that, really, when you think about it, is Memphis-Milano.

MS. RIEDEL: I've heard of it, but I can't put it in perspective.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, it's a whole series. It came out of Italy, and there was a guy here in Southern California that was involved in the group too. And it made a big splash. And right now you look at it, and it's dated. And I don't know what Memphis-Milano was, the '70s or the '80s, but it's surprising how you go, oh, there's a style that you can put a date on.

Right, and so I was getting past that, too. So everything was up for grabs, which was really great in terms of, you know, I knew I wasn't making furniture that had a style to it.

MS. RIEDEL: There's real fusion. Did you look at a lot of pop art? Did you look at Magritte?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, all of that was gain and I certainly wasn't looking at furniture books. I was looking at the broader scope of art.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And I'd go to New York and, you know, I was really interested in all the different great artists that you could see there. You know, you could go to the Met and see a lot of stuff. You can even go to Pace and all the contemporary galleries and see some great stuff.

And that was much more of an influence than any kind of a furniture maker, especially since I knew that on the East Coast there were so many guys that were so much better in terms of technique, and that's what their work was all about, that I didn't even want to touch it.

MS. RIEDEL: What was it about furniture, though, that made you decide to stick with that as a form?

MR. CEDERQUIST: I think it always had to do with function, because they always functioned. And functioned pretty well; it wasn't like the function aspect of it was diminished to the point that it was ridiculous.

It's always been the form and the fact — I mean, a guy goes out and puts canvas on a frame and paints. And it's a bunch of different sizes, but it's still a rectangle. A chair is, I think much more complicated than that, and it was much more fun to explore all the potential in that, and, at the same time, have that scale. Make sure the scale is the way it should be and the function is still there, and really a challenge in that respect.

MS. RIEDEL: I think you said that you'll get an idea or an image will come and then you'll see which form it's best suited to, what it eventually should turn into.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Or the potential there's a million different things you could make with it, and so, yes, it has all to do with that. Sometimes it leads to a point where all you get is chests, and then sometimes it leads to a variety of things. And, years later, you go, oh, I can take that concept, like "Furniture That Builds Itself.". And, oh, here's a new form that I can use.

MS. RIEDEL: That *Furniture That Builds Itself* strikes me as a great example of what I think of as a fusion between

[M.C.] Escheresque work and then the cartoon influence. I think of Disney, in particular, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, that was big. Cartoons were always, especially the Popeye cartoons, because there were a lot of things within the Popeye cartoons that influenced pieces. I don't know, exactly, it's in the catalog, but they talk about early Popeye cartoons where they made actually dioramas and had the camera. They cartooned or drew layers of images, and they're in old museums.

Still they have dioramas. Then they would pan the camera, and instead of the image being just flat and not changing, you start seeing overlapping. And the first guys that made the Popeye cartoons did several ones. It's *I Wanna Be a Lifeguard*. [They laugh.] They used it.

And then Disney — I don't know if they ripped them off or not — but Disney used it first in *Bambi* and made it a big deal. So some of the pieces I did, especially the console tables, are two layers. And both of the layers work in relationship to one another.

And that was inspired out of knowing that that's what was happening with the early Popeye cartoons.

MS. RIEDEL: So the cartoons were intriguing, it seems, on multiple levels.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, the block prints became important because of the resulting image, line in a flat surface. I added the staining to it, but the cartoon is the same thing. The comic book is the same thing. It's a line filled in with space between it, and so I just started integrating, and I put the hand in and the arm in, because I wanted black.

It was simple as that. I wanted some black. So the arm could be the black, and I did a chair. The first chair that was called *Furniture That Builds Itself*, I don't know if I have an image of it, but it's just tools. And I felt that I needed to complete the narrative by having some hands that are holding the tools, and I knew that I couldn't use human hands. It would be way too difficult to figure out what they would look like, and I'm not sure if I can interpret them. So then that whole idea of having the black band in there, and interpreting the hand as a cartoon hand, holding a realistic tool, I thought, was sort of intriguing.

So that's how that came about.

MS. RIEDEL: The cartoons seem significant, not only in terms of the perspective, but there is a social commentary and a sense of humor. I don't know if you were thinking about those directly, but they both seem —

MR. CEDERQUIST: I guess it was sort of funny. It wasn't like I specifically felt like I was doing that. Like I said, the inspiration was more — well, a lot of it in terms of the tools was, oh, man, look at what I can do with maple. I can really make it look like metal. And that big plane that I have, I can interpret that. Or this crescent wrench — really make it look like it's metal. I'm not sure if many people see that — or I guess, intrigued as I am, the fact that I can make that interpretation.

MS. RIEDEL: How has the technique evolved over the years?

MR. CEDERQUIST: It hasn't changed that much other than getting more involved in forms. I think I sort of hit it pretty heavily with a lot of the chests. Those were hard to figure out, especially with the drawers and parallelogram drawers and stuff like that, and got away from it because I got more interested in the imagery.

MS. RIEDEL: Maybe it would be a good idea to just walk through the process once. For example: the dollar piece that you're working on right now, the amount of inlay that's involved there. And the epoxy and the amount of layers that are put together; these are so extraordinarily labor-intensive.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, too labor-intensive. One of the problems is you do a drawing and you don't even conceive of. Like I looked at the dollar bill and I said, oh, that's an interesting image, and then you really look at how much graphic quality, how much graphic information is there. And you go, oh my God, what did I get myself into?

So it hasn't changed and I purposely have kept it this way, because it's minimized the amount of equipment that I have had to deal with. I don't even have a plane in the studio because the plywood's done.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Do you cut out the plywood?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, I cut that out with a saber saw. So it's really low-tech in respect to that, and I tried to purposely keep it that way. When I first started doing the chairs, I was thinking about doing portions of them as bentwood, and then realized, oh, that's silly. Just use flat planes, and you can make it look like it's bent.

So although they are complicated in terms of the way they interact with one another and they're created so as to look at them, you would think there are two boards crossing, and they were dimensional as you look at certain areas of them, and then realize, oh, they're not; they're still flat. So there's still a lot of challenge there in terms of doing that.

MS. RIEDEL: The primary material is plywood?

MR. CEDERQUIST: It's half-inch plywood, solid-core birch plywood, a high-quality birch plywood. It's all birch. If it's a chair, both surfaces, the front and back, have a quarter-inch inlay of solid wood that lends itself to whatever the image is. Like if there's a special kind of maple that I bleached that can look exactly like metal or a cloud or bone or steam.

MS. RIEDEL: That type of maple can look like all of those things?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, depending on what color you put on it.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And then other woods like Sitka spruce that have a real linear quality and lend themselves to direction in terms of the perspective, emphasizing the perspective. Most of them are light, so you can stain them dark. It's too difficult to go from dark to light. So I'm just always looking for a light kind of wood.

MS. RIEDEL: With a particular, distinctive kind of grain?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, like the dollar bill chair. The chair itself is made out of hickory, or what's the other? It's related to a nut wood, too. I can't remember what it was. Anyway, it has a real woody grain to it, and so that's why I used it. Other woods have hardly any grain at all, and I'll use them for a particular reason.

MS. RIEDEL: When you said you really worked —

MR. CEDERQUIST: What was the original question? [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: About how the working process has changed over time.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, yes. It hasn't.

MS. RIEDEL: But you're thinking about maybe getting a laser welder. Is that right?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, I don't know if I'll get that, but yes; there's this whole thing. The interesting thing about creating the chairs is I can put together a chair that you can sit on out of the half-inch plywood in about two days. And you're essentially seeing the form. I like the spontaneity and quickness of that, but then it just takes forever to inlay the surface onto it and so I'm really looking at changing it around.

MS. RIEDEL: By "forever," too we're talking about months to make a piece?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, months, so that I can reproduce or create a chair very quickly, and I see the possibilities of using a laser cutter to do it. Then doing etching, laser etching, that would reduce the amount of time.

And since you have to set it up on a computer, the whole sensibility of this thing — unfortunately, this is sort of a marketing thing that you eventually get into, that you would do an edition of them. So I'm looking at them as being like prints, and since you've got it on a computer, it can cut it out again and again and again and again, and utilize that process. So this is sort of to some degree.

There's a furniture maker by the name of Judy McKie and she started to do bronzes. She's doing real well with them and she'll do an edition of six. And once she does the original, it's done, so I'm looking at that possibility.

MS. RIEDEL: What would be a reason for it? Well, the reasons for are obvious. What would be a reason for not doing it?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, there's a million things that have to be worked out yet, and one of them —

[Background noise.]

MR. CEDERQUIST: That's the garbage truck. That might even stay a while. We'll see.

MS. RIEDEL: That wasn't too bad.

MR. CEDERQUIST: One of them is the material, and the process by which the chair is created. There's a whole

series of things that are going to have to be overcome. Part of the problem then, too — and I hate doing this — is outsourcing something. Because, like I've got some guy that's doing some waterjet cutting now, and it's taken him two months to do it. And buying a laser cutter right now is too expensive.

And scale ends up being a problem. You can buy a little laser cutter, but it's two by three feet. And, you know, I need a six-by-eight-foot laser cutter, and that just really would be nice. Getting somebody else to get on with what you're doing is really difficult, get on the same page, and then it can end up being expensive, too.

MS. RIEDEL: And with your scale it's such an issue, we were talking about that. Even with the dollars for the current chairs is that the printer that you needed was so large.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and fortunately, Gary up front has a large printer. I think taking the image and putting it into a computer and taking it that far is, I should take advantage of that with Gary, because he is so willing to help me deal with that at this point.

MS. RIEDEL: You did do a series of prints, didn't you, a few years ago?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, I did. This was in conjunction with my daughter. I took one chest that I did and I had it scanned. I had the four-by-five scanned and she started putting the different sections of the image together to create a series of prints; and that was fun.

MS. RIEDEL: They were all primarily based on Hokusai.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, the one chest, and this was again, interesting, because it was that idea of putting stuff in a box and it was five crates. How to wrap five crates from *the How to Wrap Five Eggs*. And it was five different waves inside these crates. So we just sort of rearranged those into making these prints, and they were five prints that illustrated the five different waves.

MS. RIEDEL: And they were a limited edition?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And do you think you'll do more of those? I mean, that's interesting.

MR. CEDERQUIST: One of the things I've been doing is the kimonos, and it's just a matter of getting them up on a website and just following through. And Gary, again, has been very good about that, because you need to have a good printer, somebody that knows what they're doing in terms of printing. And Gary does very high-quality printing.

MS. RIEDEL: And what kind of prints are they?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Inkjet; it's an Epson printer.

There are people that do it. You can buy a little Epson and do it, but getting the color corrected and then getting, especially size-wise, getting a printer that will do it large enough, and there's just a whole series of things that involve doing the proper and good kind of printing and reproducing.

MS. RIEDEL: And there's something Franklin would be interested in showing?

MR. CEDERQUIST: He has. He has shown them, but I don't know. I get way too involved in this stuff to go back and have to fiddle with that.

MS. RIEDEL: Is it as satisfying, to be working in two dimensions?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No. And unfortunately, I really see them as making money as opposed to anything else. But a lot of people like the images. I mean, they're fine, but you don't realize how much work it is to get them done. It's work in itself to get the things printed properly and just the nuts and bolts about selling them and so on and so forth.

There's a print, an image hanging up over here that sort of happened by accident that I'm looking at trying to do.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, one of the kimonos?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, I've done the Kimonos, several of those. It's over on the other side of the workbench — that looks a lot like Stella, a series of prints that Frank Stella did. So I don't know. I look at it and I go, I need to do this or, can I do that?

MS. RIEDEL: Are they based on a piece of furniture as well?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, if you want to go over there. How are we going to do this?

[END MD1 TR3]

MR. CEDERQUIST: —art is, does somebody like it or not? Are they going to put that in their living room or not? And I guess some people are interested in them because they do understand the source and where they come from. You know, selling art is weird. It's a weird thing.

MS. RIEDEL: And you've been involved—you've had one dealer for over 15 years, Franklin Parrish, so that must be fairly successful.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Right. Yeah. Between me not producing a lot and taking a long time to produce it, and the fact that when I do give him something it sells. I've always had pretty much a sold out show. The first series of kosode [Old term for kimono. Literally means 'short sleeve', referring to a common kimono with a short sleeve as opposed to one with long sleeves for theatrical productions — JC] that went up for sale were gone as he was putting them up.

MS. RIEDEL: Really.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, they didn't even—they were all gone by the time the show opened. And they were pretty expensive pieces.

MS. RIEDEL: At that was 2005?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, it's always an odd year. And then the second series sold pretty quickly, and they've always sold.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-Hmm [Affirmative]. The chest, the chairs.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah. He's been very good about that so—

MS. RIEDEL: Has he taken those to the SOFA exhibitions?

MR. CEDERQUIST: He's been in SOFA several times.

MS. RIEDEL: Have you been to those shows?

MR. CEDERQUIST: I went to the one in Chicago once. In the year 2000 one of the pieces got on the cover of the SOFA [inaudible].

MS. RIEDEL: I remember that, the bench with the [inaudible].

MR. CEDERQUIST: The market's all fickle and this latest SOFA, some have sold, some haven't.

MS. RIEDEL: There's one happening in New York right now.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, there is. The New York SOFA and who knows what that's going to be like. So there's all kinds of different venues. Franklin is going down to Florida a lot now.

MS. RIEDEL: Is there an exhibition in particular there?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well there's that whole Florida thing that was just on about a month ago, the one that's in Miami, the big one in Miami.

MS. RIEDEL: I know which one you're talking about.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Biennial or something.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah, Art Miami or something. [Art Basel]

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, and so—

MS. RIEDEL: How have you seen the market change in the past thirty years? Have you seen much change?

MR. CEDERQUIST: I don't know. Something that I haven't been that interested in—it was really nice to be able to say that yeah I'm selling stuff on 57th Street. And I only go there every two years. I have a friend that I went to

Long Beach with that went on to Cranbrook then stayed back east in Delaware and taught and is still teaching and always stayed connected to New York. He was a painter and maybe one of the reason I was interested in the art scene rather than the craft scene.

MS. RIEDEL: Hmm. How so?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, I just thought there was more exciting things happening. And Franklin was always more—when we first got together we discussed this being more of an art thing than a craft thing and the people that he picked to show.

MS. RIEDEL: And when you say more exciting things happening in the art world rather than in the craft world, what comes to mind?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, a lot of the traditional things, but—well, okay let's take two sources that intrigue me. We talked on the phone about this guy by the name of Oklick that was very involved in interesting perspective stuff. And Masame Teroka. And I guess I could figure out what the other people were doing in crafts and a lot of the art stuff was much more intriguing. Especially when you can go to New York and see it. You can go to a good museum and see some stuff.

MS. RIEDEL: What about Teroka's work really speaks to you? I can think of a lot of things, but I don't want to put any words in your mouth.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well the idea that he was essentially Japanese and was making an interpretation of the American. And yeah, he took this, the blockprint form and did some funny imagery with it. That was one of the things. And then the whole cross-cultural, you know, he was doing it. He's moved on since then a lot. I mean, he's changed dramatically from what people think of Teroka. [ph] He's doing these huge watercolors and the imagery has moved away to some degree from Japanese. It's gotten really sort of bizarre sometimes. So it's good to see him evolve.

MS. RIEDEL: There's been a real Japanese presence, essence in your work for a long time ever since that first, the first time I can think of is certainly *The Hokusai Wave*, the arrival of that, but there has been an interest and an influence there it seems from fairly early on.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Right, the first one that really hit home and that really brought it to it was *The Hokusai Wave* in the box, in the chest of drawers. And that was really came out of the fact that I was doing these static objects, representing static objects, and realized, oh, well why don't I make an interpretation of something that's organic or—and the surfing thing and that wave—and I realized, oh man, wouldn't it be a challenge to show a wave coming through all these crates. And so that really pushed it in terms of making a visual statement. And then that was one of the first ones that I realized, oh okay, you bleached the maple and that can be the foam, and then you can stain wood blue and that's a little difficult for people to deal with, and especially in relationship to the different kinds of woods that don't come over a photograph. You look at them and they actually shimmer like water wood.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And so that was—I did the piece for the Boston Museum. And then I immediately went to *The Hokusai Wave*, that was the next one that I did. And then I went back to making, you know when there was that whole talk about the—what was that—Cubist thing. And then, remember when I said that the Smithsonian called up two hours later and wanted to—well I eventually finagled the situation. So I said, "Well, I'll make you one." And I knew that I wanted to do the Cubist thing a little bit further and that's where *Ghost Boy* came in.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, okay. That makes sense.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And essentially you use the same imagery but you see it's repeated. I could push it even further. The whole Cubist thing could be pushed so much more and I haven't even done that yet. Haven't even tried to do that yet. And maybe that's where something can go. I can take it somewhere.

MS. RIEDEL: And what about pattern? Pattern seems to have surfaced increasingly in the work.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah and that's one of the things that's happening in the latest—I'm going to call them kimonos now because it's the 30s and the 40s and they don't use the kosode [ph] so much—that's a historic term. And most of those were really inexpensive repeated patterns of silk that were printed up. I mean in the 30s and 40s Japan was pretty stretched financially and it's amazing that they even had an economy that was going. And anyway so this repeating thing started happening a little bit more in these kimono pieces. You know, it pops up. I had been looking at Renaissance weaving and patterns, floral patterns on that and especially in terms if you view them a certain way or if you wrinkle them they get distorted. And this is one of the things I'm

looking at in terms of this new stuff that I want to do with the laser.

MS. RIEDEL: And the dollar bill too seems very intentionally bent [inaudible].

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, that was taking it—other than it being flattened I wanted to make it look more natural and give a little more than just laying it flat. And as you can see it goes from there you can cut it in half and then you can start burning it and then you can start wrapping rope around it and all that other stuff. So I don't know, where's our, what were we talking about?

[END MD1 TR4]

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, you were saying.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And I think, okay so here's an answer to that thing about being much more interested in art than the craft.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And I remember going—they had a Matisse exhibit and I just really went off on Matisse. And a lot of the paintings that he did had black in them and I said, "It's really interesting the way he dealt with that." And they had black in them and they were very colorful, I mean, obviously, with Matisse. And so, you know, the sensibility between those two things was, ok, well I'm going to, what can I put in there. And of course the arm and the hand. Oh, a funny thing about the hand, I had an Australian—there was a big show in Australia that I was in with a kosode. And he came out—the whole story, it's not worth repeating with this guy not showing up and then showing up and two years later wanting something and so on and so forth—

MS. RIEDEL: This is the [inaudible] collector in Australia?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, he was a curator for the big museum there, I don't know what gallery, something gallery. Anyway, he started laughing because he's been to Japan and he was interested in the work because of it. And he was phonetically sounding out some of the *kanji* that was written and he was getting it right, but then he saw the hands and he started to laugh and he said, "You know in Japan even the streets weeper wears white gloves." And I never—And he says, "Everybody wears—The little lady that greets you at the top of the escalator has white gloves on." And he said, "It's just interesting to make that connection."

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And so, you know, the weirdest things can happen. I knew that they wore white gloves in Japan. I even sort of knew that the street sweeper did. Anytime they do a task, you know, those people put on their gloves.

MS. RIEDEL: And how do you know so much about Japan? Because you haven't been yet?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, but I, you know, watching movies. I've seen a lot of Japanese movies. Old ones, you know, samurai movies, everybody's—but then a lot of contemporary movies. And just, you know, it's like I've been there.

MS. RIEDEL: And you said way back in college you had roommates or friends who were—

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, they were Japanese Americans from the second or third generation and we used to have giant dinners where there was Japanese girl students and we'd put together all the nuts and bolts of that table and all of that stuff and we'd help them cook. Several times we had big dinners as students. They were fun. And, you know, you just got involved with sushi and on and on and on. It just kept on going. And I got several books on Japanese culture.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Do you remember one in particular?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, it was these, you know, books about American that had been to Japan.

MS. RIEDEL: About wabi sabi or something like that?

MR. CEDERQUIST: And they were very serious books about how you greet people and their way of thinking and, you know, it was interesting to read about. You know, a whole other side of how a culture is organized.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely. And it ties in with an aesthetic sense and with a visual sense with an incredibly evolved and sophisticated sense of pattern.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh yeah, there's that whole business—it's really funny when you consider what they talk about in our fashion industry that you don't put patterns together.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. [Laughs.]

MR. CEDERQUIST: You don't wear a pair of patterned pants and a patterned shirt and a patterned coat. But they do, and it all works.

MS. RIEDEL: And we do, now, too.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, yeah. I don't know how well we do it, but. So, and that whole laser thing would be—you'd have the ability of doing pattern with a laser. You know, repeating pattern with a laser and inlaying it, etching it. So it's—I'm starting to formulate, I'm starting to get there with that and hopefully it'll get to that point but the problem is that you have to have some time to—and some money—to take that somewhere. Because you've got to do a lot of, I guess you'd say experimentation to get there.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And see what works and what doesn't work. And getting into new materials. These are those little things that keep you from doing it, and so you slowly evolve it.

MS. RIEDEL: Is there a lot of experimentation in your work? On a day-to-day basis?

MR. CEDERQUIST: In terms of—well, for instance right now this whole business with the, this one dollar bill on fire. You know, I'm not sure if it's going to work out. We'll have to see. I've got a reference that I'm using and getting some of it is coming from way back in the flames painted on cars, kind of thing.

MS. RIEDEL: What is it that you're not sure is going to work?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, you don't know exactly—well, I have to say I wasn't sure if the imagery and the way I was putting together the dollar bill and what part of it was going to be woodburned and what part was going to be inlaid and cut out. I wasn't sure, you know, how those were going to work. So that's one of the reasons why, for instance the chair is pretty much an image that I'm used to and the way I'm putting it together with the planks sort of flying together, I know that, it was the dollar bill part that I didn't know if it was going to work.

MS. RIEDEL: Because it's so complex [inaudible]?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, and then you still have to add the staining to it and the bleaching, so you're not sure. So that worked out, and we'll see how the scissors works, if we can get those stained to the point—and you really don't know until you put the finish on it because that's what brings the wood grain out and the qualities that you want in the work.

MS. RIEDEL: And what happens if it's not working? Do you strip it or sand it out and start again?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, it's either really good or it's sort of good—I haven't been in a situation where I just hated it. But that can happen. That's the problem with putting so much time into something and having it work or not work.

MS. RIEDEL: So you can't continually add layers and strip them away?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, well I have gone to the extent of taking the old router and routing off this or that or taking a piece off here or a section off there—I told you I might redo the face of Washington, so yeah you can do that. It's a lot of work and you've got to decide whether it's worth it or not. So, yeah you can do that. And as I said the vines that are on the chair itself weren't there and I had to rout those out. It would have been easier if I knew I was going to do that from the start. But I didn't, and it wasn't until I got halfway into it that I realized, oh, it'd be sort of nice to bring the vines off of the dollar bill and put it down on the wood.

MS. RIEDEL: So you don't—you may do preliminary sketches, but the work really evolves as you're working.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, what's the term—there's a term, analysis paralysis.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: My wife keeps on saying you should do more drawing before you start and I just, I can't. One of the things that happens is if you do too much drawing you go, well, I sort of explored that, won't make the chair. And so, I don't know, it's not that much of a risk and—get way too enthused wanting to see it get done to do another week of drawing.



MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And I'm really doing the drawing—I've changed that as I go along. The great thing about the plywood is you get your eraser out and you can erase your pencil mark off the plywood and rearrange it and reinterpret it. So, you know, I go along—I wonder who those people are. Okay, where are we going now?

[END MD1 TR5]

MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art interviewing John Cederquist at the artist's studio in San Clemente, California, on April 14, 2009, disk number two.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Are you going to ask the question?

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. The Japanese aesthetic and individual sensibility has been part of your work from early on and has progressed through time. Were the woodblock prints your first introduction?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, I remember in college there's a guy that would bring prints in, all kinds of prints, contemporary and historical. And he had Japanese block prints even, and he had some triptychs that were probably early 20th-century battle scenes and I just loved them.

MS. RIEDEL: Woodblock prints?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, it's the newer block prints, and I really wish I had the money to buy them. They were triptychs, and I did finally buy one — not recently, a couple of years ago — of a battle scene, and I still have it stored. I haven't put it up yet. So I bought some. I was able to buy some cheap. I'd buy the raggedy ones that had a fold in them or something like that. They were cheaper. I was more interested in the image than anything else; and so that I just realized now, that was even since college days.

MS. RIEDEL: And what about the images appealed to you?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, there's a samurai with a frog thing on his head, you know, and then you get into this whole thing about them wearing costumes and believing that they were frogs and/or they were camouflaged. I don't know. I'll show you the one at home, and you go, whoa, that's sort of bizarre. And he's holding his hands in a funny way. That's one of the reasons you go, well, why is that?

Then sometimes you find out and sometimes you don't. But the other thing that was interesting was there was always the classic art history thing, that you learned about the block prints, say, in relationship to Van Gogh. But also, [there] was the perspective, and a lot of it had to do with the perspective's not right. They have — well, at least in Western standards — they have a whole other system that I've never gotten into that I'm sure is documented to some degree, but I don't know how serious it was.

But, yes, the perspective all is off. It's not right. And the lines are angled, but they run parallel. They don't diminish. And every once in a while you run across one that's an interior scene that is one-point perspective, and they got it mostly right. So it was just analyzing those and understanding Western perspective and what theoretically correct perspective is. I guess maybe looking at them gave me the license to be able to do what I do, because it's impossible to do absolutely correct perspective and make it two-and-a-half-dimensional or make it a form.

So that was a big influence, just on a technical level, and then there was always the interpretive — how they interpreted clouds. How they interpreted lightning. You know, how did they make the image of Fuji look and that part of it. Then you get your Hokusai book, your big, fat Hokusai book that you buy used, and just go through those and start appropriating stuff, and funny things happen.

There's a headboard in the catalog, the last one; and it's — wait a second — where is it?

There it is. It's *When Machines Dream of Hokusai*, and it's a Rube Goldberg kind of thing. Again, the metal tubing, and then this big sphere that was, oh, that was fun to make, with the rivets joining together. Then I knew that I wanted the two steam things to combine; I was trying to do my own steam and it wasn't coming out very good. So I was looking at my big Hokusai book and there was this page that was from the *manja*.

It's the books that he produced that were like art books for students that you could copy. And he did this whole thing where it was a whirlpool and the oceans crashing and rocks and stuff. And I started looking at it and realizing, well, I can use that and that and that. And that's what ended up being the steam — and the name.

So that was really a cartoon, Rube Goldberg combination with the steam — actually, it's a whirlpool. It's water

that with the wood bleaching and the staining ends up looking like this very stylized steam. So that's how it gets used, and I guess there's where the humor comes too.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, and the fusion of different cultures and different times, too.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, there's a lot of — here's another. This is another funny one here. This one. I still have this piece. This is one of the few pieces I have.

MS. RIEDEL: *Road to Dreamland*. Okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And so it was another headboard.

MS. RIEDEL: This is the bench that was at SOFA, too. It reminds me of that.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, well, there was that part of it — and we would dive. When I had my boat we would dive in Catalina and there were leopard sharks that we dove with. That was a bizarre experience. There was this one area where the water was warm; it was only about four feet deep and you could float in there and there were 20 leopard sharks swimming around.

And they just swim under you, and they don't have teeth and they're not aggressive. But having a four-foot fish just go "swoosh" past you is sort of exciting, and they're really neat coloring and patterns. So this came about because of the woodworking and finding this big knot. This was actually a big knot, and then the cartoon thing was the classic image of a fish getting cut in half and seeing the bone, the meat, and the red. So that's how that happened.

So now I had to name it, and what I was going to name it was *Sweet Dreams*, because it was a headboard and the irony of having this, you know, horrendous thing above your head.

And there were Japanese gals that were in the ceramics class next door and at school, and they were fun. In fact, she did the *kanji* for it. So I said, well, can we do *Sweet Dreams*? And she goes, oh, that won't work. You know, this won't interpret. And so I said, well, do you have anything with dreams? And they have these little dictionaries, but there are I don't know how many phrases: two *kanji* phrases, that have a lot of stuff in them. They're more than just words. You know, you learn this stuff.

And I said, well, look up in your dictionary and look at the phrase thing where there's dreams. And so she consults with her other Japanese lady and they're whispering back and forth, and they're looking, and then they go, aaww, and they get all excited. And I go, well, what is it? And she goes, lookit. You know, she shows it to me, and I go, oh, those look good. And she goes, road to dreamland. And I went, perfect. [Laughs.] That couldn't be a more perfect title for that piece.

MS. RIEDEL: When did you start using the *kanjis*?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Right off the bat, the first wave going through the crates, if you look at that, that came right off. There's a lot of *kanji* on that and it came right off of the block print. I found out what they meant. I don't know if I can remember it now. [Moves around.] No, well, that's a little wave. Okay, so this means hollow wave.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And then all this is right off of the block print and it tells place. This is from the Thirty-Six Views of [Mount] Fuji. That's what that block print is.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, okay. And was *Tubular* the very first Wave piece?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, it was. It was.

MS. RIEDEL: And that led the way for the whole wave series?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And you really worked exclusively on Waves for about five years?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, quite a while.

MS. RIEDEL: [Nineteen-] ninety to '95, something like that?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, I don't know. There was a lot of inspiration that came out of them, because of the coloring and all of that. I can't remember how we came up with this, but wave, I can see that. It's interesting.

*Kanji* is interesting because — you see these three things here?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Those are called “the three drops of water.” So anything with these three things in it have to do with water. And so this hollow can be interpreted as a wet cave. Now, if you take this and give it to a Chinese person, they’d say, oh, yes, here’s the three drops of water. And you know what this is? This is skin. So a wave is “skin of the water”; and *kanji*, there’s all kinds of things through *kanji* that are like that. “Husband” has the term “prisoner” in it.

MS. RIEDEL: Really? [Laughs.] That’s bizarre.

MR. CEDERQUIST: It goes on. How does it work? Oh, I can’t remember how it is interpreted. Oh, if you take the symbol for “woman” and repeat it three times, it means “chaos” or “noise.” It’s very sexist. [They laugh.]

That’s the kind of stuff that you find out, and it’s funny.

MS. RIEDEL: It is funny.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. Anyway, so that’s how that happened. And *Ghost Boy*, the whole thing about that had to do with doing another version of the high chest by Townsend, but it’s broken up more. And actually this was done about the same time they came out with the movie. Oh, what was the name of it? *Poltergeist*, and, you know, there were scenes where they’d walk into a room and all the chairs were stacked on one another.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So I started thinking of, you know, ghosts, and these pieces of furniture being old ghosts that are still alive.

MS. RIEDEL: How interesting.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And that’s one of the reasons why it’s stained white. I put a pickle on the furniture itself and stained it white. And then the poltergeist and the ghost, and the fact that it can break itself up and do weird things came about.

MS. RIEDEL: And that piece is in the Smithsonian?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, this is in the Smithsonian. So you forget about these things and the reasons why they happened and what you were thinking of when you did them. And that particular one, that’s what was going on. I look back at it now and I realize, well, I could have broken it up even more, but you’re moving along.

MS. RIEDEL: And you do begin to break things up even more in the Wave pieces. They seem to get increasingly segmented. There aren’t as many segments.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, the Wave pieces, it evolved that I finally started putting these boards together and not being concerned about whether they were organized or not, whether they made sense. And this one was the actually the first furniture form that I did.

MS. RIEDEL: This exact chair.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. And I wasn’t concerned.

MS. RIEDEL: Now when you say the first furniture form, what do you mean?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Some say that this is a carcass piece — traditionally, it’s a box with drawers. So it’s a carcass and they call that cabinetry. And this is furniture, because you sit on it.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And those are some terms that people use in terms of furniture. So you might be a person that historically, you did furniture, or you might be a guy that just did cabinets.

MS. RIEDEL: I see.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So that was the first one. And what happened was is I was so hung up on whether you could see the thing being real and representing an object, i.e., a Thonet chair or a Thonet cabinet. I realized, oh, okay, so now let’s not be concerned about viewing them from one perspective, because you have to view those early pieces from one perspective for them to make sense.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

[Telephone rings.]

[Audio Break.]

<<<MISSING TRACK 2, 3, 4 OF DISC TWO>>>

MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel for the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art interviewing John Cederquist at the artist's home in Capistrano Beach on April 15, 2009, disc number three.

I'm going to start this morning with a conversation about this is not one of a series, and we're looking at a tray that was made.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Right. I just wanted you to see the shape of it and how it was constructed. And these came about because I had just finished doing four Kosode and they're big and heavy, and hard to deal with. And I wanted a break from putting a lot of time into one project, so I thought about these trays. I don't know if this happened before I started making the trays or somewhere during the period of time I was making it, but the movie *Memoirs of a Geisha* came out.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Did you ever see that movie?

MS. RIEDEL: I didn't. I know the book, though.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and I had read the book and the movie was good and bad. It had some really interesting visuals stuff in it, but there was this one scene where they were all in this giant hot-tub thing, and it was almost like this swimming pool, a swimming pool you'd see in Las Vegas where there's all these little channels and little spots. And they're all sitting there and they're up to their necks. Do you remember this?

MS. RIEDEL: What?

MR. CEDERQUIST: This scene in *Memoirs of a Geisha*.

MS. RIEDEL: They're sitting up to their necks in what?

MR. CEDERQUIST: In water, and they've got this dumb dialog going, and it's sort of laughable. And what really is funny is that along in the middle of the scene come these trays that are floating in the water with sake on it. And I just started to crack up, because here's these silly trays. And the tray in Japan, it's a very central and important part of their society in terms of serving and all of that stuff. And they're really deep into organizing this visual effect on their food.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So that was one of the things that got me going on it, and realizing that yes, it's pretty simple to make a tray that has a functional quality to it that is essentially just a flat board. So it was great. I could do anything I wanted to, and I have sort of a passing interest in ceramics. One of the teachers that I taught with a long time, his name is Tom Gaines. He was really deep into Japanese ceramics. He had Hamada out teaching at the school one time.

MS. RIEDEL: At Saddleback?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Or maybe he was the one that helped organize it when he was a student at Long Beach.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Anyway, that's where I think you saw him, yes. So Tom was trying to do Oribe. I don't know if you're familiar with it. It's actually done by the farmers in the wintertime, so all of it is unknown. There's no artist, and they're really interesting pieces and they've got a whole range of things that they make, and they're all related to serving food and so on.

MS. RIEDEL: So that's what distinguished his Oribe ware. It's all related to [inaudible].

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, well, there's a quality in terms of the color of the glaze and it's very — I shouldn't say crude — but, yes, most people would think it would be very crude ware, but it's, in a way, very sophisticated also. So there's a lot of examples of that, which are great. And then one of the reasons I got going on this is that

a student told me about a book that was originally published by Hiroshige, and this happened to be a reprint by the Metropolitan Museum. And I went to the shop and tried to find it and I can't find it. I don't know what happened to it.

So this book was called *A Shoal of Fishes*, and it's a lot of different fish that are native to Japan and also here in California, there's bonito and some other halibuts, soles, and stuff like that. There are these little tableaux and then maybe some flower or plum blossoms or something like that in them. And I thought, these are really sort of neat. I don't know how much they relate to being food, but you're getting heft or very live food, anyway, in Japanese.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So I just started putting the ceramics, the bowls, the little dishes and the wasabi and one of these fish, or a crab or something like that, together to create these trays. So now you have a tray that mimics a tray. I also wanted to have them so that people would have something other than a coffee-table book on their coffee table.

I wanted them to be seen horizontally, which for some reason people can't deal with that. They buy them and they always want me to drill a hole in them or want somebody to drill a hole in them so they can put them on the wall.

MS. RIEDEL: So you were making these to be displayed so there's complete, finished pieces.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and viewed horizontally. That's how I wanted them to be seen. I guess some people do that, but most people want to prop them up for some reason. But, you know, they prop up ceramics too. Anyway, so I was making the trays and it was great, because they weren't taking a long time and I was getting this nice little object.

MS. RIEDEL: Very different for you; much smaller than anything you really work on these days.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, exactly.

MS. RIEDEL: And this was just recently, a few years ago, 2005?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, I started doing the trays; and then some people were buying them. I thought it would go gangbusters, but it didn't, typically [laughs]; and, if you want to buy some of my work, here is, to put it crassly, a price point that maybe is a little bit more affordable for people.

MS. RIEDEL: And were these part of the *This Is Not Lunch* exhibition?

MR. CEDERQUIST: So, okay, let me follow through here.

MS. RIEDEL: Sorry.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So I'm doing the trays. I'm doing the trays, and it comes time to do a show, and I realize, well, I just can't do the trays. I just can't have a lot of those trays. Maybe we need to have something a little bit larger and a little bit more furniture-related. And I just thought, well, I could take the tray and put it on top of a chair, inlay it into a chair, as if somebody had taken a tray and laid it on a chair. I've seen that happened before.

MS. RIEDEL: And ensure it is displayed horizontally. [Laughs.]

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, exactly, and so I started the *This Is Not Lunch* series that way; I don't know if I intended when I started doing it to create another tray, a discrete, different tray that was exactly the same as the one on the chair. But that's what ended up happening. And I thought that maybe they would be interested in buying them as a set or whatever.

Well, they weren't interested in buying them as a set. They just were interested in the chairs. So that's how *This Is Not Lunch* came about. The name has to do with Magritte, which has always been an inspiration and an interest that I have, and I thought that that was sort of a Magritte thing to do is to have the tray and then have the chair with the tray inlaid in it.

And also I'm sure that there's a famous Rauschenberg thing that happened. He painted two paintings that were exactly the same but supposedly spontaneous; and, actually, they were an assemblage kind of painting. It's called *Factum I* and *Factum II*. And there's a big deal about them. I read it, but I can't remember exactly what it was all about. So that's what was part of the repeat idea, of making both of those trays exactly the same.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you do that for all the chairs in the show?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, so I had five chairs and these five trays. They had some problems figuring out how to do it in the gallery, but they ended up having the five chairs with these odd shapes painted in the floor, and then over on one side they had a high counter with all the five trays on them. And the *This Is Not Lunch*, as I said, had to do with Magritte.

I have a calligrapher that's online here and I'll make a request and she does a lot of the legwork in terms of figuring out how to write it out, because it's very complicated. That's one thing that's very difficult to deal with.

MS. RIEDEL: How so? How is it complicated?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, for instance, when I asked the Japanese girls at the ceramics class [that] I wanted to do "sweet dreams," they just [said], well, I don't know how I can figure out how that will work.

Because between *kanji* and the other two styles of writing, the one that's phonetic, *hatagana* and *katakana*, I think. Anyway, it can be difficult. So when I asked her that, she came back almost immediately or the next couple of days and said, oh, that was easy. And I said, why? And she said, people have already done it, but they did "This Is Not a Pipe," because of the Magritte thing. So that had already been translated, and she said it was very easy then to just replace "pipe" with "lunch." So that was sort of funny.

MS. RIEDEL: That's great.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. So on the chairs, I have *kanji*. If you look online and you see the chairs you'll see a little line of *kanji* that says "This Is Not Lunch."

So that was really the essence of that. It was fun trying to reproduce ceramics in the wood and I thought it worked out pretty successfully in a lot of ways. In a lot of ways, it was just really adding color and figuring out some wood that had some interesting grain here, there, and the whole thing about a Japanese meal with the tiny little serving dishes and all the little funny things inside.

I really haven't explored that. One of the areas that I could go into and I haven't yet, and I don't know if I should just do some more trays or whatever, is looking back at the *How to Wrap Five Eggs*, and then there's a *How to Wrap Five More*, second edition.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, another five eggs or something like that.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. And they have pictures of those boxes of sweets in them and really sort of strange-looking stuff that I could really explore, but I just have moved on.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, but I can see how that would be, especially in context with the trays, be really appealing.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, yes, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: The thing that's interesting, too, about this story in these trays is it's different than what we discussed yesterday, which is your normal way of working in terms of a specific series of pieces for a certain show. These trays were done at the same time as the Kosode without any particular relevance to them. Correct?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, they were done after the second series of Kosode as a reaction to having to schlep and take a long time to create a piece.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, those enormous pieces.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So it was just so great to be able to quickly do something and have a finished product that I thought really was sort of original and interesting and stayed in line with the whole concept of a utilitarian object that mimics itself. It's a tray that looks like a tray that can work as a tray. And then just all the great subject matter that was involved in it, so it was really a confluence of that, getting ahold of that book.

The book, actually, a student told me about it; and I said, oh, man, looking for that kind of book, that's really a problem. And she says, no it isn't. You go to Amazon and you look at used books. And, like, a week later, here's the book. And I said, wow, how much? How much did it cost? And she said, oh, it was, like, ten bucks. So I gave her ten bucks and I got this really neat Metropolitan Museum reprint of *Shoal of Fishes*.

MS. RIEDEL: How great, and it sounds wonderful. Those are incredible.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, yes.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: It was probably our first experience with Amazon too.

MR. CEDERQUIST: It was. It was like, okay, we can do this.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Yes, it was like, oh, this is a whole new world.

MS. RIEDEL: It is. It just changes everything. It's interesting, too, because listening to you describe where the idea for the tray came from that film, I'm thinking about where you get the ideas from your work, and it doesn't always seem that one series suggests the next series, but it does seem there's a pattern of images coming to you through film or through television, you know, 2D images coming that way.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, well, I think now after I've looked at all the Kosode, I think one of the most original ones is the one where it's called *Bluto's Diner*. And, again, I was more interested in all the little serving things in the background of the image — the pots and pans and the way they were drawn — so that really inspired that. And what I thought was so nice was to play those off the Kosode form and somehow integrate those compositionally into the deal. So it would be interesting to get a Japanese reaction to it.

MS. RIEDEL: And that piece in particular is so much about perspective and perception, because so much looks like it's about to fall or tumble to the ground.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and there's coffee being poured and there's a big cleaver in there. And they don't particularly seem like they relate to the form. But it is something very Japanese, if you look at enough of these kimonos, especially the very early ones. They have everyday objects in there. They have hats and pots and even little scenes like a writing desk that is portrayed on a kimono.

MS. RIEDEL: On a kimono — are these contemporary or antique?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, these are the old ones. If we went back into when fashion became art, I can show you those. And they did a really good job. They have a whole section on maps and scenes of villages and so on; and then they have a section on calligraphy that was integrated, and so on and so on.

MS. RIEDEL: I know you mentioned that historical Japanese tattoos have also been an inspiration.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, that's a whole area that I haven't explored, but I've got a couple of books on tattoos and it's out there, and it's got potential.

MS. RIEDEL: It does. Have you done anything tattoo- related yet?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Not really; generating the image, like a fine line on these things, sometimes it's wood-burned and sometimes I use this vibrating tool that people use to engrave on their camera. You've seen them. They buzz and a little point.

Well, I've got one of those and I do that. That's how I do calligraphy using that, because it looks very calligraphy-like at the end, and that's almost the same thing as what a tattoo artist uses. He uses that tool that vibrates and the needle punctures the skin. So it's very much the same as the real process, and that's one of the things that I realize that maybe that could work. And then there's all the color, and again it's outlined with color inside of it.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely, and it's the mixing. It has wonderful potential as mixing cultures.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. I just haven't had time to explore that yet. Maybe I will.

MS. RIEDEL: Have you thought about what form that might give itself to? It hasn't gone that far yet.

MR. CEDERQUIST: That's part of the problem. You know, right down to just maybe doing a chest, I don't know what it would look like, and then just tattooing the heck out of it all over the whole surface. Then playing around with the tattoos, and especially in terms of the computer, you can generate a feeling of dimension and side. By taking the computer and taking the pattern and then skewing it you can do that on the computer, too, to make it look like it's the side of something.

You end up foreshortening everything when you do that. Anyway, just haven't done it yet. There's a lot to do and that's one of the reasons why I don't think that this process is ever going to dead-end anywhere.

MS. RIEDEL: It doesn't sound that way.

MR. CEDERQUIST: No. You know, the basic, it might end up being different the way I produce it, but in terms of the possibilities of where to go with it, I think they're pretty endless.

MS. RIEDEL: It does seem the Japanese imagery and cultural references have increased over the years.

MR. CEDERQUIST: You mean, just in general?

MS. RIEDEL: In the work.

MR. CEDERQUIST: In my work? You know, I have to say yes and no. And sometimes I go, well, I'm signing my own name now using the phonetic form and have done it for years now. And I always said, well, if I don't do anything Japanese, I won't sign it that way.

I'll sign it some other way, but they still signed some stuff, like the dollar bill has nothing to do with Japanese. You know, you can come back to it. You get tired of it and then you come back to it. Whatever works. Maybe I should have gone out and gotten some Japanese paper money.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] That could be the next series.

MR. CEDERQUIST: [Laughs.] Yes, right, if you could get some Japanese paper. Maybe I'll happen to get it and then start doing something with it.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, you're talking about a trip to Japan, right, next year?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, I don't know. They've got this thing happening with the V and A and then it would be sometime after that, so.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you know where you would go?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, we're getting to the point where there are tours and our association with the people at the Renwick, we've heard these.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: We're getting old and lazy. We've got two girls here.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Talk about these two Japanese girls that give tours, and we've gotten information from a commercial, but we're not sure if they're the same people. And the next time we've got to contact some people and find out about these two girls, because they talk about how pleasant they are and how they really know how to organize things, and it's all related to craft.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: And they go to villages. They go to villages that are specific, on specific crafts. And then they'll go there and you'll stay there and you learn about whatever craft they do in that village.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. Sounds great.

MR. CEDERQUIST: We'd be happy to do that just to be lazy, so to speak, because it could be just really daunting to deal with Japanese. I mean, you can't even read the signs. We have a friend, Tim, who's been to Japan four times.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Three, maybe.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Three or four times; he originally was a fireman. He got this "in" with firemen in Japan and he's got a lot of great stories about how they run Japanese firehouses as opposed to American firehouses. And he says, yes, I wander around. It's not a problem. I eventually get there.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: He's a big, daunting guy, though, too.

MS. RIEDEL: I met him at lunch yesterday.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: But he's tall and he says nobody bothers him.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I can imagine him being quite successful doing exactly that.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And he had gotten involved in some interesting, like this one day, one time he was there, there was this huge festival when they all came out in their regalia and he got to shoot one of those big bows. He said that was a disappointment. He says they don't work very good. [Laughs.] He pulled it back, let it go, and the air went "boonk." So he wasn't quite sure if he had the real thing there.

MS. RIEDEL: Or if there was a special way to fire it.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, exactly. Anyway, the Japanese things would be fun; they do start out in Kyoto and I think you end up in Kyoto. And maybe we would move on to somewhere else.



MS. RIEDEL: The *Furniture That Builds Itself* exhibition seems like it was quite different in imagery than the ones than the ones that had come before — the sense of things coming in from the outside in order to make things work in terms of imagery — how did that come about?

MR. CEDERQUIST: I remember that, too. It's silly stuff. A lot of people, it may not make sense to them, but that had to do with, I guess I wanted to be involved in making cabinetry more than anything, but there was a Hiroshige print. I'm pretty sure it was Hiroshige; and it was a window. Obviously, you were inside a house. There was a window, and outside was the scene of the harbor with some boats going by, but in the window frame and hanging down from the window frame on a string was a turtle, a live turtle. And it's sort of goofy when you think about it.

Here's a live turtle hanging from a string in a window frame, so it was really this near and far thing that was happening, so the hands and the tools were the turtle and then there was the framework and then the scene outside; and, usually, they involved in waves and stuff like that.

MS. RIEDEL: If you were looking at the turtle, would he be superimposed over the water?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. He was hanging in the middle of the scene. I don't know if it was a convenient way of keeping him alive until they ate him or if it was a pet. But it was obvious. It had a little bow on the string there and I think he was hanging about halfway down in the scene. And, you know, it just struck me as odd. Well, and then look at this print over here on the other side.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Well, that's real Magritte-ish then, if you superimpose over the water. He's here and it's there.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, right.

MS. RIEDEL: You mentioned this yesterday with the frog.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. Yes, and what's this about?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And I understand that they had disguises or something like that. They were warriors and there's something about the way that he's holding his hands that's special.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, and he's got the sword, and there's claws over here on the left, too.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So, I don't know. There's just strange stuff that evokes an idea and then you want to continue on with it. You know, the hands, like I said, I wanted to use the black. And I was really interested in reproducing the tools.

So, consequently, that was really just a big excuse. The cabinet was just a big excuse to show that image; and, it was the first time that I moved away from the piece of furniture looking like a box or something that had been stacked. It was like, oh, well here's the image of a piece of furniture that somebody has made, but then at the same time the center of it is empty or it has this image in it that doesn't relate to the furniture itself.

MS. RIEDEL: That seems like it might tie in to perception, perspective, the way the real world — we've talked about this — the way the real world is perceived and the merging of worlds.

MR. CEDERQUIST: It got to the point where I didn't care. I was concerned, oh, this has to look like a crate. Well, okay, it has a wave coming out of it and that's a little crazy, but it still looks like a crate. And now I didn't care, and then, oh, okay, well, let's throw these hands in there.

But then at the same time the hand is holding a plane and the plane is planing the edge of the wood around the framework, or it's got a bit and brace — that's the auger kind of thing. I did that only because that's an interesting-looking tool and it can be drilling a big hole somewhere.

MS. RIEDEL: It feels like a spin-off of surrealism that has to do with goofiness, and I'd like to talk with you about goofiness, because it's something that you've talked about a few times. And I think there's an elevation of goofiness into an art form in your work. Have you thought about that specifically?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, yes, and a lot of it has to do with — at one time I talked about it — being like a clown car — it's really funny; it was like one time I said, well, who wants to pay a lot of money for a clown car?

MS. RIEDEL: Lots of people, clearly.

MR. CEDERQUIST: I guess, yeah. Yeah, you put the stuff together, and like I said, it got to the point where I didn't care whether it made sense or not.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, it seems like it almost was better and made more sense if it was an element of the unexpected or goofiness.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, and some of it was hidden. The bench in that series, the *Flat Foot Floogie Builds a Bench*.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. CEDERQUIST: If you look at the backside of that, one of the legs of the bench is pushing down on the shoe of a guy's leg coming down. And it's like, if you sit a piece of furniture down on your foot. So that's where that name came from and what it's about, but it's way in the back of the chair and I should have gotten a picture of that aspect of it.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: There's also a thing where the unexpected happens, like with the gloves, because you just really wanted to use black and white. You wanted to get black and white in there, and then after the fact that thing about the gloves, which you didn't know.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, we talked about that yesterday.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Oh, you did?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, the Australian guy came from Japan? Yes.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: It's serendipitous, some things. You do it for one reason, but there's a whole other reason that ties in that you're completely unaware of, and I think that happens to more artists than you realize.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: They have an innate sense of things that just are good and then find out it ties in in more ways than they ever considered.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly. Or people can connect to it and relate.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: I think that happens to John a lot.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah, it seems that way, but it seems like you must look for that, or wait for that, or watch for that to happen in the work when it's being put together, because it happens enough that it's not.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, yeah, for instance.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: I think it's sort of inherent in their personality and they're not even aware that it's happening sometimes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, like putting the leg of the chair onto the foot.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: You know, I saw the opportunity there: oh, wait a second — I can get this thing pushing down on the guy's foot; and I think it came out of watching cartoons. They have the absurd happen. The great thing, first, I took 35 mm slides of the cartoons and it made them still. And then that's when you realized, oh, look at how neat the background is.

Because if you're watching it, you're looking at the action, and you realize, oh, look at that row of dishes. And one time we were in New York at one of those pottery stores or kitchen stores.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Restaurant supply.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah. There was one on one of the main streets.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Fishs Eddy, it was called. Fishs Eddy.

MS. RIEDEL: Sorry?

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Fishs Eddy was the name of the store. They got all this restaurant supply stuff that was, they discontinued those dishes, so then they go there. You know, "subliminal" is the word I'm thinking of is. I think

that the stuff goes in subliminally and it's in there.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: You don't even know that you're doing it until you do it.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, yes, that makes sense.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So I went in there and, God, everything was stacked up and I just took a million pictures of all this. They thought I was nuts, but when you're taking pictures, you know, and I was getting close and far away. So all of a sudden it comes in in terms of that inspiration, and then comes out. And then the cartoons.

So I was doing the 35 mm slides, and then 20 years later they invent TiVo, and you can digitally record the cartoon and you don't even have to stay up until one o'clock in the morning to do it, because that's when they show it. Now, you can actually stop the action and start it, and you can actually see how the cartoonist made that pot break, stop action, for every frame that he drew. I was thinking about getting more involved in that kind of stuff, but never explored that, because you know his face wrinkles up and the pot starts to break up and then it flies further and further away.

It's very visually rich, and it was always the early ones, the ones that were in black and white. They really did a good job of those. When they started producing them in color they really went downhill in terms of the quality of them.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] That makes me think of your interest that we mentioned in passing, yesterday, and we want to talk a little bit more about. Photography, in particular, and in this particular sense the time-motion sequence that you can watch happen so clearly.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Right, yes. You know, I took a photography class at Long Beach and learned the basics of it. And in terms of the teaching perspective, it became a confirmation for the perspective stuff. And one of the things that I did in teaching in relationship to perspective, I would ask the students to bring in *Architectural Digest* or any kind of home magazine that had a lot of architecture or furniture in it. And then we'd cut it out and put it on the wall and I could show them how they could find where the eye level was and where the vanishing point was and identify the photograph in terms of, well, was this taken and is this done in one-point, two-point, or three-point perspective?

It's an interesting lesson, and it's, I think, again getting back to that whole sensibility of our relationship between two-dimensional imagery and three-dimensional form. And since we were talking yesterday about this, one of the things I think happens is that when you cut it out — and I think this is a more important factor than is realized — when you free the object, like the chest of drawers, from the plane that it is drawn on, it goes one step closer to being real.

When I first started doing these I really was concerned about the carcass in back not relating to the front. Like I said yesterday, a lot of other people were concerned about that also. So I always felt, oh, okay, one way to really show these would be to create a false wall and just put the carcass in back and just have that frontal section of it. I don't know if I ever did it, but what happens is — and it's really interesting — if you pull the cut-out, the flat cut-out away from the wall a foot or so, they seem more dimensional than if it were plastered right up against the wall.

And, so I said, heck with it. It really is much more convincing and works better if they are pulled away from the wall and I don't have to deal with that aspect of showing them more. So cutting them out, I think, is really important. The other thing I think happens is they are of human scale, or people have the sensibility that they're human scale. And then the interaction in terms of — all of a sudden this thing works.

If you take Magritte's *This Is Not a Pipe*, you really have to take into consideration that — and he said this in some quotes — what you see you can't put tobacco in and smoke it. So there's an aspect of function there and that surprises people. I did a walk-around at the Smithsonian at the Renwick Gallery and there were about 30 or 40 people there walking around. It was fun to do that, so I was up on the riser and I was talking and talking and talking. And I pulled out a drawer, and they all freaked. They didn't realize that these things actually functioned.

And I think that that, as silly as it was, was a pretty dramatic moment for them.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, it's a huge part of the work, and we were talking about that yesterday, is that they do function and they are a reference to furniture. They *are* furniture. They're *about* furniture.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: And the metaphorical levels.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So one of the things that I think happens is that because they're cut out, because there's aspects of the perspective that work — and then we talked about that business of form and then the perception of form, i.e., the railroad tracks are physically parallel. But we perceive them as converging.

MS. RIEDEL: Coming together.

MR. CEDERQUIST: I think that it forces people to confront that issue, because they usually generally see 2D stuff over here with a background, and it's framed, whether it's a TV or the motion picture or the computer, and it's stuck to that background. Or they see a dimensional object and I think that everybody lives in these two worlds. And when they look at my work, somehow those things are integrated and come together, and they're confronted with having to figure that out.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, and the most famous experience was the one where I said, antimacassar?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: It has a drape that comes over a door, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, yes.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: And I saw John make it, I'm there, you know, I'd seen the whole thing. And I made some comment, that if you wanted you could put something on there. And he said, Sue, it's flat. What do you think? So even though you know it is, your eyes are telling you it's not, and what do you believe? Do you believe what you know, or do you believe what you see?

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly, exactly.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: It's just weird.

MS. RIEDEL: And that's wonderful coming from you when you watched the whole thing literally be put together.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Yes, I mean, I feel really stupid when I say something like that, but I just don't believe it.

MS. RIEDEL: Or when you see them in photos and try and tell your brain what's flat and what isn't, but especially in a photo, it's practically impossible.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: And every time John gives a lecture I keep saying, you realize now, this is flat, because people don't understand when they see the pictures.

MS. RIEDEL: No. Not at all.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And then I think that that's one of the reasons why, you know, there are. You see photos of everything. You see a photo of a Jackson Pollock painting, but you're not yet confronted with it until you go to the museum and see the scale of it. And that business about scale, I think, is important, because you can look at a piece of furniture, but until you're confronted with the size of the piece of furniture and you're physically relating to it, and you look at a piece of furniture — and I think people have a good idea of what it should be, because we relate to that so much.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Like a chair, we always have a good idea of what a chair looks like. There's a guy that's been doing giant furniture. I don't know who he is, but he's just got a table and chairs set up. And you're walking in the gallery and the seat of the chair is over your head. And I'm sure that's another aspect of, oh, here's something very familiar, but look at what size it is. And every once in a while on *Antiques Road Show* somebody will bring in a model that they'll use to sell a chest of drawers or a chair, something like that. Oh, and Bob Straight, the guy that did that painting, started collecting — what's the name?

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Necchi; I think it's Necchi.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Necchi, it's the sewing machine company.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: I think they were called Necchi.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And it's these human forms that will have a dress on, that you can make this dress with your sewing machine.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: The forms are like mannequins but they're miniature mannequins, so you recognize the mannequin.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, they're about three foot high and they've got them around their house. And they're really creepy.

MS. RIEDEL: I bet.

MR. CEDERQUIST: You walk around them.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Scary as I remember them, they were in sewing stores.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And then the ones that are really bizarre, the ones that are displaying girdles and bras.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: No. They weren't really displaying them, I don't think. It's just that then you couldn't have a naked statue, so they put the sort of undergarment on them. They painted that on and then you put the dress over it, because if you were changing it and someone would be in the store or something, it would be, I think, offensive.

MS. RIEDEL: And what did these date from?

MRS. CEDERQUIST: I think they're from like the '40s and '50s, I think. I remember seeing them as a kid.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Bob and Chris are famous for collecting these things, just as they get to the point where you can't find them now.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: They're very expensive now. They had ended up with about four or five of them, and you walk around the house and you see these things; and they are bizarre.

MS. RIEDEL: What you were talking about early, the functionality of furniture, I think is really an important point, because the functionality becomes part of the content of what you're working on. The image becomes part of the content and there's a fusion, and something that happens between the two there and furniture that doesn't happen, for example, in jewelry, I don't think, or even ceramics. There's something about the functionality of furniture that seems to allow you do things that you really couldn't do in another form.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, it's funny, because I think it's really important that they function or — because at what point, what are they if they have function? And I always thought that was sort of a copout.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Doesn't ceramics do that too, though?

MS. RIEDEL: How so?

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Because it's a vase or it's a whatever. They've got a little function thing going on, but they're not really, really functional. Really nice ceramics — usually they don't use it to function; and John's stuff, not too many people really use it to function. But some people do, and some people do use —

MS. RIEDEL: I would imagine the chests probably are used more frequently than the chairs, for example.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Well, there's a bed, too, that somebody sleeps in.

MS. RIEDEL: The headboard piece that you were looking at?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, you know, the one that I described or talked about. What's the name of that one?

MS. RIEDEL: I can see the headboard with the steam pipes in the waves, right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, "*Dreams*. Yes.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: I'd want to use them, but then I'd always say, well, they're too expensive. We can't use them. You know.

MS. RIEDEL: Yeah.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So, what else do we have?

MS. RIEDEL: We're going to talk about the most recent Kosode and how they're more explicit in social

commentary than some of the pieces that come before.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Okay. Yeah, we talked about that without having the recorder on.

MS. RIEDEL: What are the titles of those, John? Do they have titles?

MR. CEDERQUIST: We've been going back and forth on titles.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: We send feelers out to all of our friends and some pictures and say, do you have any good ideas; and we've got some going around.

MR. CEDERQUIST: There's one that you didn't see that's under a blanket in there, and that's definitely going to be called *Double Fuji*. And that plays off *Double Fudge*. Because it has two pictures of Fuji or two images, they're repeated.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: I wanted *Bombs Away* for one, but I think John didn't care for that title. [Laughs.]

MR. CEDERQUIST: No. I don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: They all have planes. Is that uniform?

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Yes. They have bombs, planes. It's pretty much a war theme, anti-war theme.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Okay. Was it Bob that sent the postcard or the thing?

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, Bob sent it to me and then I ordered the book.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah. And I looked at it and I said, oh, those are neat, because they were these bizarre images of the Kewpie dolls, tanks, and stuff like that.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, very cartoon-like.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and I got busy. I was doing stuff, and Sue ordered the book and it finally came.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And John's so funny, because you don't hear from him or see him for two days. It's like when a book arrives like that, he just disappears. He's into the book. It's almost like the cartoon thing, you know, where he's able to — whoosh! just right into the book, because really, you don't see or hear him for, like, two days. He was so into it.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And I thought I was done with the Kosode until I saw those.

MS. RIEDEL: And what was the book called? Do you remember?

MRS. CEDERQUIST: *War Propaganda*?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, it's *Wearing Propaganda*.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah, that one we were looking at yesterday.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, you saw it.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So, you know, I said oh, well, look at here, all of this. And then it was interesting. You really got into a little Japanese history and what they were doing. And it was just a whole other image, and then I had been involved in flying model airplanes.

MS. RIEDEL: I saw those in the studio yesterday.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: And we were watching that movie last night too, and they were talking about the Japanese not being interested in the war, not being interested in getting into war, so they definitely had to be enticed as a people too, and they did it through a lot of different means. And of course their kimonos are really important to them.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Right.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: They just started producing things that were pro-war.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting, so this would be what, the 1920s and '30s?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Thirties and '40s, yes.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: I mean they had to entice them into war, get people behind it.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So all of that started paralleling what was happening.

MS. RIEDEL: Here and now.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, and you know, you're going well, boy, the Japanese. I don't know who was ever involved, seemed to be very naïve. And I'm going, oh, man, does history repeat itself here. And then, you know, the visuals were nice. So that's what started it and we'll see what happens with it because the High Museum in Atlanta bought one of them. I don't think it has any bombs in it. It has a plane and a blimp in it.

It was funny, because we sort of had to talk them into it. They were concerned about —

MRS. CEDERQUIST: The circles.

MR. CEDERQUIST: The theme.

MS. RIEDEL: Of course.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And that wasn't my job. I just made it and then let them deal with it. It was funny, because it was one of the curators that wanted it, but he had to deal with the board on that situation.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: That was also before the tide changed a little bit in terms of thinking about war, and I think we've completely done a flip-flop.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: In the two years, last two years.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And I don't know where the *Heavenly Victory* came from. It just sounded very Japanese. Sounded like something that they would be into. Maybe it was from something.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: I think it's a movie title.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah?

MS. RIEDEL: I've heard that multiple times.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: It's one of those subliminal things. I think it is.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So the *kanji* looked good and so I just realized that maybe that's what the theme of the thing should be, and just started pulling together the same way I did with the previous Kosode kimonos, and just really enjoying the imagery, drawing those old airplanes and putting them together. There's some pretty direct appropriation with them, just taking other elements and reorganizing them. A lot of them don't have it.

I knew I wanted to do one and do a really large version of the *kanji*. I'd seen that on some kimonos before where they just really blew the characters up and had them wrap around the robe. So that's how it got started; and, yes, there was a very conscious effort between the "Mission Accomplished" sign and the *Heavenly Victory*, situation.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: There's a good title, right there: *Mission Accomplished*.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, you're right.

MS. RIEDEL: That is good, yes.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: That's how the titles come up. We have friends who come over and say, hey, you know what those scarves are called on the chest? And John goes, no. And she goes, those are called antimacassars.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, that was a great title.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: And John goes, that's a good title. You know, so that's kind of fun.

MS. RIEDEL: *Auntie Macassar Goes West*. That took a little while to figure out, but that was really interesting.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And people relate to, because then they relate to that piece because they feel like that's their piece because they titled it.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Yeah, there you go.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So who was it? Was that Chris?

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Chris Straight, yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: *Mission Accomplished* is good.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, well, that will be one of them, finally. Now we've got two.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: [Laughs.] And because we can't remember any of them we should write it down, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Now it's on tape.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Oh, well, you'll be the one then. You'll be going, and you know, I was there. I was instrumental in that title. [Laughs.]

MR. CEDERQUIST: I wonder was it my Chris at work that said the *Double Fuji* here? I can't remember. Or was it me? I don't know what it was, but just the "double." And, double fudge, they always have to say things like that. And then we went, well, maybe it should be double fudgy." And I said, no, *Double Fuji* is close enough," so.

MS. RIEDEL: And do you think that series is done?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, I have a carcass that's sitting there and I haven't come up with anything yet. And the plan is that I do have enough time that I could possibly get another one going. But, frankly, a lot of it has to do with how much space is at the gallery now; and five might be crowding it.

There's one out there now that is at the Pittsburgh Craft Center. They're doing a show, a touring show, and it's stored somewhere. So there's four in my studio and one there. So I don't know. And, as I said, this thing was really — I thought it came to an end, and this new series came up and these new images came up. So I don't know if it will ever come to an end. Something else might happen, but you never know. That's the funny thing about it is, you never know. And somebody will send you a card or you'll find this book, and you go, oh, wait a second, here we go. Here's a whole other thing that we can do.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Well, just in that conversation that we've had we've probably come up with three or four different things, from tattoos to ceramics.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, that's the other thing.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Yes. I think John has several sets of series in his head that he's thinking about doing, but then something will set it off. There's just something that pushes that one forward.

MR. CEDERQUIST: There might be another element related to the tattoo that will jibe and allow it to evolve.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly. It seems it's really important that there's sort of a powerful juxtaposition that sets something off.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, and it's involved in the title of *Furniture That Builds Itself*. I remember also, and it's a silly thing, but if you start looking at film noir pictures, movies, there's the classic image of the telephone that's *this big* right here.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And then there's this person on the other side of the room that's about this big, and then the phone rings.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And that was one of the things that also I saw a correlation with in terms of here's that turtle and it's this big, and here's the boat way off in the distance, and it's only this big.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Right.



MR. CEDERQUIST: It's happened to a little degree. I'm making a realization now. I don't know if it will come off this way, but I'm realizing now that the dollar bill that I'm working on and the fire, first of all, the dollar bill is big. Then the scale of the fire looks sort odd in relationship to the dollar bill; and it might end up really making it. Who knows?

That fire was inspired from a Japanese painting of a village that was being burned up. And so, again, there is a whole scale thing. Here we have the scale of this fire that's burning a village, and now I have the certain scale of fire that's burning a dollar bill. And do they jibe? And if they don't, maybe that's what's going to make it interesting.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly. Yes, it seems that's often what makes it interesting. That really skewed perspective and/or scale.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, exactly.

MS. RIEDEL: You had a major exhibition at the Oakland Museum that went on to the Renwick in 2000. Right?

MR. CEDERQUIST: I think that was the one at the Renwick. The one I had at Oakland that was in '97.

MS. RIEDEL: That was '97, right. That was a retrospective.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Right. Ken was there when he initiated it. Ken Trapp was there when he initiated it, and then he left. He went to the Renwick.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And the whole project really took a nosedive. I don't know exactly what happened there. I was getting a little depressed, because now it's a year, and now it's a year and a half. And then a gal there, her name is Kathy Borgogno, who was not a curator, but one of those people who made the museum work. And I don't know if it was through her or what, but it got reestablished, and she did a lot of the work.

Ken did an introduction, and Franklin was helping with this. And he was asking, he said, well, I think I can get Arthur Danto. And then he says, and I think we can get Nancy Princenthal on board. And the museum said, Fine. Let's do it. Let's do it. And then Kathy, boy, I was surprised at the extent of what the catalog was going to do and they started adding pages. I had a lot of the photography already, which was good. So I can't remember how long it took, but finally it happened. And it was a little bit of a drama.

They took one moving truck, went around the East Coast, Washington, and New York, and came all the way across country with this work, and it was full. It really surprised me. I think there were 40-some pieces and then they hired this guy. And he basically created these tableaux, and then we decided where they should go. It wasn't like it was decided specifically, but it ended up being really great.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Didn't they photograph them too, along the way? Because Tony's was photographed at her house.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, there was some emergency photography, and I think that that was —yes, that one was. It was photographed at her house.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Mija, what would you like to drink? We're going to have iced tea, but would you rather have hot tea?

MS. RIEDEL: Sounds great. Iced tea sounds perfect. Thanks.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So they had the show, and what had happened, though, was a lot of pieces came there and they had lost their color because I used an aniline dye that said it was archival, but it wasn't. Some blues and reds were just totally gone.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And in the meantime, since this happened.

MS. RIEDEL: And these pieces were 10 years old? Twenty years old?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, less than that sometimes.

MS. RIEDEL: Pretty quick then.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, and so I had been experimenting and knew that these things were doing this; and, finally, I realized that I could use litho inks from lithography and so I spent a lot of the time, the two weeks before the show, down in the basement, sanding and restaining.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, my gosh, wow.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And the crew was up there doing their job. I sort of missed a lot of that installation part of it, but it was a huge effort. And you make the realization that you have absolutely no control.

It's so big, it's just happening. I think the biggest thing that happened was in the end they had made these placards. And here's your standard, and then they would put them up like this. And I said, why are you doing that? Oh, it's the old people. They can't reach over. And I said, but it makes it look like it's a shoe store. You know what I'm saying?

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Yes, yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: The price on it?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And they said, yes, you're right. But it was an easy fix. All they did was just get rid of the little standard thing and lay them down flat, because they do that a lot. I'd seen that a lot.

But that was the only complaint I had, because those guys worked hard and it was a very successful show. They said that they had a lot of people come in, and then since Ken had gone to the Renwick and they had tried to get it to travel, but they really didn't have the chutzpah that they should have at Oakland. I mean, they did a great job, but —

MRS. CEDERQUIST: They were remodeling the Renwick then, too.

MS. RIEDEL: That's right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and so Ken said, well, it's coming here. You know, that's happening. But it took two years, I think, and it was emended. So they couldn't keep the show together and travel. It was too big to travel. It was huge. You know, that's the problem with furniture shows, is that it's a huge expense.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly, yes.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And so it was emended, but I think very successfully done. And I was happy with what happened with the Renwick.

And there's a critic in Washington. You don't realize how many shows are in Washington. Especially government-related shows. They're putting up shows all the time. There's a lot of venues there. So there was a critic in Washington that every year he would identify the 10 best shows.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you remember his name?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No. I can't remember, but it was in an article. They wrote a huge article, one of the big papers. They wrote a big article with color photos and all that stuff. And he named it. You know, it was one of the 10 best shows.

MS. RIEDEL: That's fantastic.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So that made me feel good.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely. Absolutely. Well, you've had a really extraordinary response from critics. We were mentioning earlier, Roberta Smith in the *New York Times*, to be sure. That's the main one I can think of. But Arthur Danto wrote beautifully.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, I don't know. I don't think he would have done it unless he liked the work. He ended up using that as a basis for an article in *House and Garden*, they revamped *House and Garden*, and he had that essay in there.

MS. RIEDEL: Really? About your work, that's interesting. Which leads, I think, directly to the question of critics and art writing and who, if anyone, you find interesting or helpful?

MR. CEDERQUIST: You know, maybe I should read *American Craft*, because I think they're trying to do more.

MS. RIEDEL: Over the years is there anyone or anything?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No. There was a gal that wrote a little pamphlet for the Oakland Museum for my show that I thought was one of the best written. And I tried to hold onto that thing; and I don't know where it is now. I don't know if Oakland keeps that kind of stuff.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Can you guys come to a stopping point pretty soon?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Sure.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure. We can come back to this.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, let's do that.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Let's do that.

[END MD3 TR1]

MS. RIEDEL: Seems the Steamer series is one that we haven't talked about yet. We've covered, I think, pretty much everything else. That was in the early '90s.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and that was probably one of the first. It was a series that I broke away from having to look realistic or [that] allowed me to explore moving around. It also, I think, was one of first groupings that I was able to take the maple, the northwestern maple that has some flaws in it. But it ends up, by the time you finish it off, it has a really neat reflective quality. And so I was doing a lot of pipe with it and did several chairs. And then the steam coming out of it using another type of maple, but really bleaching it.

And, yes, there was a whole series, and I did quite a few that the steam pipe was wrapping around a bundle of boards and ended up being *Chest of Drawers*. And I don't know if we talked about this earlier, but it was really a situation where the idea that was a piece of furniture that was a chest of drawers inspired the idea of, oh, well, how can I get those segments going. And I realized, oh, you can take and make that steam pipe spiral around, and for each turn, you know, there was a drawer segment.

MS. RIEDEL: Aha, so that would be a precursor to *How To Wrap Five Eggs*?

MR. CEDERQUIST: You know, I can't remember which came first. I mean, obviously, the crates were simple to deal with, because the front of the crate could open up to be the drawer.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: But I did that spiral thing several times and did slight variations or sort of major variations on that particular image, because I liked the V-shape of it, which leads into another piece that was very early, again a drawer series. And that was the one I called *Top Drawer*. And that, again, I was looking at the top drawer, I went, oh, well, those drawers, top drawer. So there I go with this idea of using a top and tried to make it look like it was spinning.

And realizing that I couldn't have the segments right next to each other because of a problem that had to do with construction or making the drawers work properly, so I segmented them and had them going off-kilter. So, you know, that drawer piece was actually the first one where I used epoxy. Previous to that I was cutting a real skinny strip, then bending it into the shape. And this one allowed me to put a line into the image that had much more variation, a much more expressive line, rather than a very mechanical straight line.

MS. RIEDEL: That makes sense.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, and that just really opened it up in terms of doing the Steamer series. And there were the carcass pieces, the drawers, and then a lot of different chairs that I had done utilizing that. But, yeah, now it was like the first time the woods were expressing more than just wood, that the woods could be made to look like metal. Then it would surprise me how convincing they were within the context of the image and putting a highlight on it, and putting a stain on it. And then that particular wood, that particular maple, looked exactly like. And it even had knots and discoloration in it, and, you know, oh, this was an old, cruddy steam pipe kind of thing.

Then I did another series. You know, it's funny. I don't know if it took me two years to do this grouping, but I remember having a show and everything, but I think maybe only a couple of them were really successful, but I was using all maple and all metal kind of look to them.

MS. RIEDEL: What series was that?

MR. CEDERQUIST: It's the Wave series. Very mechanical with dials and steam gauges, and steam looking like toasters and stuff like that. And goofy things, like, I remember one was called *Space Age Wave Machine*. And I don't know some of the other names, but they had some pretty crazy names to them.

MS. RIEDEL: This was for the wave machine show, right?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and I guess I do have a little catalog on that.

MS. RIEDEL: That sounds familiar.

MR. CEDERQUIST: You start forgetting that you do, and that was really a series. There was another instance where it was pretty much dedicated to this one kind of quality look to it, and I did at least five pieces, I guess. So that really tells the tale on all the different series that I've done.

MS. RIEDEL: You know, we've talked about so many different influences, but I don't think we've talked at all about trompe l'oeil or the really early marquetry work. Did you spend a lot of time looking at that, Italian 15th century?

MR. CEDERQUIST: You know, when that show came up I really wasn't aware of the Studiolo, they called it. I don't remember the names of the artists. It's all well-documented by the MET, and I don't think we talked about this on tape.

MS. RIEDEL: I don't think we did.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So I went to the show at the MET, and then for a while there for a couple of years the room next to it was all about the restoration of the piece and getting it out of the castle in Italy. And then the technique, and what really surprised me was the fact that it was very similar to what I was doing.

A lot of the East Coast artists and a lot of furniture makers were having a hard time with me using a really thick wood, you know, as Arthur Danto said, it's intarsia more than it is inlay or marquetry. But it was interesting to say, hey, I can go back to the 15th century with mine and I'll bet you it's going to last longer than the thin layer of veneer. And there are things that I can do with it that I can't do with veneer.

A lot of the highlights and a lot of the imagery is produced by spraying with an aniline dye and then sanding it. You couldn't sand veneer, or else you'd sand through it. I guess I'm not as interested in the qualities of the wood as opposed to the image that it produces or the effect that it produces. And I don't think I could get it to have the same kind of look to it if it were thin veneer. Unfortunately, the problem with it is if you have a severe climate, and what I mean by that is if you just really have a place where it's got low humidity, and that's all it is, is low humidity, then that intarsia can crack.

But, you know, on the West Coast here, especially right next to the ocean, the humidity level stays pretty constant, and I would think that anybody that would pay that much money to have that kind of furniture or any kind of artwork in their house would have climate control. I mean, it's not that expensive.

I do have a lot of clients that have no problems with the work at all, and most of them are of that concern that they have climate control, and not only from my work but for any of the work that they have, especially paper. So I've continued with it even though I had critics talk about it. That just doesn't bother me anymore.

MS. RIEDEL: And you really haven't had too much trouble.

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, and okay, so it cracks. Well, that's what happens to wood. It cracks. I remember John Makepeace sent a table over here and it got into an air-conditioned climate, which can be very dry, and the thing just flew apart. And a lot of people will bring English antiques here and it flies apart, because in England, you know, they generally have a much wetter climate naturally; and they don't dry their wood as much as we do out here. So it really has a problem, because they build it at 12 percent, 10 percent, and we take ours down to six percent.

MS. RIEDEL: So then there's a difference

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, that's all technical stuff, so, anyway.

MS. RIEDEL: I think that winds up the series pretty well.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, I think it does.

MS. RIEDEL: Teaching and any thoughts you have about the place of craft in American universities?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, you know, I think it's changed a lot. I vacillate between the fact that some of these kids can really get a very good education and very complete, mainly technical, and that's relatively easy to do.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] At the university level?

MR. CEDERQUIST: At the university level. In fact, when you even look at the curriculum you see how it's divided up into, well, here's a class on bending. And here's a class on joinery, and here's a class on this. I think that's great, but it's very difficult to teach design or how to be successful, or how to be in the art market.

That's something that can never really be taught, and I think that in a lot of cases students come out of that with all this technical ability and then get discouraged, because they don't know the rest of it. And some people have intuitive knowledge of how to manipulate that and do fine. I'm not sure if they even need technical ability then, but I don't know how you could overcome that. And you have some students that somehow find friendship and somebody that's famous or well-known in the area, and that seems to be a huge help, even in the regular art world.

MS. RIEDEL: Someone to champion their work.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, somehow an association with, and, well, I was the student of Louis Vuitton, you know, Pollock. And I'm sure that that helped things for him, and/or he was there at the right time when that kind of stuff was happening.

Somebody I recall was talking about how also you need to be a part of a movement; and I think an example of this would be Memphis-Milano Group, because it was a group of Italian artists, mainly, that got into this thing and really were able to promote it. And it was very popular.

You know, it really hit the pop cultural kind of thing, and this particular person, it seemed to me, he was mentioning the fact that if you're just one guy out there doing something that's incredibly interesting and different, that you're going to have a hard time because nobody else is doing it. You know, on the other hand, for instance, photography, how many photographers are there and how difficult is that to get yourself identified within that huge, massive grouping of so-called photographers? And that's one of the little things I think was interested about Franklin was finding this niche.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Being part of the craft movement made a big difference, too. That was a movement.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah. Who's the guy that owns the gallery in New York that does ceramics, contemporary ceramics?

MS. RIEDEL: Garth Clark.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Garth Clark. He's talking about how ceramics did this leap, i.e., Voukos, and then a lot of other ceramic artists. He said that wood might get there some day, and this was early on. And I think it did to some degree, but you go to New York, and I went around to a lot of galleries, and Franklin got himself known as handling a group of people that had a particular kind of sensibility, let's say, like Ken Price, and both maybe regionally, because they ended up being a lot of California artists.

And then also within this little narrow niche of craft or art, or whatever you want to say, and even though it was so specific, it really did stand out, because he could have handled art. You know, just art, and now you're back into a gallery. You don't know how many art galleries there are in New York, so that was one good thing that happened with Franklin.

We did both connect on a sensibility to that, and I think one of the reasons why he was interested in my work, and then I had the opportunity. He was first in SoHo and then moved up to Fifty-Seventh Street, which I'm not sure if it was a good idea, but it really ended up being the best idea, although his space got smaller, which was unfortunate. And it's always sort of becoming a little bit of an issue when it comes for me to show because of the scale of the pieces.

MS. RIEDEL: And he's done the SOFA fairs from time to time. Right?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah.

MS. RIEDEL: He's using a little bit more space.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, he has.

MS. RIEDEL: And other fairs as well?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh, yeah, he has. He tries to get more into the art fairs, because I think, you know, you go to some of these art fairs and the crap that's out there is just incredible, and his sensibility, you can see. Oh, well, here's something that's different.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative], exactly.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And I think it's been to some degree a successful one. It will be interesting to see if he can survive this recent economic thing, because, you know, this is the kind of stuff that starts eliminating galleries. So the university, one of my feelings is that in a lot of cases the university gets way too academic. I don't know if that has anything to do with becoming a success. And I think to some degree you have to have some financial success.

MS. RIEDEL: By "too academic" you mean classes that aren't specifically relevant to making a living as an working artist?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Exactly, right, and or getting way too academic in terms of the kind of work that you do; and you've only got so much time and I'm saying this because I remember going to a symposium or something. And this girl who's a jeweler started lecturing, like it was two hours on this jewelry, and it was historical jewelry. And I went, well, what's that all about? It really didn't serve any purpose.

If she wanted to be a jeweler, she wanted to be an art historian, you've got to make a decision there. And if you spend too much time being an art historian or a jewelry historian, I don't know if it's good or bad, but I appropriated images. I don't get too involved in where they came from or why they look the way they do, because then you're spending your time researching that, as opposed to making something.

MS. RIEDEL: Over the number of years that you taught at Saddleback, did you find any way to incorporate anything relevant about that to your students that you thought might be helpful?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Teaching at Saddleback was mainly beginning courses and it was pretty rote. I tried to bring something to it that was maybe a little bit different, like getting a little bit more involved in perspective and 2D design than I should have.

You know, they weren't ready for that. They were still in the formative, beginning stages, and I thought that was fine, because I didn't have to get involved in any school politics. I remember several times talking to teachers that were at the university level and how they just came to hate some of the students that they had to teach because of the attitude that they had.

So that was one great thing about the school. They really didn't bother me that much in terms of being a professor, so to speak, and I guess I just took advantage of that and went home and did my work.

MS. RIEDEL: Did your work, right. Do you see any difference between artists who are trained in universities or in colleges and ones who have learned their craft or their art on their own? And being specific, too, of the difference between someplace like Saddleback and then the school that John Makepeace was running in England, and then larger universities, larger programs.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Well, the school that I taught at was a community college. So, again, I don't know if we can put it in there. John's was very practical in the sense, and I liked this part of it, is that within a year you were having to come up with your commission, and you were just really put into the business end of it.

And in the universities, I don't think you could say this group or that group displayed any kind of special characteristic, although I think that some students can be so inundated by the whole technique thing, because of the university or the university process that, yes, they do have a hard time when they get out and see what's happening in terms of the real world.

I think that, yes, they can exist in this ivory tower a little bit too long; and when it ends up having to make some money — and I can't claim that I didn't have to depend on teaching to do what I do, it did give me the opportunity to do stuff that I wouldn't do due to money pressures.

MS. RIEDEL: So the teaching was beneficial to your work in that sense.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, in that sense, but I didn't let the teaching prevent me from doing it, and I can see that happening a lot with fellow teachers. All of a sudden, they're not working.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Then they somehow feel guilty or they feel more obligated to the teaching part of it and, well, I don't think you can have those feelings. I think you have to decide, and I think that you can be an example. You know, here's the stuff I make, and a lot of teachers can't say that. They can't show stuff that I make, and I made this last week kind of thing. I didn't make it five years ago when I was still a grad student before I started teaching. This is what I'm working on right now, so I felt good about that part of it. And I brought the work into the classroom and that, I think, gave me a certain credibility, which I think is very helpful.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So I don't know. I don't know if coming out of a university situation is either helpful or not helpful. I don't know if it would make any difference. I guess there's a certain amount of connections that can be made through the university, especially if you have an instructor that is viable within the field.

But if that isn't happening, if you get stuck at some school that really doesn't have a good program and isn't going anywhere, yeah, I think you can be stuck. So that's that.

MS. RIEDEL: We were talking about writers right before we took a break for lunch and you mentioned earlier you think there is a lack of critical writing.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, and I think there was an effort on the part of some craft organizations to get that happening more. You know more about the new *American Craft* magazine, and are they trying to get more people to do that?

MS. RIEDEL: I think he's trying. He's brand-new. He's just been there a couple years.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, and are there people out there trying to do that?

MS. RIEDEL: I'm asking you.

MR. CEDERQUIST: I don't know. You know, I make it.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative], so there's nothing that's been very influential to you one way or the other?

MR. CEDERQUIST: No. Not really. And I think you can get the same satisfaction of just reading art magazines. I don't know how much you can get that from reading a craft magazine. I think you can go through an art magazine, especially *Art News*. I like that better than any other ones, because their articles are relatively short and they're informative. And they go do historical things as well as contemporary things, and I think that that's much more interesting than some of the other stuff. And I don't know.

It could be a writer out there. It would be nice if there was a writer that had, say, the financial support that Robert Hughes had from *Time*. So he or she could go out and really just look for the best thing and write about it. And do it on a — magazine comes out — monthly basis. Because I remember always getting *Time* magazine so that I could read Robert Hughes.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. CEDERQUIST: And then slowly Robert Hughes wouldn't be in every week or every two weeks. He was writing other stuff, I guess. So I got a little discouraged there. I guess I didn't make an effort to try to find anybody else writing, so it seems to me it would be interesting if you could get somebody out there. And I always thought it would be interesting to see somebody do a program for PBS.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you see *Craft in America*?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, I thought that that was to some degree a disappointment. I think they dwelt way too long on one person, and could have been visually a little bit more exciting.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: They used to have somebody on that Sunday morning show with Charles Kuralt. They used to have an art segment and they would actually do pretty interesting things of not really, really famous people, but people that were doing new things. And it was just the right amount of time. It was like a 15-minute segment on an artist.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: And it was very interesting. We really enjoyed it.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you see that *Art21* series on PBS? That was pretty interesting.

MR. CEDERQUIST: You know what? I think one of my students gave me a disc that had about three people on it, yes, and they were pretty amazing.

MS. RIEDEL: They were really pretty good.

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Yes, that's the kind of show that would be good.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So how come that can't happen? But the interesting thing about all of this writing stuff is it's doomed, in light of the fact that newspapers are going out of business and our magazines. I mean, *Time* magazine now is this skinny little pamphlet. It's not where it used to be.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: So, you know, where is that?

MS. RIEDEL: Online, I would guess.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, so you go online, but it seems to be so simple to produce some of this stuff, you don't need a really special fancy camera anymore and you can go in there and shoot some images. I've always thought about doing that, and going into a guy's studio and, hey, look at this and look at this.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm [affirmative], then it makes it much more accessible.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes, okay. And so he's pretty intelligent about it and gets some words with it that makes some sense and are interesting other than just, you know, showing it. Why are you doing this and where does this relate?

MRS. CEDERQUIST: Maybe we'll end up with a YouTube art thing.

MS. RIEDEL: Wouldn't that be interesting?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yes. Maybe YouTube will have an art extension where they'll just have those things on YouTube. I mean, that's what it'll end up doing.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Anyway, yes. You know, you do talk about writing, and I think that that's the interesting thing. You talk about Roberta Smith, and then all of a sudden you realize, well, wait a second. Maybe the *New York Times* won't be there. It would be interesting to see how they're doing, because, boy, the *Sunday New York Times*, you realize. How could that be going under? That thing's a giant wad of paper with all this printing on it. Maybe that's the only one.

[END MD1 TR2]

MS. RIEDEL: Over the past day or two you've made reference to the ritual, the ritual of woodworking. I just wanted to ask you what that is for you and how significant it has been for your work over time?

MR. CEDERQUIST: I think guys, woodworkers that were really into their tools—well, I can see it in Chris, my assistant, I can see it in him, he makes guitars and is way into the technique, you know, like they're machine made.

MS. RIEDEL: Because they're so finely detailed—

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, you know, crafted. And there's a whole sensibility in terms of the way they function, interpreted in terms of the way they sound, and the thicknesses of the woods that they get into and they're so thin, but, you know, you can see him there honing the blade of the plane. And Chris really didn't get into the wood part, he was—you should really see some of his metalwork, it's amazing. He's primarily a metalworker and then when he started working for me, that sensibility was then brought over from the wood. And then when you think about an instrument maker you think, oh yeah, if he was a jeweler and involved in wood that that would be what you would want. So he—you know, there really is a lot of ritual in terms of honing that blade or preparing your tools or looking at the wood and stuff. And always, for me it was a better and more practical ritual than ritual for ritual's sake. And—

MS. RIEDEL: In that it had a practical outcome?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, I mean it was for a reason. You get into some religious ritual and you go what's that about? And they explain something that is pretty close to being science fiction.



MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. CEDERQUIST: But I can talk about a ritual and I don't know if it's so much my work but the fact that I produce it the same way and I work with some very specific tools and I go in at a specific time and I—lately I've been able to ease off in terms of getting right to work, but just managing the day and doing a little work here and getting that section done and getting this section done and, you know, inlaying here and there and so on. And then after that process is done, there's the other ritual of sanding it smooth or putting the epoxy into it. There's the ritual of producing the carcass for the chair and cutting out the half inch of plywood and looking at proportions and figuring out what plane intersects with this plane and where it screws together and whether it's going to be structurally sound—you know those are all rituals that I think have a much more practical purpose. I think that are obviously much more satisfying because at the end of this ritual, you have something. And you might have one piece and then all of the sudden you have several pieces and then you go well here I've got a show. And so it's all segments and parts of something that gets bigger and bigger and bigger and I guess maybe eventually it ends up, well look at all those things, that's your career.

MS. RIEDEL: And when you talk about ritual it ties in historically—certain aspects of it—to the history of furniture making and the other aspects of it are things that you have come up with yourself, the epoxy, for example.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, the discovering that the studiolo, those intarsic pieces of wood were very similar to the ones that were cut for the studiolo and then realizing that he even did detailed cutting an eighth of an inch down or thinner and I go, well I did that too. And I felt that I maybe took it a little bit further because I used the epoxy for the line. And that took some doing and it eventually became very much of a ritual in terms of squeezing the epoxy into that gap in between there and looking at that gap as the Japanese guy was doing cutting the block for the Japanese block print and looking at the quality of the line and how it affects what the image is doing.

So yeah it's all ritual, but a much healthier one that has a basis in fact and an outcome that is something other than just the ritual. I think that that's—there's all different types and I think you can get really very—especially like guitar makers can get very ritualistic about it. And I have known woodworkers that are over the top with it too to the point of saying well, I'm not even going to have an electric motor in my shop.

I remember the first time I taught at Parnham House with John Makepeace's class, there were two sections. There was the first-year and the second-year and I taught the first-year and the second-year had a guy come out that did a chair—that made several different types of chairs in a traditional woodworking sense. They used green wood and he went out and got rush from the streams and they had a rush seat to them and they had been making this chair for something like 300 years, and there was a ritual. And a history that was amazing. And the only difference between what he was doing today and what was happening 300 years ago—maybe even 400 years ago—was the fact that the lathe that they used had an electric motor in it, and that's it. Everything else was done exactly the same way, even to the extent of going to the manor house that was in the local area and asking the lord whether he could go in there and cull out the reeds that he used, or rushes that he used to make the seats with. So talk about, you know, establishing—and that was one of the neat things about going to England in terms of seeing that sense of history. And he was the first one that was producing the chair that was outside the family. Previous to that for 300 years, someone within the family had been making it. And then he apprenticed early on and then the line fell out and so he was somebody of a completely different name but obviously an apprentice and had worked for the guy and then his sons were working for him. And it was pretty lucrative because he said he had a three-year waiting list.

MS. RIEDEL: Extraordinary.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah. And crazy things like—and this was what was funny about the Parnham House students was that they'd ask him everything, like "how do you heat the shop?" And they said, "Oh, well we take all the shavings and there's a special stove that you can buy that is a heater that uses shavings." And then he says, "Yeah, it's very efficient." And it's just a crack-up to hear that that's how they heat the studio.

MS. RIEDEL: Which is, it sounds like, the antithesis of the experience you were describing earlier for your students in terms of practical experience out in the world. Here they're asking the most basic practical questions about how to survive [inaudible] furniture in the world.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Oh yeah. That school, I don't know how long it lasted.

MS. RIEDEL: It was the Parnham School?

MR. CEDERQUIST: Parnham House School, yeah. It was really sort of special, I thought. But very difficult to sustain.

MS. RIEDEL: Why so?

MR. CEDERQUIST: I think partly because of just the financial end of it. I think you get burned out trying to raise money.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. CEDERQUIST: You probably know more about that end of it than I do but it just—and a lot of it had to do with instructors moving on too. The guy that started it, Robert Ingham, was really a nice guy and he finally retired. So I mean I'm sure there was a lot of reasons for it but I could see when I was there how difficult it was to sustain the whole thing. Just modern times. So yeah, the, and I think that that could all spill over into, especially into ceramics. And I think that it's much more sustainable because of that aspect of it.

MS. RIEDEL: Ceramics is more sustainable—

MR. CEDERQUIST: No, I'm talking about just the idea of ritual and the fact that if you're making something—and it's funny because Obama was just on TV the other night, last night or the night before, and he said the problem with the United States is we don't make anything. And my friends and I have talked about the fact that, yeah, we make things. Who makes things?

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And it's a little esoteric in terms of what we make. You know, it's certainly not an automobile or whatever, but, the whole concept of—and especially kids coming up in school you really wonder, are you interesting in making something, and “things get made?” kind of question. [Laughs.] Oh, I thought it came from China. So I really think that a little less of the sort of strange religion, a little more of the downhome ritual and religion might be much more sustainable.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. That's the vision for the sustainable future in the 21st century.

MR. CEDERQUIST: Yeah, you know, let's make that into a religion.

MS. RIEDEL: That's an interesting thought.

MR. CEDERQUIST: And we might be a little more successful here, we might survive.

MS. RIEDEL: Hmm. That's a really interesting thought. Great.

MR. CEDERQUIST: That's it.

MS. RIEDEL: That's it. Thank you very much.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]