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**Oral history interview with Beverly Pepper, 2009
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a digitally recorded interview with Beverly Pepper on 2009 July 1-2. The interview took place at Pepper's home in New York, NY, and was conducted by Judith Olch Richards for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the U.S. General Services Administration, Design for Excellence and the Arts oral history project.

Judith Olch Richards has reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose. **What follows is a DRAFT TRANSCRIPT, which may contain typographical errors or inaccuracies. The content of this page is subject to change upon editorial review.**

Interview

JUDITH OLCH RICHARDS: This is Judith Richards interviewing Beverly Pepper at 84 Thomas Street, New York City, on July 1, 2009, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, disc number one.

Beverly, I'd like to start at the very beginning and ask you about your family—your parents and your grandparents a bit, as far back as you want to go. And then about when and where you were born, and into your childhood.

BEVERLY PEPPER: Okay. I think I'll start with my grandparents, basically because my paternal grandmother, though I was 13 when she died and I hardly knew her really, was a major influence in my life. My grandparents on my mother's side came from Vienna [Austria]. They were—

MS. RICHARDS: What was that family name?

MS. PEPPER: Their name was Hornstein. And they were very sensitive, quiet. My grandfather was very well read. And they came to America somewhere in the late 1800s; I don't know the dates. They were so unlike the rest of the family, where everyone else in the family, whom I could see, had been very strong, outgoing, and even aggressive people. But my grandmother and grandfather, who met by mail—it was arranged—and they corresponded for two or three years before they married. And they were an incredible story of love. They were so in love that they always ate out of one plate at the table. I did a painting when I was quite young of my two grandparents sitting at the table eating from one plate. They had two forks and knives, but they had one plate always.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you know how that started? It's so unusual.

MS. PEPPER: I haven't any idea, neither does my mother or anything else. I do know that when my grandfather died, my grandmother died one year later out of grief.

MS. RICHARDS: Where did they go when they came from Vienna?

MS. PEPPER: And they moved to Brooklyn.

MS. RICHARDS: They met and married in Vienna?

MS. PEPPER: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And moved to Brooklyn.

MS. PEPPER: My mother was born in New York. My paternal grandparents are just the opposite. My grandfather and grandmother—he was 17, she was 18—and they came from Lithuania, which was I guess was Russia then. Vilnius. They were very political, very leftwing—whatever you would call it at that time. They made speeches against the czar on street corners. And my grandmother and grandfather were not like Jewish refugees who left because they were Jews. The Cossacks were coming for them, as the story goes, and they got on a boat to America, and they got married on the boat. They were very radical. They were very disgusted with their children because they're children, they were not political. But more importantly, they were so bourgeois they got married. They didn't believe in marriage. They believed in free love. My grandmother was very political her whole life.

MS. RICHARDS: Did that set of grandparents—end up in Brooklyn?

MS. PEPPER: Yes. I never saw my four grandparents together. [Laughs] Now, that's another thing that I never thought of until this very moment. My maternal grandparents were so quiet and sensitive and religious. And my paternal ones were leftwing, noisy, aggressive. But remember this is somewhere about 1880-something. And this is a woman who had her hair short as yours is. I've never seen her with long hair. My other grandmother wore what's called a sheytl or something, a wig, because very religious Jews did that. When my father met my mother, nobody believed he was Jewish. Also, strangely—

MS. RICHARDS: So your mother's family was Hornstein.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. And my father's family Stoll, S-T-O-L-L. What is interesting is that you would think these political people then would've wanted education for their children and made all that effort and everything else. Instead, my father's family were really without any real education. And of course my mother's family only the son was educated and went to the college and all of that kind of thing. This is important only in terms of the fact that I come from a family of— Now my mother, who should've been my paternal grandparents' daughter because she was just like my grandmother—and they loathed each other—[laughs] was a very, very strong woman. She worked politically places. She collected money on street corners for tuberculosis. You know we're talking about as long as she was alive; and it started in my memory when I was about six years of age. I can remember my mother doing that. And she worked for the black community. My father, who came from this very political family, hated the black people. [Laughs] He was prejudiced. He had all the things that you think would've come from the opposite. Until my mother introduced him to Shirley Chisolm. And then he fell in love with her, and then the blacks were acceptable. It was very funny.

But I tell you this because I come by my freedom and my—I'm not a completely brave person. But I'm very brave because I overcompensate for any kind of possible fear I have. My life was about overcompensation. And it took me a while to realize that I'm my mother's and my grandmother's child, these two women. My mother's sisters were very strong, too. So that I— And my mother never ever made a difference between boy and girl; she felt that we all had exactly the same rights; we should do what we want to do. So I never questioned anything that I—it never occurred to me that I couldn't do something I wanted to do. I never thought of myself as a woman. That's why when the concept of women artists came up, it was very foreign to me. Artist. I'd always considered that you did not have to have an adjective, some kind of definition of what artist was, you see. So that's about the family part that I think is very important.

The second is my father was a very difficult, in many ways brutal man. And I will tell you the story of why I left home very early in my life. I was six years of age. Remember there was a depression; people had no money. And I took a dollar from my mother's pocketbook. My father said I stole it. [Laughs] But I just took the dollar. And went to the nearby candy store. And as I talked to my analyst years later, I didn't buy candy, I didn't buy ice cream. I didn't buy the dolls. There was this three-drawer colored pencil box. It was the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. You know there was about—to me it was about that size; but it was about this size and it had all of these drawers. And so I bought that with that. And my father found out about it. First he beat me so I that I still remember my mother banging on the door for him to let me out. He beat me so that I couldn't go to school for a week. I went to live with my maternal grandmother for that week. And it was the best thing that ever happened to me in my life. Because I left in my head right then and there. Now I know all of this because of analysis that I had later in life.

But I realized that I was free. He never frightened me again. He frightened my brother, he frightened my sister, he frightened my mother. But he never frightened me again—ever. And when I grew a little older, I realized that man didn't think clearly. What did I buy? You know I bought my future. I didn't understand that was my future then. And also I bought freedom in another way because my mother then, when we moved where we had a house, gave me the whole basement to paint what I wanted to do, and do whatever I wanted to do. So it was my passport to being me. That was a very, very important thing. And when I read about Louise Bourgeois and everything, I don't do autobiographical art. I think this is part of the father that made me. And it still makes me. That's why I wanted to be stronger than he was. That's why I always did very big things. This confrontation went on without my being aware of it most of my life. But between my paternal grandmother and my mother, women can do anything. And my father beating me to the point where he never frightened me again, and I literally left home in my mind then. I got out as fast as I could. And when I graduated from high school, I was not quite 16.

MS. RICHARDS: I wanted to stop for a second.

MS. PEPPER: Okay.

MS. RICHARDS: Why don't you mention where you lived exactly in Brooklyn when you were born, your address, and what date you were born? And how about any brothers? Were you the oldest?

MS. PEPPER: No, I was the youngest. I was the youngest, and I was the leader, thanks to my father, you understand. You see there's an old joke, which I won't do right now, but at the end it's about a man having—a little bird having—cow plop falling on it during the wintertime. And it survived the winter because he was covered by the cow plop. And it shows that not all kinds of shit is bad. [Laughs] You see. And that particular instant in my life was formative and freeing. Though I still see the welts on my body. I see all that kind of thing. And with great regret—I wanted terribly to forgive him. But he was so brutal throughout his life in other circumstances that it didn't work out that way. God knows he wanted to make up with me. I was the star of the family, you know. I think my father was—well, let's not get into my father now. We've done that. But I was born in Brooklyn, and I believe it was on Bedford Street—Bedford Avenue, Bedford Street? You see I've wiped myself out of the whole thing so that I don't really know. I know that I spent my most important years on Avenue R in Flatbush.

MS. RICHARDS: You mean important years being—

MS. PEPPER: As a child before I went to art school.

MS. RICHARDS: I see. I see.

MS. PEPPER: And my life was formed in strange ways by men in the fact of my father's beating me. And then I had a boyfriend who was—when I was in high school—who was in his twenties, and he was in the advertising business. And he saw great talent. And he went to my mother and father and said she had to go to art school. Because my family would not have thought about it.

MS. RICHARDS: Hmmm. You were born when exactly?

MS. PEPPER: December 20, 1922.

MS. RICHARDS: And that was on Bedford.

MS. PEPPER: Bedford, I believe. I was born at home, I was told. Bedford Avenue or Bedford Street. I'll find out from my brother.

MS. RICHARDS: And then you moved to a different address in Brooklyn?

MS. PEPPER: No, and then we moved to Flatbush, which is still in Brooklyn, but the address was—that I know was 3020 Avenue R. Isn't that interesting I should— We moved to a house. We were going upscale then. The Depression was [inaudible].

MS. RICHARDS: What was your father's profession? And did your mother work?

MS. PEPPER: No, my mother didn't work. She worked for causes; my mother was a cause person. But she didn't work. Which is interesting because she—my mother may have been the strongest woman in the world. [Laughs] Almost as strong as her mother-in-law. But my father first imported rugs—and then the war came—oriental rugs. Then the war came, and he had—obviously couldn't do that any longer. So he went into the fur business and became a manufacturing furrier, whatever that meant.

MS. RICHARDS: Did your brothers go to college?

MS. PEPPER: I have one brother. Yes, he went to college.

MS. RICHARDS: You said he's older than you.

MS. PEPPER: Yes, he's the oldest. I have a sister between us. And my brother—this is a story of my father again—who was going to go; I don't remember the college, but it was a college in New Jersey. My father was a gambler. I'd say he was a borderline hood. And he lost his money for my brother's education. Can you imagine how bitter my brother is. [Laughs] And so he went to Brooklyn College. But he was—I'll remember the name of the college that he was going to go to. And my brother's brilliant, utterly brilliant. An enormous waste because he was also tyrannized by my father very differently. My father wanted him to be a bully as he was. My brother's too sensitive and too caring and too brilliant, you know, to do that. Anyway, the young man who I was dating thought I should go to art school. I wanted to be a painter at the time.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you have teachers in elementary and high school who encouraged you?

MS. PEPPER: No. As a matter of fact the most wonderful story: My brother and sister—I used to do all their—

MS. RICHARDS: What were their names?

MS. PEPPER: Harriet Falb; she died a few years ago.

MS. RICHARDS: How do you spell Falb?

MS. PEPPER: F-A-L-B. And my brother's name is Norman Stoll.

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

MS. PEPPER: And where was I now?

MS. RICHARDS: Talking about your—did you have a teacher in high school?

MS. PEPPER: Oh, yes. [Laughs] I did all the drawings, even when I was eight, seven- eight-years-old. My brother for his geography and my sister and everything else. And when I came, I wanted to—you were able in high school to major in something. I wanted to major in art. They wouldn't let me do it. I had a teacher who simply must have loathed me for whatever reason. And I said, "But I can draw anything." And, "Please let me stay after school. I'll—" He said, "Your sister or your brother drew these." They can't draw at all. And I said, "No, I'll stay after school, and I will draw anything you put in front of me." And I did. It was very interesting. He put a glass, he put a book. I drew and I drew and I drew. And he still wouldn't let me major in art.

So when I told my mother that I still wanted to go to art school, and I said to her, "I don't want to take anything from Dad. He has to pay for my first year if I can get in, and then I'll support myself. I want nothing from him, but I can't do it at this point." Well, my friend— Well, first my mother said, "You can't go. You can't study art. I don't want you to be a starving artist." And I said, "Why would I have to be a starving artist?" She said, "Because that's what it is, a starving artist." And then I realized my mother thought –

[Telephone rings.]

– starving artist was a hyphenated word. [Laughs.]

Let's just see. Hello?

Well, we'll just leave it here so we don't— I'm expecting a call from Italy.

So we compromised, and I would study advertising art, if I could get into art school. And I worked so hard. I didn't know the difference between pastel and oil. I never—I wasn't in the art department. I never knew anything. And—

MS. RICHARDS: In high school, knowing that you wanted to be artist, did you feel that you weren't interested in the other subjects or you didn't do well in the other subjects? You just had a passion —

MS. PEPPER: Oh, no. I did very well.

MS. RICHARDS: You did well academically.

MS. PEPPER: No, no, no. I didn't study very much. But I still was in the eighties, you know, my marks. I wasn't a great studier, but I had a very fast mind. And I was dyslexic. As you know, most artists are; no one knew what it was. So I never understood why my math marks were so bad, but I reversed

the numbers. Now I know because I use math a great deal in my work. And I don't use—I do it very fast in my mind. But I did very badly in math and brought my average down. But my average was anyway 87; so it was all right. But my mother said if I studied like advertising art, I could go to art school. And so I took all these tests for Pratt. It was the only art school I knew about, you know; it's Brooklyn. And indeed I got in. And I was the youngest person in the school, but I also had no background. I literally did not know the difference between pastel and oil.

MS. RICHARDS: You never went to museums in New York?

MS. PEPPER: Well— No, I didn't have that kind of family. They were not—the fact that I had any culture is phenomenal, you see. But then my brother and sister have culture, too. So we just sort of, you know— My mother bought books by the whole set, you know: de Maupassant; I think she got it from the *New York Post* clippings or something, whatever—you know, they had so many clippings, you could get de Maupassant like that. But—and I don't remember how this happened. But I did when I was ten years of age went to Saturday classes at Pratt one summer. And so I had some—that's what made me realize that's what I really could do. But what happened was that I realized, when I got into Pratt [Institute, New York City], I may be the worst artist in the whole school, as far as I was concerned. And that's a challenge for me. I'm somebody who if there's a challenge, I don't run; I jump over it, do what I can. And I decided I was going to be the best artist in the school. But then something happened the first day of school.

I was invited to join a sorority. It was the most exciting thing I could think of in my life. You know, Brooklyn, and blah blah blah. And the next day I received a note from the sorority saying: "Dear Miss Stoll, it never occurred to us you were Jewish. And of course we do not take Jews in our sorority." Well, I was in a serious dilemma because if I told this to my mother, her politics were so politically left, she would've picked me up and removed me from the school. There would be no way that I could have stayed. That was the end of my life. So I went to see—I still remember exactly what he looked like—the dean. His name was Boudreax. He looked like a French—

MS. RICHARDS: Do you know how to spell that?

MS. PEPPER: Yes. It would be B-O-U-D-R-E-A-X. He looked like a caricature of a French colonial with a tiny little moustache, you know, and spare hair, and very straight. And I gave him the letter. And he read it, and he said, "Sit down." Up 'til then he'd had me standing. [Laughs] And he said, "You have to be very extraordinary." And I with tears running down my face, "Why? Because I'm not allowed to join a sorority and I'm Jewish?" He said, "No, you don't understand. We have a one percent Jewish quota, and a one percent New York quota. And you are in—you've gotten in on both quotas." [Laughs] But it traumatized me. I said, "What am I going to do about this?" He said, "You make believe it never happened, and you're just going to go to the school." And indeed I have to tell you that I made very few friends in art school. I didn't know who the enemy was, you know. And it was very good because I worked day and night. There was another Jewish girl there with whom I was friends. And the best artist in the school was a senior, and his name was Lawrence Gussin.

MS. RICHARDS: How do you spell that?

MS. PEPPER: G-U-S-S-I-N. And I married him. The marriage lasted—we were still in art school. Because I graduated art school at 19—that's how young I was. And I married him for two reasons: One, he was the best artist; and the second was that I was to—

Hi, here's my beautiful daughter.

JORIE GRAHAM: Hi. [Inaudible].

MS. PEPPER: Well, this is Judith Richards. My daughter, Jorie Graham.

MS. GRAHAM: Can I hear the doorbell from here?

MS. PEPPER: Certainly.

MS. GRAHAM: I'm expecting a courier letter.

MS. PEPPER: I know your husband almost went out nude to let her in. [Laughs.]

MS. GRAHAM: I know. [They laugh.] So if it rings, will you get it? I'm just running out to get something. I'll be right back. But just in case I miss it.

MS. PEPPER: Certainly. No problem.

MS. GRAHAM: Thank you. You look beautiful.

MS. PEPPER: I do?

MS. GRAHAM: Yes. It's your face, Mom, not your clothes.

MS. PEPPER: [Laughs] My daughter. Do you know anything about my daughter? She's so wonderful. You know that's the blessing I have. The best friend of the world. We are so close. The only other person we're that close is my granddaughter. Fabulous child.

Anyway, we'll finish this story. I married Gus. But I must tell you that I stayed with him until I became a better artist than he was. [Laughs] Terrible story. [Laughs] But he was boring. He was very boring. By then—

MS. RICHARDS: Was it partly so you could move out of your parents' house?

MS. PEPPER: It was [inaudible]. It was completely that I could move out of my—I don't think it was even partly. You know I think that I didn't think in the front of my head that way. I thought I was in love with him. But he taught me a lot. And then I became an art director. Have you read some of this stuff?

MS. RICHARDS: But still, it's important to—

MS. PEPPER: Okay. What happened is that also given my grandmother's blood, which I inherited, I didn't know how to be a follower. [Laughs] So when I looked for my first job, I didn't look for a job as an assistant. I had a great portfolio, Decca Record covers; so I got a job at Decca Records doing album covers.

MS. RICHARDS: So you graduated in the normal course of time at Pratt?

MS. PEPPER: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: When you and Lawrence married, where did you live?

MS. PEPPER: Forest Hills.

MS. RICHARDS: And you commuted by subway to Pratt?

MS. PEPPER: No— Yes, yes. That's right. And it was the last year just then—my last year.

MS. RICHARDS: When you married him.

MS. PEPPER: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: He was in the same—

MS. PEPPER: No, he was already out.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: And what happened was he was very good, and *Redbook* needed a new design. And some German refugee came to the art school while he was in school and—Gerhard—I'm trying to remember his last name. I was going to say Richter, but we know it's not. [Laughs] But he was a German Jewish refugee, and he found Gus. And he asked Gus if he'd work with him to redesign *Redbook Magazine*. So I helped. I was still in art school, and I helped design—redesign—that. And then we did *Cosmopolitan*. But I was—there was something more I wanted. I didn't know what it was I wanted.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you have any remarkable or influential teachers at Pratt?

MS. PEPPER: There was—

MS. RICHARDS: Did you study painting and sculpture?

MS. PEPPER: I didn't study sculpture. But there was a woman—I just remembered her name the other day. I studied industrial design the first year. And it was heaven. It was like I came home. And they didn't allow me to continue because I was the only girl in the class. There were buzz saws and this and that. And the machinery, they felt, was not appropriate for a girl. And they called my mother and said that they wanted her to know that they were having me be removed from the class—not because I wasn't talented, but because they didn't feel that a girl could work this machinery. Rowena [Reed Kostellow] —what's her last name now? Rowena—it'll come up. I'll get it. She was very famous.

But anyway, everything I know about—that I use to make sculpture—I learned in the class. If I never took another class at Pratt, it would not have meant—nothing would've changed in my life. That first year was so extraordinary because I learned—You know you designed cars with clay. You had to learn to do three-dimensional drawings. Thought I didn't weld, other people did. They wouldn't let me. But I watched. I think that it was the most extraordinary, important thing.

Also there was another teacher there who taught me to look. What we used to do was he'd have a model, and we wouldn't draw from the model. He would not allow us to draw from the model. He'd have us look at it for a certain length of time. And then we had to draw. That's the best training you will ever get in your life. I see more than most people because of him. It was an amazing experience. I'm now—I'm very involved with Pratt. I've had every award they can give, etc., etc. I'm their famous graduate. But it was a wonderful experience. It was during the war. I remember some of the kids were very mean to some German kid who was a refugee. Clearly they should've understood that. But he was a German for them. How cruel kids are! But Pratt was an extraordinary experience for me because I was away from home. I was in a world where there was ideas.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you live at home and commute, or did you have an apartment? Before you got married.

MS. PEPPER: I lived at home and commuted. My mother wouldn't allow me to go there. But I also did that for another reason. I didn't want my father to pay for anything. So I worked while I was in school. I worked in the library. There was some kind of student loan thing. And then after the first year we studied lettering. Nowadays they, you know, they run everything today on the computer. But we had to learn how to letter. And lettering was a very high-paid craft. So that on the weekends I would letter for whatever freelance I could get. And they paid you \$5.00 a word whether it was Constantinople or A. So I did very well. And I was able to support myself that way. And I was free. I was out of that house, and in my mind I was somebody else. You know I just there— But I can go on with my youth forever. So we're going to make a jump over the fence and say that I was in the advertising business. The first job was with Decca Records. I was art director for Coty [Inc.].

MS. RICHARDS: So you graduated in 19—

MS. PEPPER: Thirty-nine, was it? Forty-one?

MS. RICHARDS: Before the war?

MS. PEPPER: When did the war start?

MS. RICHARDS: Well, for the U.S. in 1941 after Pearl Harbor.

MS. PEPPER: I was married then, I remember that. I can look it up.

MS. RICHARDS: You were 18 in 1940. Were you 19 when you graduated or 20?

MS. PEPPER: Yes, 19.

MS. RICHARDS: Four years. Nineteen?

MS. PEPPER: Yes, 19.

MS. RICHARDS: So '41. And then your first job after Pratt was at Decca?

MS. PEPPER: No, the first after Pratt was at—what hotel was it? No, it might have been Decca. But I worked in some hotel. And I didn't even know [laughs] I was the art director. I didn't know what you did. And then we had to do pay stubs and things—it was very different. And I told them that I designed the things, but we have to have somebody else do all these pay stubs. I didn't know how to do them. [Laughs] So I had these people working for me doing things I did not know how to do. I was just there designing things. Then I became the art director for Coty, but I became the art director for Coty through the backdoor. By that I mean I was working—

MS. RICHARDS: Coty cosmetics?

MS. PEPPER: Yes. But I was working in this advertising agency, and I discovered I was doing accounts like men do, you know. Liquor, this, that. And I discovered I'd been paid much less than the men. So I said to them, I don't really want to do these. I would like to do cosmetics or something like that. And to my utter joy, they let me do it—I preferred other things; they were much more interesting—because they paid me properly because I was a woman doing a woman's thing. But the woman's thing was not a—psychologically they needed to get a very high price. I had amazing

experiences, which would be a whole book amount. I used to—I was a kid. I'd have Eric, who was a famous illustrator who worked for us. And I'd have to go every morning to make sure he wasn't drunk and saw that he was doing it. And I'd show up, and he'd be drinking milk. And I said, "I don't know you drank milk." He said, "Have some." It was spiked milk. So in the morning I'd be drinking bourbon-spiked milk—delicious. I had this amazing life. I met the most amazing people. I met the whole big world.

MS. RICHARDS: Were you still married?

MS. PEPPER: Well, I think I probably had already left him or was still married to him. But I was losing him.

MS. RICHARDS: How long were you married to him?

MS. PEPPER: I can't tell you because I was—I had a love affair probably after the first year; I left him probably after the second year. But I didn't get the divorce until I was in Paris and everything else. And I actually was going to go marry the other man—thank God I didn't! But that's another soap opera. My love life we're not going to do in this thing. [Laughs] We haven't got time.

MS. RICHARDS: But were you painting at that time?

MS. PEPPER: I was going to the Art Students League [of New York] at night. And I studied with Kuniyoshi.

MS. RICHARDS: So after you graduated Pratt and you were working in advertising, was there a time where you thought you would want to be in advertising as a career?

MS. PEPPER: No.

MS. RICHARDS: When you left Pratt, you knew you also wanted to go to the Art Students League?

MS. PEPPER: A number of things happened while I was at Pratt—even though I was working as I told you. But for the last year and a half of Pratt, I'd go to Brooklyn College at night because they didn't give me enough education at Pratt. At that time you really didn't get any culture. You didn't get anything into philosophy—anything. So I'd go and take philosophy courses at Brooklyn. That's why my marriage didn't work. My husband was lazy. He wasn't interested in growing that way. And I was going so much faster. You know I was still a kid. I was growing and growing. And then György Kepes—do you know who he was?

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes.

MS. PEPPER: K-Y-P-E-S, I think. And György is with a Y.

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

MS. PEPPER: György Kepes who opened the whole world for me. I mean I—

MS. RICHARDS: At Brooklyn College?

MS. PEPPER: At Brooklyn College. I'd never heard of Moholy-Nagy. He was a friend of his. People picked me up. They took me—people met me when I was just a kid. But they would open doors for me. It was a very interesting thing. I had an unbelievable what's called an overcompensated

inferiority complex—unbelievable. I know that from all the analysis I had. But that's another story. But I was very lucky that someone like György Kepes opened doors for me. Gave me another life. And told me about the surrealists he knew, and they'd come to America.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you meet any of them?

MS. PEPPER: Not in America, in France. In fact my life was very strange. I was going to go to Black Mountain after Pratt. I thought that's what I want to do because Paul Rand, who became a friend—and once again someone who put me under his umbrella—said I should go to Black Mountain. But life is very strange. A girl came into my office—

MS. RICHARDS: He said this to you when you were in the advertising agency?

MS. PEPPER: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And also taking evening classes.

MS. PEPPER: That's right.

MS. RICHARDS: So you took the classes at Brooklyn College while you were at Pratt. When you graduated Pratt, you started taking classes at the Art Students League.

MS. PEPPER: Art Students League.

MS. RICHARDS: And those were classes in painting?

MS. PEPPER: Painting, painting—bad painting. Because I had these figurative people. Now I have at home in Italy abstract paintings I did in 1948. I probably have—

MS. RICHARDS: Did you know of Hans Hofmann?

MS. PEPPER: No, I knew nothing. I was very ignorant. My education came after I was in school. I really didn't get a—I'd learned craft in school, but I didn't have an education. I was starving for some kind of culture. I was starving for it.

MS. RICHARDS: When you were in advertising, did you get to meet artists in New York City?

MS. PEPPER: Well, I did. I'm trying to think—I knew a few of them like Ben Shahn and, as I said, Kuniyoski. But I met all the rest when I went to Europe. I really didn't know artists. Except Paul Rand, and Paul Rand really wanted me to go to Black Mountain. But life is very strange. I wanted out of the marriage, and I'd left him. But I didn't know what I was going to do with my life because I knew that I didn't want to be in the advertising business.

MS. RICHARDS: So you left him—

MS. PEPPER: I was making a lot of money.

MS. RICHARDS: Supporting yourself.

MS. PEPPER: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And living—

MS. PEPPER: I could support myself. I could support anyone else. I made so much money when I was such a kid. I mean it's unbelievable. You know I made much more money than my father made, you know.

MS. RICHARDS: And you were living in your own apartment?

MS. PEPPER: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: At that point. Where was that?

MS. PEPPER: In the '30s all the way east—I don't know. But what happened is a girl came into my office to tell me that she couldn't do a job I gave her to do. And I said, "Why not?" She said, "I'm leaving for Italy—for France. I'm going to go to school in France. I'm going to art school." I said, "Where are you going?" And she said, "The Grande Chaumière [Paris, France]." I said, "How do you do that?" She said, "Well," she said, "We're right across the street from the French Consul. You just go across the street, get a list of what you might want to study, and you ask for it, and you get a visa, etc." She left my office. Don't ask—life is so strange. I got up, went across the street [laughs] to the French Consulate—and I can't believe this.

[Doorbell rings.]

And decided that I would go to France to art school.

MS. RICHARDS: Is that the door?

MS. PEPPER: Yes, that's what my daughter's worrying about, so I have to do that.

MS. RICHARDS: Sure.

[Conversation pauses.] The interview is paused for a few minutes.

[Audio Break.]

MS. PEPPER: While I think about it, I knew theater people. I knew actors. I knew [inaudible]. I didn't know artists, you know. Anyway, I just decided [laughs] to do to school in France.

MS. RICHARDS: You were in the middle of taking classes at the Art Students League, but you didn't think that they were—

MS. PEPPER: Oh, my work was terrible. I wasn't getting anywhere worth going at night school, when I'm doing one thing over there.

MS. RICHARDS: At that point were you going—starting to go to museums yourself in New York?

MS. PEPPER: Oh, yes. Of course.

MS. RICHARDS: And getting an idea of the kind of work that inspired you?

MS. PEPPER: Yes. Absolutely.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you remember what that was?

MS. PEPPER: Well, Moholy-Nagy stays in my mind all the time because of Kepes. So he sent me in

that direction. And that was, you know, as a Constructivist, they were very important; I did that. I'm trying to go back in time because I haven't thought about— Well, I knew about Hans Hofmann, which is one of the reasons I wanted to go to Black Mountain. But Black Mountain was in America. What I didn't put in is that I was—I had psychoanalysis. I went to an analyst, a Freudian, a woman, whom I saw five days a week for two and a half years. No holidays. No holidays.

MS. RICHARDS: [Inaudible] your salary.

MS. PEPPER: Well, I had enough to do it. I had enough to go all this time. A charmed life at that point because it really—I was young enough for it to be important. I was in the real world. I had all the right things. However, since she never spoke to me, I felt very uncomfortable about believing something was happening to me. So I decided—when I went to the French consulate, I made everything for six months later, to go to Grande Chaumière in January in 1949, not immediately. And I told my employer that I gave him six months' notice. He said, "You'll never go. It's fine." I said, "I'm going to go. But I need to get my life in order. I have to understand. I'm tearing up everything. Everything! My relationships, my this, my that. I just want to leave the country." And that's why I didn't go to Black Mountain, which I regret considerably. And, yes, I was going to museums. I did things I never did when I was a child in a cultureless house, you know. And men always guided me, so I was given the right books to read and all that kind of thing.

And I was very political, very leftwing. And worked with—I worked for [Henry] Wallace; that's in '48, I worked for Wallace. And somewhere in the summer, I realized what a—that I really couldn't support Wallace. So I never voted for him. I never even went that way. And that was the last political thing I did. I realized that I was in the wrong boat. And that was part of good analysis. I understood when to pull back. I've never lied to myself. But the analysis really—it was even more clear. But I didn't trust the analysis. So I went to see—I got the name from somebody—a man named Jalowitz. He was so cute; I remember that.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you remember how to spell that?

MS. PEPPER: J-A-L-O-W-I-T-Z. He was a psychotherapist. He talked, you know. [Laughs] And I said to him, "You know I've had this analysis, and I'm tearing up my life. I'm taking all my savings, and I'm going to move to Europe to go to school. And I'm not sure I'm doing the right thing. But I have to have someone to talk to." After the first two sessions, he said, "Darling, you have a great—you're very well analyzed. You don't need me." And I said, "I do need you. I need someone to talk to. I don't care about paying you. I want to talk to you at least once a week." And the reason I'm telling you about him is because there's a lovely punch line. When I had my first show in Italy—I don't even remember the date.

MS. RICHARDS: I think 1952 was your first solo show [Galleria dello Zodiaco, Rome, Italy].

MS. PEPPER: Oh, okay. And I thought, well, I'll figure out. It was a very quiet week in the news in Italy and Rome at the time. And *Time* magazine sent someone around to see this woman who was having this show. Also because I had a little bit of notoriety—no, that was afterwards. That was afterwards. Anyway— And when they walked in the gallery—this is all luck; this is what life is about; it's really pure luck—Lionello Venturi was in the gallery looking at the work. And I didn't even know who he was. But the *Time* magazine person knew who he was and asked him what he thought of the work. And he said, "Oh, she's going to be a notable painter, [inaudible] at least." Well, the *Time* magazine wrote a piece, I managed a whole column, on my very first show.

And I got two letters from America. One from the Freudian, who said—how she knew it was me, I

haven't any idea because I used my name Beverly Pepper by then. She said, "Dear Beverly Pepper, I am very pleased that success has come your way, and I'm so pleased somebody is doing something that she really likes to do." [Laughs] And I thought that tells me about that bitter, little ugly woman who looked like Betty Friedan. [Laughs] I got a second letter from Jalowitz that said, "Darling Beverly, Of course you're going to be a success. It's been written all over you. And just have your dealer pick out any painting in the show and send me the bill. I want a painting." I tore that letter up, too. I'm sorry I tore those letters up. I did that for many years. But I just wanted that way in the past, you see. But that I've been— But I think—

MS. RICHARDS: So you took six months in New York and then went.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. And then went. And I was having—

MS. RICHARDS: In fact to study painting.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. Though the reason for painting is I thought I would like to travel, and I figured if you're a sculptor, you can't travel. [Laughs] You see, I haven't stopped traveling since then. But that was the reason I studied painting. However, I used to stand outside Zadkine's studio and watch him work. And we'd talk a little bit, you know. No, I was a pretty girl, and it was easy to stand out and have him talk to me. And I never talked to—oh God, tell me, my senior moment—Brancusi, but I did see his studio there, too. But I had letters—remember now I was part of the big New York world, advertising, all that—so I got letters to all kinds of very important people, whom I never called. But I was going to London. I was very discouraged.

MS. RICHARDS: Wait. You went to Paris, and that was a discouraging experience?

MS. PEPPER: No, no. I was discouraged with my work. I didn't think the work was good enough. I was no longer doing abstract painting. I was doing terrible figurative painting. I was studying with André L'Hôte in the Grande Chaumière.

MS. RICHARDS: I see. It was studying in Paris that was discouraging.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. I thought— But I also felt that there was— When you got to Paris—I got to Paris in the wintertime. And it was so depressing. You know it still felt the war. People were still wearing those clogs, and the women were dressed drably. And I felt—I couldn't see how I could make abstractions. So I did just these terrible—they're not so terrible now that I see it—but they seemed terrible to me at the time. Realist painting, that kind of thing. And I didn't like the work I was doing. And so I decided I'd go to London. And I had a letter to Roland Penrose.

MS. RICHARDS: Does it mean you dropped out in the middle of the semester?

MS. PEPPER: No, no, no, no!

MS. RICHARDS: So you finished the semester?

MS. PEPPER: I didn't drop out at all. I went for a long weekend to London.

[Telephone rings.]

My assistant's there. I wrote Roland Penrose, send the letter of introduction. And he very nicely saw me. And I told him I was very discouraged, that I thought I was going to go back to advertising. And I had a number of things I had down on paper that I was doing in London. I drew all the time, and I

painted all the time. And he looked at them. He said, "Well," he said, "I'll buy that one." I was such an ass, I said, "Oh, no! It's not good enough." [Laughs] He said, "You mustn't leave. You're very, very good." Then he was going to Oxford, and he said, "Have you ever seen Ashmolean Hall?" And I said, "No." He said, "Well, come up. I'll take you to lunch there tomorrow."

And he introduced me to Paolo Uccello. I'd never seen one of those. I'd never seen any Renaissance art. I'd never looked at Renaissance art. I didn't go to the Met. I went to the downtown Whitney and all that, you know. I was absolutely an empty vessel that anything you put in me was something. And I'll never forget seeing that. I stood there with him. It was like the whole world opened up for me. What's nice about it is Roland—though I never kept in touch. And this was the thing I was very bad: I didn't keep in touch with all these major people. Roland Penrose knew about me also. And when I bump into him places, he was always so warm and friendly. And he wanted to do—what could he do for me? Etc., etc. I was very proud that he kept me in art school. But I didn't know how to work the street. You understand. I should have seen [inaudible]. I would have learned much more from him. You know he was a very important man at the time. Anyway, I had a great and good friend who had been brought up in France, and he was coming in April to travel with me to Italy.

MS. RICHARDS: Coming from—

MS. PEPPER: New York.

MS. RICHARDS: New York.

MS. PEPPER: I was considering marrying him, though I wondered why [Laughs] because I wanted to be an artist. So I met him—I went to Naples first. I wanted to see Naples.

MS. RICHARDS: This is—

MS. PEPPER: Nineteen forty-nine.

MS. RICHARDS: Toward the end of that first year in France.

MS. PEPPER: In the middle, right in the middle, April.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Oh, because you went in January.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. And it was also spring break. And my life changed because, first of all, he came to Italy with a Town and Country convertible car. You know the wood sides that they had.

MS. RICHARDS: He brought it on a ship?

MS. PEPPER: Brought it on a ship. With a trailer for the luggage. Now this is a man who'd spent many years—I don't want to put this in there—but he was Helena Rubenstein's son. And [inaudible]; this was Horace, his younger brother. And we'd go through these war-torn places, and I'd be so embarrassed I couldn't bear it. It was just so awful. That when we got to Rome, and we stayed in all these fancy places. And we got to Rome, I told him that I didn't think I could continue traveling. This was just— Obviously we were two different people.

MS. RICHARDS: Would you like to give his name?

MS. PEPPER: Sure, it was Horace Titus. And so what I did—it's so funny—I said I'd meet him in Venice. Famous last words. And I went to the concierge, and I asked him if there was a Left Bank in

Rome. And he began to laugh. [Laughs] But he said, "There's this hotel where the artists go called the ." And he told me where it was. And when I got there, there was a girl I didn't know, but I'd seen in Florence because she asked me about my sandals. So she said, "What are you doing here?" Having seen me with this fancy car and all of this stuff. I said, "I thought I'd like to see Rome." I said, "What are you doing here?" She said, "I'm going to meet a man named Bill Pepper [Curtis Gordon (Bill) Pepper]." And I said, "Oh, I had a letter to him." Which was true, in Florence, but there was no way I could call him the way— Maybe she'd introduce me to him. Which she did. And we were married three months later.

But the most important part of this story, while I'm telling you about Bill Pepper, is that Bill Pepper has an insatiable mind for learning, learning, learning. And he was studying art history in Florence at the time. And I think I got a complete education and then a Ph.D. with Bill. He took me to see everything. He took me to see the Duccios. He took me to see the Giotto's. He took me everywhere.

MS. RICHARDS: That happened right away? You didn't go back to Paris?

MS. PEPPER: We went back to Paris to get married, where we met this poor girl [inaudible], and she was shocked to see us together because she never saw him. He was in the bar with Gabe Cohen. I don't know if you know who he was, but he was such a great sculptor. He died too early. Gabe Cohen, he was a really great sculptor.

MS. RICHARDS: This is in Rome.

MS. PEPPER: In Rome. Nick Carone was there. Consagra [Pietro Sansagra].

MS. RICHARDS: Nick Carone who just had a show at Washbun?

MS. PEPPER: That's right, Nick Carone was there. We all met at the—

MS. RICHARDS: Consagra?

MS. PEPPER: Consagra. And suddenly I was in the middle of an art world with this man who was studying art history and a writer. He was writing a novel. He had been there in the war, and he stayed on—what is it called—War Crimes Investigation. Then I went back to Florence, and just put a hole in my head, a funnel, and poured culture in it. And also being married to Bill gave me a possibility to do anything I wanted to do. He was that—

MS. RICHARDS: He was already an expatriate? He was already permanently—

MS. PEPPER: We don't consider ourselves as expatriates. And I'll explain why. Because we don't live in an expatriate world per se. Now Todi [Italy], where I live now, so many Americans have moved there. But when we were in Rome, he was working for *Newsweek*. He was the bureau chief of *Newsweek*. He was a foreign correspondent.

MS. RICHARDS: Is he older than you?

MS. PEPPER: Yes. He's 92; he's younger than I am. [Laughs] He's amazing. You know he's an amazing man. And he's like a sponge to learning, even at this point in his life. The education that I didn't have, I certainly got with him. He must have 20 publications that have come up.

MS. RICHARDS: So you went to Rome for the visit, and you never left. You stayed there? You found an apartment?

MS. PEPPER: We went to Paris. We didn't live in Rome.

MS. RICHARDS: You went back to Paris.

MS. PEPPER: We went— We traveled. He wanted me to see things. So we went to Assisi, we went to Florence, we went to—

MS. RICHARDS: Were you still in your mind a painter?

MS. PEPPER: Yes. I was a painter. And one that I didn't really think was a good painter. It's very strange because I never—I have a very high critical level about my work. I'm not one of these people who loves everything I do. I do maybe looking back. And I think a major problem for me and probably for other artists, is when I'm finished with something, I'm better than when I was when I started. And I see what I should have done. Now this is not true at the moment I'm finished because I work until I'm finished. That is the work stops me. At this point there's nothing more I have to put into it. But as my great friend and [inaudible] Lanzone says to me, "You never like anything." He said, "I've never known an artist who every time you finish something, it's never good enough."

MS. RICHARDS: Lanzone?

MS. PEPPER: Lanzone, L-A-N-Z-O-N-E. And I met him through the GSA [General Services Administration], my first work.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So you and Bill went to Paris.

MS. PEPPER: We went to Paris, and we got married there.

MS. RICHARDS: You were divorced first.

MS. PEPPER: Actually we married three months later, but we probably would've been married earlier if I had had my divorce papers. So I had to make sure I had the divorce papers. Then we had to get [inaudible].

MS. RICHARDS: That wasn't a problem?

MS. PEPPER: No.

MS. RICHARDS: Getting the divorce.

MS. PEPPER: No, no, no. It wasn't a problem. I'd already been gone from him for three years, you understand. I met him when I was 14. Very sweet man, but he really was—he didn't have the energy level for me. And also he reached the height of his talent. He wasn't someone who was going to go beyond and beyond and beyond. And I have been extremely lucky. I have known the best in different fields. And they've been very interesting sort of guides for me, paths. If you know people who are really good at what they do, you realize how much they're never really satisfied because it has to be better. Not that we ever had those discussions. But I observe a lot. I told you that man that taught me to see by not letting me draw it. Looking at models. And there are a few— It's interesting that the high points and what do you call them? road signs, people who are road signs in your life, you're not aware of them at that point. I remember Martha Gellhorn once telling me. She said, "You're going to meet people in your life, and they're going to be signposts for you."

MS. RICHARDS: Who is Martha Gellhorn?

MS. PEPPER: She was a very famous journalist who was and novelist who was Hemingway's third wife. The Spanish Civil War. One of the best things he did. Spanish War wife. She was considerably older than I was, but she liked me. She came to stay with me, and she was fascinating. But then, as I say, I was very lucky because I had all these signposts.

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

MS. PEPPER: And I was a sponge.

MS. RICHARDS: So you and Bill got married. And you subsequently went—

MS. PEPPER: We went to Paris because I wanted to continue what I was doing in Paris. And then I got pregnant. And I didn't trust the hospitals in Paris at the time. So we went back to America to have the child. We always knew we'd come back, but we didn't have any money. [Laughs] I'd already gone through all my money. And I thought I would never travel again. This is one of those great myths. I thought, oh, God, I have a child. I don't know whether I'm going to be an artist. I don't know whether artists should have children. I'm not even sure today they should, even though I have these children I adore. But I said to him, "Well, we have to get a car and travel across America. I've never seen America." And there I was pregnant. I'd seen a doctor. For the next—I don't know how many months it was—we went— We arrived in a place called [inaudible], Georgia, where there was a lynching. I helped make a pamphlet for some black cause while I was down there. We met— Bill had this ability that people just opened doors for him and let him in. So we slept in various people's homes: black homes were strange at that time. And we went all the way to California to meet his mother.

MS. RICHARDS: Where in California did she live?

MS. PEPPER: I think it was— Must have been— Well, she's lived everywhere; she's not from there. I guess L.A. was where she was. And then I took a plane back to New York because I couldn't travel back by car again. I was huge, you know. [Laughs]

MS. RICHARDS: What year was that when your daughter was born?

MS. PEPPER: Nineteen fifty. And I never saw a doctor all that time. I think about it now! I would read these books. One day he came in and found my crying on the floor. I was trying to do the Lamaze breathing and stuff. And he said, "Why are you crying?" I said, "Well, every time I read this, it starts with 'I would've died in childbirth if I hadn't done this.'" [Laughs] [Inaudible] those books. When I got back, you know, they weren't pressurized cabins. When I got off the plane and went to—my brother met me and took me home. And my water broke. [Laughs] I remember him saying, "Get off my couch. I just bought that couch. Oh, I've just had a baby." I said, "I'm not going to have the baby. Bill is not here." But indeed I had the baby without Bill. But what's astonishing is I couldn't remember the name of the doctor that I had seen in New York, you know. I remember he was at New York Hospital. And finally I found the name of the doctor. He had never seen me. I'd never seen a doctor. I mean how primitive can you be? But I knew nothing about it, and, you know, my life is serendipitous. It always has been. I trust. I trust me, you know. It's so strange. So I had the baby. And we by then had no more money left.

MS. RICHARDS: And the baby's name?

MS. PEPPER: Jorie.

MS. RICHARDS: Jorie.

MS. PEPPER: Jorie. Jorie Shepperd Pepper was her name. And the name Jorie is because we fought over names.

MS. RICHARDS: That's J-O-R-H-I.

MS. PEPPER: J-O-R-I-E.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh.

MS. PEPPER: But we fought over the name because he wanted Marjorie, and I didn't like it. So I said, "Let's take off M-A-R, and we can do Jorie." And that's how Jorie came about. But I went back—we had no money. And he was writing a book. So I called Art Fatt—that was his name—Arthur Fatt, who owned the agency I had worked for.

MS. RICHARDS: How is his last name—

MS. PEPPER: I think it's F-A-T-T, Fatt. It's a big fancy agency. Big agency. And I said, "I just had a baby, and I need some work. I'm back from Europe. But I want to work only three days a week." I must have been very good because he paid me a whole week's salary for three days a week. You know I have no idea whether I was good or not. But I must have been.

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

MS. PEPPER: Because once again, very well paid. But we still didn't have any money—I had enough money to go back, but how were we going to live? So I got an idea for a cookbook. This was only because I wanted to go back to Europe. [Laughs] And also because it was so cheap, and you could have help. I wanted to go to a place where I would be free to do what I wanted to do and have household help. So he applied for the GI Bill. And I had an idea for this book.

MS. RICHARDS: He'd been in the military?

MS. PEPPER: He'd been in the army. He'd been in Italy at the time [inaudible]. And we decided on France first because that was the language I spoke. Until we ran out of money, and he had to get a job. I said, "We'd better go to Italy," because that's the language he speaks. [Laughs] But anyway, what was interesting there was that I had an idea for a cookbook, which was a very stupid idea, but I knew it was very saleable. This is my advertising background. And the idea was to—because women were going to work then. They hadn't up to really— The war was over, and they were going to work. So I had a book that I gave the menus for every day of the week. Now this sounds so ordinary now, but it was revolutionary then. And I had what they did with leftovers, their shopping lists for every week. Told them to go out on Sunday, to have people in on Saturday. It was so stupid.

But I went to Bill's agent, and she just flipped for it. And sold it to Doubleday immediately. And sold it also to *Glamour* magazine to run as a monthly. And we had money to live. [Laughs] We had at least one year from the monthly income there. And we had also that. So we went back to Europe. And that started the haunting life of Beverly the cookbook writer. I didn't have enough sense not to change my name. [Laughs] I didn't know anything. I was so ignorant. I mean anybody would've known to change their—don't write under your own name if you want to be an artist. But I was just in the process of evolving. So anyway, I can't give you every detail of my life.

MS. RICHARDS: So you went to—

MS. PEPPER: Let's get back to art.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. So you went to Italy. Where did you live at first and why?

MS. PEPPER: Well, first we went to France, and we went to southern France to Haute de Cagnes.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. PEPPER: Which is on—it's between Cannes and Nice. A hill town. It was cheap. He went to the university in Nice. More art history, but really he was writing this book. And we had a person who cleaned and took care of the child on this whole hundred dollars a month kind of thing. And I was free to do what I wanted to do. In fact, that first show that I had in Rome, a good portion of it was painted in France.

MS. RICHARDS: In 1952. What gallery was that in Rome [Galleria dello Zodiaco]?

MS. PEPPER: You can find out by looking at my—

MS. RICHARDS: It doesn't say on your bio.

MS. PEPPER: I'm going to ask Christie.

MS. RICHARDS: How did you end up getting that show? Was that a gallery you stayed with?

MS. PEPPER: Oh, no, no, no. Was that the Obelisk? No, it wasn't. The second show was the Obelisk Gallery [Washington, D.C.]. The first show—I'll have to get the name. Does it say it on there?

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, I'm sorry. It does say.

MS. PEPPER: What's the name?

MS. RICHARDS: Zodiaco.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. The Zodiaco. And Carlo Levi wrote the catalogue. How that happened was—

[Cell phone rings.]

[Audio Break.]

MS. RICHARDS: So that was a painting show.

MS. PEPPER: Well, Rome was a very, very small town then. And—

MS. RICHARDS: I think I should change this disc.

[END DISC 1.]

MS. RICHARDS: I'm Judith Richards with Beverly Pepper on July 1, 2009, disc two.

So now we're going to move along.

MS. PEPPER: What about Carlo Levi?

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: For instance.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: Carlo Levi—Rome was a very small town, and I can't remember now, but I think my husband got a job on a small newspaper called the *Rome Daily American*. And he wrote a column for it, which was very successful and let to him working for CBS and Ed Murrow, and working for—

MS. RICHARDS: When you left New York, you moved to Rome?

MS. PEPPER: No, we moved to southern France.

MS. RICHARDS: I'm sorry, yes, southern France.

MS. PEPPER: Southern France.

MS. RICHARDS: But he got a job—

MS. PEPPER: No, but then we ran out of money. [Laughs] I had to start another book. And so it was this lovely time that when couples needed money, the man got the job. [Laughs] Nowadays women have made that terrible deal, you see. But it was nicer when a man thought he should take care of you. So anyway, so we went to Rome because he could speak Italian. What happened then? I think we went to Rome first because when I was in Paris, all those American directors who were running away from [Senator Joseph] McCarthy showed up in Paris. And I don't know how I got to know the first one, but then I knew them all. I knew Losey, Julie Dassin, and the whole bunch of them.

MS. RICHARDS: Losey?

MS. PEPPER: Joseph Losey.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes.

MS. PEPPER: And Jules Dassin. All of them. So when we needed money, I said, "I know Losey's making a film in Rome. Maybe you can get a job on it." And indeed he did. So that was typical. It paid so well we lived it up. [Laughs] We went through all the money. We lived at the [Hotel] Gregoriana. But you knew everyone. I was painting, however, painting, painting, painting.

MS. RICHARDS: How do you spell Gregoriana?

MS. PEPPER: Gregoriana, you know, like Gregorian Chants?

MS. RICHARDS: Oh. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. PEPPER: Gregoriana. And so it was Carlo Levi who saw my paintings and said, "These have to be shown. They're wonderful." And I said, "I don't think I'm ready." He said, "Yes, you are." He said, "If you have a show, you raise the bar for yourself. And it's better for you to have a show so that you raise the bar." And so he wrote the catalogue. And there were only two or three galleries of note whatsoever in Rome, you know. The Zodiaco was owned by some woman. It was—if I can remember where it was, but in the middle of downtown Rome. The show *Time* magazine wrote about, I think— When was the Zodiaco show?

MS. RICHARDS: Fifty-two.

MS. PEPPER: They wrote about that show? I would have thought they wrote about the one at the Obelisk, which is the next one.

MS. RICHARDS: Fifty-five. There's one in between in '54. Barone Gallery?

MS. PEPPER: That was in New York.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: That was in New York.

MS. RICHARDS: Obelisk was '55.

MS. PEPPER: I don't know. So I guess—I'm surprised. Well anyway, the Barone people saw the thing in Rome at the Zodiaco—the [inaudible] really. You know it's a series of good luck. People ask about careers. It's a very important thing to recognize those signposts and follow them. And when I was younger, I was better at it. Now I just want to work, let someone else do the finding that out. But it was a very small town, it was a wonderful place to live. It was quite extraordinary. I had my son in 1954.

MS. RICHARDS: And his name?

MS. PEPPER: John. And our life—Bill, everyone he knew because those columns were extraordinary. It was called "It Happened in Italy," and they were terribly—if we had time, I'd just tell you some of the columns because they were so amazing. So it moved us into different places, you see. One more vignette, and then I want to get back to the work. For instance, Clare Luce read those columns and invited us to lunch. I was pregnant with John. And she decided to pick us up, you know, [inaudible]. We were invited to all these things. She even came to see us in our modest apartment. And I in my Brooklyn blunt way said to her, "You know, Mrs. Boothe—" "Clare," she said, "Call me Clare." I said, "You know, Clare, I think if we're going to be friends" —because she was making this pitch—"you should know that I am politically diametrically opposite to you." [Laughs] And she loved it. No one had ever been that honest with her. [Laughs] Stupid little girl, you understand, saying this to her. So it was a small town, and it opened sesame. It was very interesting. You know. I don't know that I would've had a show so soon had I lived in New York.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you have a separate studio?

MS. PEPPER: Oh, yes. Well, yes, yes. I'm trying to think about it. At that point—I'm trying to remember. It was always just one very big room someplace. But we moved then to Positano, and that's where I had a big studio. Where I did the worst paintings you've ever seen because it was so beautiful that it was impossible to paint anything. Just impossible. Also I was getting claustrophobia. I started out as a very good painter because I was still close to my American roots. The thing that happened was the Italian and French experience, they watered down my roots. And I was absorbing everything around me. And it was very good for the future, but not for the present. So that the work, though very successful, most of my stuff sold and sold very well and was reviewed well, but this was in Europe, you understand. It wasn't in Italy. I just didn't think they were good enough. But anyway, I was looking for more dimension. That's what happened. And I started to make clay things and stuff like that, just to get more dimension into my work. And I think we should skip to 1962. It was 1962 was the most important year of my life.

MS. RICHARDS: I understand, though, that around 1960, you decided to, in fact, you moved to sculpture after an important trip.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. Oh, yes. I forgot about—

MS. RICHARDS: And that was sculpture that was cast or carved?

MS. PEPPER: No, what happened is I went to Angkor Wat with my daughter. We went around the world. Which I recommend to women who think they get along with their— It was the most wonderful trip I've ever had.

MS. RICHARDS: This was before or after your son was born?

MS. PEPPER: No, it was after he was born. He was too little. We couldn't take him with us.

MS. PEPPER: And so when we got to Angkor Wat, you flew in from Bangkok on a plane that picked you up at the end of the day and brought you back. But I was [inaudible] by Angkor, that there was one hotel, a rickety hotel, and I decided we were going to stay. And we stayed more than a week. I think it was about almost ten days, which was unheard of. You know no one—even today no one does that. But I have a daughter who was always a major brain. And she was just as enchanted and interested in everything. And we were very lucky because, you know, that trip could have killed us both. I just realized that there was dimension in Angkor. These huge heads. But also the trees, you see. Now they're cleaning it; it's just too bad. But the banyan trees just absorbed into the statuary. And there was a mystery—which the heads in themselves have mystery. But let's [inaudible] statuary. The combination of the trees and the roots of the trees and the history of them, and they had only dug out about 70 years before then. But they were not spending any money on that kind of thing.

So I was very lucky to see it in an incredible state. And I was haunted by it. And when I got back to Rome, we had moved to a house outside of Rome. Now it's the center Rome. But at that time it was the outside. And there were about 30-some-odd trees that had been cut down on the property before we ever got there that had been lying there. And I guess this would be a microcosm of my life. I never sculpted a piece of wood in my life. So I went out and bought not sculpting tools; I bought jigsaws and this and that. And started cutting up the trees. And the result of those cut-up trees was that I had my first show. Lionello Venturi. Lionello Venturi, who followed me, who was a very big fan, came to see them, because I was still had paintings on the side. And I said to him, "Professor Venturi, do you think I'm crazy giving up painting for this?" And he said, "These are extraordinary." He said, "If you have a show, I will write your first catalogue."

And I worked for about two years. It may have been a year and a half. Whatever. I'm a very, very—I'm a ten-hour a day, 12-hour a day worker. I was then. Now I'm only probably eight. [Laughs] And I had a gardener that came with the house. And he had one of those—what do they call them in English, those saws, circular saws. I don't know but it's the kind they cut down trees and things. So I asked him to cut off limbs and that. And I would do all my— For instance, to make a hole, I would [inaudible]. It's the thing you make holes with. What do you call that machine that we make holes with? I'll ask Christie. But anyway, so I would drill holes in a circle to make the hole I wanted and cut it through. And then I used—I invented the wheel. And I really made only big things; they were trees. I didn't make little things like that. I had a whole tree. I have one in my—one of my favorite ones I still have in my kitchen which is nine feet tall. This is the first year I'm sculpting. [Laughs] And by then I knew a lot of artists, like Andrea Cascella and Pierro de Grazio came to see me.

MS. RICHARDS: Sorry, Andrea—

MS. PEPPER: Cascella. And he said, "You've got to keep this up." He was a sculptor. He said,

"You're really doing something very original." But I also had Venturi there. So they brought people to see what I was doing because they liked them so much. And so this Galleria Pogliana, which is my first sculpture show—I think it's written there, Pogliana.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, Podana Pogliana.

MS. PEPPER: He said he'd give me a show. And so I wrote a letter to Venturi saying, "Dear Professor, You know you said— Would you do it?" He said, "Certainly will." He died before the show opened. His assistant was a man named Argan. Argan became the Clem Greenberg of Italy. [Laughs] He wrote my catalogue. So everybody in the world came to see it, the show. And a man named Carandente, Giovanni Carandente, who was Argan's assistant, asked me—he came to see the show. He brought some people to buy sculpture, too, which was amazing of this man when I didn't know him. And he asked me if I could weld. Now this is where my Brooklyn savvy came in, and I said, "Why?" Because there was no welding in that show. It was carving and some cast bronzes and things. I should tell you, in between the show—was it after that show? At the same time I was doing very strange string wax big sculptures which I had cast, which I never did show. They were foreign. They were really so avant-garde before anything like that and certainly no—

MS. RICHARDS: What kind of forms?

MS. PEPPER: They were just—

MS. RICHARDS: Organic or geometric?

MS. PEPPER: They were organic. But they were like almost cast shadows in a way. And they were very strange. And I took some of those things, and I put them into the wood. Anyway, Carandente asked me if I knew how to weld. And I said, "Why?" And he said he was organizing a fill [ph] where he was sending various artists to factories. And I said, "When?" And he said April, and this was November. Because [inaudible] learned to weld. So I said, "Of course I know how to weld." So he invited me to Filbino. If I go on and on about this, we'll never get through. So I'll tell you that the most important thing that happened to me in that show is that it's still the greatest sculpture show ever done.

MS. RICHARDS: At Spoleto.

MS. PEPPER: The greatest sculpture show ever done, ever done.

MS. RICHARDS: Nineteen sixty-two.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. And I was for one month in a factory in north Italy. And David Smith, whom I had met in New York, was in a factory in Genoa. But he spoke no Italian. So he'd call me and ask me to translate things and talk to people. Well, that was an education in itself because just things he wanted to use and his equipment, etc. I suddenly was right in the middle of the art world, the sculpture world. I got to know [Alexander] Calder. [Inaudible] and I became friends. David and I were friends. What's his name? Lynn Chadwick, we became friends. I was suddenly catapulted into the real world. I wasn't in the Italian world. And it just changed my life.

MS. RICHARDS: In '62 you were nearly 40. So you were an adult artist.

MS. PEPPER: Late bloomer, clearly. [Laughs]

MS. RICHARDS: However, this must have been a challenge in many ways as a woman.

MS. PEPPER: Oh, believe me!

MS. RICHARDS: In Italy.

MS. PEPPER: Anywhere. The reason they sent me to [inaudible] is they decided it was a 100 percent Communist town, and therefore they would treat me like a companion, and everybody would be equal. But what it did to me—I worked three shifts. This is typical of me. I worked the morning shift which was eight to two. I'd get there— No, it was six to two. I'd get there, and they would come with their onion sandwiches, and I would eat the onion sandwiches with them and have breakfast. And then I'd have break. Then I would work the two to ten shift. And then I would work another four hours for the third shift. I would eat with all these guys. They taught me everything. Listen, it was a Ph.D. in metal welding, metalwork. They adored me because you know what? I gained, I think, 14 pounds. Well, you know I ate all those things and the junk you wanted.

MS. RICHARDS: And muscle, too.

MS. PEPPER: Muscle, yes. But believe me, it was onion sandwiches, red wine, spaghetti, whatever they were eating. And I learned how to handle myself in factories. This was the most extraordinary thing that happened to me in my life. And then when we were setting up the show, I was with all the guys. And David and I became very good friends. In fact my very first commission that I got, I did not know, after I— It was a thing on Third Avenue and 47th and 48th Street, a big stainless steel sculpture for the Swiss architect, [William] Lescaze. And at one point I said, "How did you come to pick me?" He said, "David Smith recommended you." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, I wanted David to do this thing. But he never worked in this size he was working in." The sculptures I did in Spoleto were 18 feet, 20 feet. [Laughs] And I also did another—like 17 other sculptures. Didn't let them know. Because I thought you're not—Only after David had his show with all the [inaudible] where he'd done all this, that I realized you're allowed to say you made that many things. But I didn't know anything. I just sent that stuff to America for my first show. But I had done all this sculpture. But Lescaze said, "David said he can't work in that scale, but you could." And I— He said— And I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "She can do anything." It was so wonderful, and I was so touched that David had done that, you know.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you know David's wife, Dorothy?

MS. PEPPER: No, no, no. I met everybody in Spoleto, you understand. And Lynn Chadwick and I went up—was it that year or the next year?—to see David in Bolton's Landing [NY]. And it was Easter, and it was the biggest snowstorm. And we were snowed in for three days. [Laughs] Me and David Smith and Lynn Chadwick. In which David had a freezer filled with steaks. And the other thing might be interesting for history is that David drank so much scotch, and he had these boxes for the scotch, and thus began the Cubi series from this scotch. The showiness [ph] I was doing it. I tell you I had a—you know it was just what Martha Gellhorn said: There are signposts in your life, and you take them, take the road. And that was the most extraordinary thing that happened to me.

MS. RICHARDS: So the welded pieces that you showed at Spoleto—how did your work evolve from there?

MS. PEPPER: Let me see my biography. [Laughs]

MS. RICHARDS: Right. Sure.

MS. PEPPER: So I'll remember.

MS. RICHARDS: I know that you did some rough contorch [inaudible] cut.

MS. PEPPER: Oh, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Painted interiors.

MS. PEPPER: Oh, no. That's something I should have continued with because—

MS. RICHARDS: Made in '65?

MS. PEPPER: Yes. I had—I was working in U.S. Steel. And I was making a sculpture for someplace in Tennessee. I now had become very involved with factories. And the Steel & Iron Institute or something like that sponsored me for something. And they were—they gave me very thick steel, but there was no way to cut it. So I decided to try to cut them by overheating the welding. And therefore I had these very rough—I'll show you some; they're up there—these very rough edges. And actually Fontana, Lucio Fontana, for my first show at the Marlborough [Gallery, Rome], with these—these were small pieces—but he saw that. And I remember getting a call from the director of the Marlborough saying—

MS. RICHARDS: This is Marlborough Rome, 1965.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. And he said, "Fontana wants to buy one of your works." And I said, "Well, tell Fontana that I'd rather trade with him." And to my horror, he said, "No, he wants to buy it." And I thought, I just want to trade. Then he laughed and said, "And then he'll trade with you." I only realized afterwards—because I was so ignorant—what Fontana was interested in was what I was doing something he was doing with holes and things like that. And he was very interested in how to do this. The truth is, to be able to have done that, A, you had to have that kind of steel; but you needed industrial equipment to do that. And that was only because I was at U.S. Steel at the time. But they were wonderful.

MS. RICHARDS: What about the use of color on those works?

MS. PEPPER: Well, I was now working in America, and it was at the beginning of Pop. And I'm not impervious to what goes on around me. And I assume that—there were problems. There weren't a lot of burnt areas on the inside. And it was very difficult to clean them. And also the burns looked very interesting. And I tried to figure out how to keep them. And I decided to put color in them. I also, I must tell you, that I'm the first person—the first artist in America—to use Cor-Ten. And that I did in 1964. Because U.S. Steel said to me, because, you know, they liked me. I was this good-looking kid. "Beverly, why don't you try this new material we have. It's Cor-Ten." Now, Corten is a brand name, which you get—Bethlehem Steel had different numbers, etc. By calling it Cor-Ten, U.S. Steel really had the market because it was a name. And they gave me these pieces of corten. And I made a work that actually Charles Cowles's mother bought it. She's given it to some museum now—she's now quite old.

MS. RICHARDS: Is that Virginia Cowles?

MS. PEPPER: No, that's his sister. Jan Cowles.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, Jan.

MS. PEPPER: And Mike was alive then, Jan and Mike. And they bought them. There was— And when Barnett Newman was working the obelisk that he did, he asked—I was the only person really

—I was working in corten at the time. I went with him to, I guess it's Tattle—Teitel Geitz—where he was working in this place. Because they didn't know how to get the patinas. As a matter of fact, even the first patinas that Michael Steiner did, Clem Greenberg, they didn't know how to get the patinas. And when I put the patina on, instead of having it from outside in. So Barney and I went there and showed them how I did the patinas. And why did I know how to do the patinas? Because I was working in U.S. Steel with the people who invented it. It's not been ever published, by I did the first Cor-Ten pieces. You know it was quite something.

And then when the Cor-Ten disintegrated, I called U.S. Steel and said, "What's going on?" And they said, "Ssssh." [Laughs] Sculpture all across America disintegrating. Because Cor-Ten—we artists didn't use heavy-duty. We used 3 [inaudible], whatever that's called in English. We used very thin sheeting and a few— If it was anywhere near the sea, or anything like that, it just—

MS. RICHARDS: Corrodes.

MS. PEPPER: —corrodes right through. I now, when I use it, I use very heavy-duty, thick Cor-Ten. But I prefer carbon steel because it's orange and changes its color with the weather. It's not that warm color, you know.

MS. RICHARDS: The color that you used in these pieces on the inside, were they your silence references to Pop art?

MS. PEPPER: I wasn't aware of that. I realized I absorbed it. It was not that I said let's put the color in.

MS. RICHARDS: Besides Calder, were there other sculptors who were using color, abstract sculptors?

MS. PEPPER: I never thought of calling it using color in the sense of—because I used the color always with the raw material.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: It was very different. The stainless steel, you always had the outside. I used color in the inside to try to, in some way, emphasize the material that the work was made of.

MS. RICHARDS: When you were working after '65 and making these large stainless steel pieces that were outside, what was the initial inspiration for taking that leap to those pieces that were involved with different formal concerns? The positive and negative and the mass and the scale and all of those issues that those pieces— And the fact that they were outside in the landscape?

MS. PEPPER: Well, I'm trying to think of the first stainless steels I did, were the ones that were flame-cut or whatever that was.

MS. RICHARDS: Right, right.

MS. PEPPER: And then I went on to—from then they became fairly geometrical. And that's because — That all started at U.S. Steel while I was making the sculpture for this place in Tennessee. And so I became acquainted with stainless steel at that time. When I built my first boxlike structure, the grain is [inaudible] of the stainless. Either I ground it—people don't understand. David Smith's bronze sculptures, he never—there's no design he did. That's the way when you grind a sculpture, you want to get off the welding, that's what happens. You decide whether you want to have that

welding, those circular things, etc. If you want to have them, then you look like you're doing a David Smith because that was his— But you had no choice. Once you welded a seam, you grind it off, you immediately have that pattern. And I was very concerned about being accused of taking David Smith's patina. Though people have always associated me with David Smith, my work really—I loved his work, I must say. He influenced me in many ways, but not in terms of taking his work. I kept trying to work against it. And one of the reasons for polishing them was that I tried to figure out what to do with the seams without grinding them.

And that was once again very serendipitous because by then I had already done the Cor-Ten piece that had been painted and the other flame-cuts that were painted. So when I ground— When I did these and we polished them, I realized that something extraordinary—this is once again the divine accident— When it was [inaudible], it absorbed completely the landscape. That led me to saying, why don't I just use the landscape rather than have it as an image? So that led me to using grass instead of having absorbed that, you see.

My work is really like compound interest. The first work always influenced the next work. If you go through all my work, you'll see. I gave a lecture once. And I was trying to show this, and I found a photograph of the inside of one of my stainless—actually the one at Albright-Knox—that I put, just that detail, I put on top of one of my triangular ones. And it was exactly that shape. I still have it. So there I was, I was now using the insides instead of the outsides. And my work always sort of moves from one thing to— One area it didn't is when I moved to what's it called? I'm thinking in Italian. Forged work. That was a decision.

What happened there is that I happened to be passing a—once again I'm going to have to translate it for you—where metal was thrown away. People used metal and things. And I walked in, and I saw these extraordinary molds that were cast iron. And I didn't know that they were cast iron. I thought that they were forged. So I went to a place and asked them to teach me, show me how to forge things. And for about a year I made forged sculpture. But I realized I am not physically capable of doing that. It's very, very hard work. You have to be a big man. Even if you use a dropped forge with your feet, you still have to hold the metal and turn it. And I was covered with burns. So I had to find another way to do that. So I started casting in iron. Once again, you'll find very few people in America cast in iron at the time I started, which was also in the late sixties, when I started casting in iron. And iron is my favorite material.

MS. RICHARDS: I've read wonderful quotes about iron that you've—

MS. PEPPER: Yes, I just love iron. The reason I'm not using iron these days is that at each stage of one's life, you must have reality. And the reality is that I can't make those big things physically out of iron anymore. I just don't have the— And I don't want anyone else to do anything that has textures—it has to have my handwriting. And when I worked with plaster, I worked directly with my hands. And, you know, it's very good; you have soft hands from it. So you have my fingerprints all over it.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. PEPPER: I have a very bad back, you know. I'm going to be 87 years of age, and I've been working with those heavy materials for a long time. So that I have certain things I can't do. But that's fine because it leads me to do something else. Makes me invent another wheel, you see. Which is the interesting thing about it.

MS. RICHARDS: After the works, the stainless, there was a period of work, I think it was the late sixties, where you really felt it was a breakthrough using the stainless. That's the period you're

talking about? And then I think that led to a touring show, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago in 1969?

MS. PEPPER: Yes. Well, that was my first Marlborough show.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, before that.

MS. PEPPER: No, my first New York Marlborough show. And they were all big stainless steel—very big things. And most all those works were sold to museums.

MS. RICHARDS: Right, 1969. I see. Was it the actual show that toured, the Marlborough show that toured to the Albright-Knox—I mean Chicago in [inaudible]?

MS. PEPPER: I'm trying to think, because most of that stuff was sold.

MS. RICHARDS: Because I think that Jan van der Mark—

MS. PEPPER: That's right. He wrote it.

MS. RICHARDS: —wrote in that.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. He organized the shows, too. He was the director of the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art at the time.

MS. RICHARDS: Was that your first major museum exhibition of sculpture in the U.S.?

MS. PEPPER: Well, it went— The Albright— First, what happened was in 1967, maybe it was, or 'eight—I'm trying to remember his name now, Douglas [MacAgy]—? He organized this show called "Plus by Minus," for the Albright-Knox Museum. And he had seen a work of mine in Italy. And I got a call from the gallery in New York saying that he chose that work for the "Plus by Minus" show. That was my first really big recognition kind of thing because the Albright-Knox bought two things from that show: my sculpture and Simaris's [ph] chair with all that. Of course it made the Marlborough very happy, you see. But that was my really first—to have Seymour Knox who then became a big supporter of mine and bought lots of things always. But what's very important about this stainless steel is how it led directly to the work that most people aren't aware of because where I use the land, I do so much land work.

MS. RICHARDS: Right.

MS. PEPPER: I've just finished a theater for some private people Upstate New York where it's a land sculpture which they use as a theater. And I'm doing something for Bill Fisher outside of San Francisco.

MS. RICHARDS: Well, later on I do want to touch on the current projects.

MS. PEPPER: Okay. Fine.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. So in the early '70s and 1970—the image is the stainless steel? [Inaudible.]

MS. PEPPER: That went into the—That was how I broke with Clem Greenberg, among the things. And the way I broke with Clem Greenberg is that Clem Greenberg, who wanted to be a big supporter of mine and loved my work, said to me once that women can't be great sculptors, but you may break the mold. I made a sculpture which now is at the Albany Mall [*Compound*, Albany Mall,

Albany, NY] that went like this, and then down. Clem wanted me to take away the things that went along the ground. And I said, "I can't." Now his relationship to almost every artist he supported was that he was their editor. He went in—I mean he'd go in to Helen's [Frankenthaler] place, and she'd put her things, and he'd figure out where they're going to cut it. He told all the artists except he didn't get away with that with Sonny Carroll. But certainly with Ken Nolan, all of them. And I was very distressed because I knew I was about to cut the cord. But I said I couldn't possibly take that off. That was the whole—it was a very important thing; it was a continuity that started at the floor, it went up, around, came back down into the floor. In fact I was right because that led me to putting things under the ground and into the ground. Had I not done that piece, I wouldn't have gone into the ground for a long time. But there are seminal pieces in your life, and that was a seminal piece.

[END DISC 2.]

MS. PEPPER: And that's also around the same period that the Nashers [Raymond and Patsy Nasher] asked me to make—they were going to buy a sculpture, brought me out to look at the place. And I didn't want a sculpture in there.

MS. RICHARDS: That was in Dallas?

MS. PEPPER: That's right. I'd never been to Dallas. I thought, why not? So they brought me out to see their shopping center where they had art. And I didn't want my thing in a shopping center. I was not secure enough to have things in the shopping center. And as we were leaving, I saw this median strip. And I said, "You know what I'd like to do is make a sculpture for the median strip. You don't have anything that's using that." And from what I understand, this is the first—that was the first commission site specific using the land sculpture [ph]. Emily Pulitzer and I discussed this. She said Richard [Serra] had the first. We looked at the dates. Richard did it after I did mine. It doesn't really matter. I didn't see his, and he didn't see mine. So I went back. And they called me and said, "You know we like that idea. Come up with something." So that's when I went down into the ground and started using the grass.

I had been doing—I had been doing works using the land and that kind of environmental work for many, many years. But never, ever achieved it. I just have photographs, you know. I wasn't part of the New York scene. I didn't know you could show your photographs. I had haystacks that were shaped in ways. I had—used, what's it called? Vesuvius [ph]. I did a whole thing using Vesuvius [ph]. I'd been doing that on my own just for myself. But, you know, I was at the Marlborough Gallery, which is a very commercial gallery. And one of the reasons I left them was because of the Nasher sculpture. They didn't want me to make that sculpture. They didn't consider it sculpture. They wanted him to buy the piece he was going to buy. And I said—we had terrible fights about it. I kept saying—

MS. RICHARDS: Was it a matter of their not being able to get the commission or make the same amount that would come a—

MS. PEPPER: It wasn't an object that they were selling. And I told them—I remember the cable I sent them—which said, "My contract doesn't say I have to make money. But I promise you, you won't lose money on this. I want to do this thing." We fought and fought, and I did it. But he was a big client of his, and they felt this was intrusive. To me it was a very important experience, you know. And I have never been an artist for dollars. I take risks—not that I'm so brilliant that I know what's a risk; [laughs] I just do what I have to do. I don't know that I'm taking risks. But I left Marlborough then over the Nasher piece. And I went to André Emmerich's [gallery, New York City]. In fact it's terribly funny. When André closed his gallery, because of Dale Lanzone I went back to the

Marlborough. And I said to Pierre Levai, "You know I've only been in two galleries in my whole life." And he said, "One too many." [They laugh.] I'll never forget that.

MS. RICHARDS: When you were at [inaudible] in Dallas—well, two questions: First, what about the fact that you would see it as a drive-by in their car? As I understand it—in part you see it that way.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. Before that I had done, among the things that later on a showed, I did a number of what I call automobile-oriented sculptures, the highways. But I did it on photographs where it was—the car became the motion camera. If you split it up, you see one piece at a time. If you really see it as a moving camera, it becomes one piece in your mind.

MS. RICHARDS: The frames.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. So I did about 40 frames to come to one piece, you see, that way. So when I did the thing for the Nashers, I had already done that kind of experiment. But it couldn't really work because you couldn't—it's not a highway, you see. You don't really have the right rhythm to have everything go by. So that each frame is a separate frame. So I tried to get them to imitate themselves in the work. And then I did the circle around that thing. It was a wonderful experience. It was a wonderful experience to make that.

MS. RICHARDS: That piece has pyramid shapes, triangles, and the earlier stainless steel pieces were squares. And there's a kind of a vocabulary of forms that you seem to be working with. Was that something that you developed consciously? Did it seem right that there were these fundamental forms?

MS. PEPPER: It seems to me that they are. They seem to be my forms. The triangle is something that I am forever involved in. I'm always doing the triangle. It's not that know; I come back and find myself do it. And that's what I'm saying: The Albright-Knox piece is the one that I photographed—had it photographed—and then discovered it's cantilevered. But the absolute inside shapes are the shapes I used that I told you that I put one negative on top of another, and they turned out to be almost identical.

MS. RICHARDS: The angles.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. I think all of us have our own vocabulary. I mean if we have a vocabulary; if we are lucky. An artist who's lucky, who has a vocabulary, it's not one that you impose on yourself. It's one that you recognize. It's like the divine accident. And for many years I kept wondering whether I had a vocabulary. 'Til one day I was doing this talk, and I was getting out all my slides. And then I realized that this is my vocabulary. This is my language. It's the—but I never really understood it. Because I don't working with the front of my head; I wake up and find out where I am. I follow myself. But this, too, in my old age; you know you start thinking back about what you did in your life.

Anyway, Skira's about to do a book on me, and we're trying to work out how we're doing it. And I realized that—I didn't even realize I had a signature. But it's quite clear that my work is recognizable and that I keep doing this. I always thought I never did the same thing over and over again. But I think we're doing it in one form or another and that— But it's not because I decide to do it. As I say, I follow myself. It's completely intuitive. I've made some work. I had the Alexander Calder Fellowship at Saché [France]. And when I went there to work, the thing that shocked me was that nothing in his studio had anything that I could do any metal work with. [Laughs] Sounds strange. He had no equipment for me to make my kind of sculpture. So I went—

MS. RICHARDS: Where and when was this?

MS. PEPPER: Saché, France. This is about—it must be written there somewhere.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes.

MS. PEPPER: So I drove around and found that there was a quarry about 40 minutes from there. And so I bought—once again, modest Beverly—I bought all these big stones—*big* stones. And I worked there. I'm telling this story basically because of what a man said to me. And it was like someone putting up a light bulb or a mirror for me. He said, you know—a sculptor, a local sculptor, he said, "I've been watching you." And he said, "I've never seen anyone like you in my life." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Never seen anyone trust themselves as you do. You really trust yourself." I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "Well, I've watched you where the big piece is there, and you go right into it. You have no drawings, you have nothing. You go right into the piece and work. And you really trust yourself." Well, this was an amazing thing that he said to me because it was a—he forced on me a kind of self-awareness of something that I was not prepared even to consider. But it is true that I do trust myself. I may be wrong, but I do trust myself. But I had no way of describing what I did. And then I thought about it, and I looked at all those works—because I had a show of them, all big sculptures, all of them done in Saché. Not a model was there for one of them because I had no equipment to make any models. And I actually don't make models for big sculpture unless it's for a commission where they have to see what I'm going to do.

MS. RICHARDS: I was going to ask you—and this is a good point—what part drawing and preparatory sketches and model-making play in your work?

MS. PEPPER: Not as much as I used to—but I run around with notebooks, which I'm doing this. And sometimes I find that I've made this work. You know but, here, this is the work that I did for that place that we just inaugurated, you know. But it's a theater, you see. It's a theater. This is stone, people can— But I just scribble all the time. That's what I do. You see the tuft [ph] triangles back in all of these. This is not a new book. But I brought it with me on this trip because I figured I had so much paper left in it, and it's an easy one to— So I just thought I'd start on this side now. But, no, I draw. I don't draw as much as I would like to. But this is something that interests me: I've just—this was done a long time ago. I just did a sculpture very similar to this, an 18-foot sculpture that's going to Calgary.

MS. RICHARDS: Is that one of the pieces that was in the show at Marlborough last year?

MS. PEPPER: Yes, yes, yes. But I don't take this and then say, "Now let's see what I'm doing and make it." It's like an archive that I come back to and see I have had in the file, in my mental file. But I also do make—when I'm doing some for a commission, you have to bring something, make Styrofoam models. I'll show you. There's one I brought which I'm in the middle of working on. I thought I would do it here. [Walks away from the microphone.] This is the model I'm working on.

MS. RICHARDS: Let's see if this mike picks up. Oh, I see.

MS. PEPPER: See?

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: It's made of Styrofoam, and it's an easy thing. It's the medium that I picked up when I suddenly found that the difference between my age and my mind made it such that I physically couldn't do it. But I run around with things—I'm doing, huge, huge projects for Calgary.

MS. RICHARDS: I can't wait to talk about that.

MS. PEPPER: That's going to be a rather extraordinary one.

MS. RICHARDS: Going back. After you did the piece in Dallas, it seemed like another important work was called *Amphisculpture* [AT&T Long Lines Building, Bedminster, New Jersey, 1974-1976], a huge commission for AT&T.

MS. PEPPER: Was that after Dallas?

MS. RICHARDS: Well, the dates I see for Dallas—they overlap. It was '71 to '75. Then '74 to '76. So clearly you started working on this—

MS. PEPPER: Yes. That was a very—that's another seminal piece.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: Have you seen that photograph?

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, I've seen the photographs.

MS. PEPPER: It's an amazing piece.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. And it's extraordinary that a corporation—

MS. PEPPER: Pure chutzpah it should've been called. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Let's hear about how that evolved. What was the chutzpah involved? What new revelations did this bring up?

MS. PEPPER: Well, I only now—I just think that I, as the Italians say, [inaudible]: Without any conscience.

MS. RICHARDS: But confidence is—

MS. PEPPER: But not confidence, conscience. Confidence I seem to have. I trust myself, that's the point. The architect, Gene Kohn of Kohn, Pederson, Fox—but it wasn't then; he was in another place—had been talking to me about making a sculpture for one of his clients. And I don't know why he thought I would be able to do that. I'm trying to think of what he knew of my work. But he was making these headquarters for AT&T in Bedminster, New Jersey. And there was a place where they had problems with how the land was meeting. It was a problem—Today you might say it was an environmental problem. But it was actually—the problem was about how the land was shaped, and it was difficult how they were going to put it together. And he asked me whether I could do something for that area. And I was fascinated. I did three different concepts. I wish I knew where they were. One was really quite extraordinary—had never done it—where I used plantings; seasonal plantings which changed its color. And it was the size of that other one, you know. That's a very, very big piece.

MS. RICHARDS: Two hundred feet.

MS. PEPPER: The circumference. That's a major, really big piece. When you think that my loft from beginning to end there is not quite 100, that's twice.

MS. RICHARDS: It's longer than it looks.

MS. PEPPER: Yes, that's right. And I did that. I did another one where I had a sculpture that you walked through, and it was more conventional. And then I thought I would really love to do something that was flat in that area, really go down and up. I don't know how I came up with the solution. But once I saw it, I thought this is what I wanted to do. And he was very supportive.

MS. RICHARDS: Gene?

MS. PEPPER: Yes. Really supportive. And he went to AT&T and said this would be great. She wants to give a meeting place for your people to could come out and sit there. And you can have concerts or anything you want. Blah blah blah. And they went for it, which was quite a— I don't think they would've gone for it if they didn't have him behind him. And it was an amazing experience. Once again, I learned so much. Nicest part about those kinds of commissions is what I learn that I put into the next. My work is really like compound interest. It's the story of Clem Greenberg wanting to take the bottom off, but the actual fact is it was compounded into going into the ground and doing these other things. I don't consciously want to change. I never do anything consciously. I follow myself into the next thing. And it's very rewarding to wake up and find out that I've been brave. I didn't know I was brave. But then you find out you're brave. And I think you can't be an artist without courage.

MS. RICHARDS: Have you ever taught and tried to convey that to students, art students?

MS. PEPPER: I don't teach, but I lecture. I'm going to lecture—sometimes my daughter and I do song and dances together. We're going to do it at the Meyer Sculpture Park [ph] She and I collaborated on a piece for the Environmental Protection Agency in California. And she was working on her book which has got to do—she's very involved with the environmental things. So she wrote poetry on these four columns there, 20-some-odd-feet columns of stone. And she wrote poetry. Now neither she nor I understood what we were doing. You understand this is very important. She was writing poetry, and I was making sculpture. So when we saw the finished thing—and this is not, this is what I'm trying to explain—that you have to be open-ended. You don't have to be because many artists are not open-ended: Someone like Richard Serra always knows what it's going to look like when it's finished when he starts, and there it is. And they're wonderful. But I have to be open-ended. So my work is always a learning process for myself, which is very exciting—if I'm lucky.

MS. RICHARDS: I didn't mean to interrupt your story about *Amphisculpture*. But perhaps you had finished talking about it.

MS. PEPPER: I did finish.

MS. RICHARDS: So that piece—

MS. PEPPER: And that could be called a seminal piece because I kept moving it to other things then.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. And that piece again used the grass and concrete.

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

MS. RICHARDS: You also did some pieces with white paint on steel?

MS. PEPPER: Yes, I did—

MS. RICHARDS: Was that—

MS. PEPPER: For Dartmouth [College, Hanover, NH].

MS. RICHARDS: I think in 1976 you started using cast iron?

MS. PEPPER: Yes. Was it only '76, not a little earlier?

MS. RICHARDS: Maybe.

MS. PEPPER: Was it André— When did I have an André Emmerich show?

MS. RICHARDS: Seventy-five.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. So it was '74 when I started casting iron.

MS. RICHARDS: Hmm.

MS. PEPPER: And forging iron.

MS. RICHARDS: And then maybe we could go to '76, at least when it was finished, the GSA project, *Excalibur* [Edward J. Schwartz] Federal Building, San Diego, CA, 1975]. A piece that was—

MS. PEPPER: [Laughs] Did you ever read about that? There's a book written where there's a very funny told about it.

MS. RICHARDS: I read some about it, but not that book.

MS. PEPPER: Judge [Edward J.] Schwartz and me [laughs]. You just say that to me. We became such friends. It's so strange [laughs]. *Excalibur* was—

MS. RICHARDS: I know there was some controversy about the work.

MS. PEPPER: Well, let me put it this way: When you're—

MS. RICHARDS: That was your first government—

MS. PEPPER: No, no.

MS. RICHARDS: It was your first GSA commission?

MS. PEPPER: Was it my first GSA commission? I seem to remember— My first commission was in '62 or '63. That's on Third Avenue, that one. [*Contrappunto*, William Kaufman Company, U.S. Plywood Building, New York City, 1963]. I don't remember things like that. But I'll tell you about that commission. It was a devastating experience for me in the sense that it so abused that piece with skateboards and things like that, that they have a tan [ph] around it. So it just defeats the whole purpose. Because the flat part of it is in the ground. The whole idea is that people could buy [ph] it and things. But it is unfortunate because I have a sculpture in Assisi at Saint Peter's Church and kids go skateboarding up that. So I guess we're living in a society where people don't look at art as art. They look at—it's always entertainment. We're living in an instant gratification society. And whatever it is that's in front of them, that's what they want to do.

MS. RICHARDS: How did this piece evolve from your presentation, from the initial idea to what you

ended up with?

MS. PEPPER: I don't even remember how I got the commission. I never go after these things. Of course particularly all the things I do, I get through—Dale Lanzone does get [inaudible], and frequently they're competitions. But from that point of view, I'm too insecure to enter a competition. I'm very insecure about entering competitions. He enters my work in competitions, and I seem to win them. [Laughs]

MS. RICHARDS: I see. So you work with him as a kind of an agent for these commissions.

MS. PEPPER: He is president of Marlborough International Projects.

MS. RICHARDS: I see.

MS. PEPPER: And he sends my things into whatever it is he does.

MS. RICHARDS: But he's starting out saying, Beverly, there's this commission. This is the space. What do you want to propose?

MS. PEPPER: No. He just comes and says, You've won this commission or you're one of three people. We have to make a proposal.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, obviously, though, he's not making a proposal without telling you about it.

MS. PEPPER: No. He sends my slides or whatever—

MS. RICHARDS: Just background.

MS. PEPPER: —he sends in. And all that. And he—frequently I don't know about it. He just writes something [laughs] that I might have said, you know, and that kind of thing.

MS. RICHARDS: So he's taking it to the point where you're invited to submit a proposal.

MS. PEPPER: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: At which point you are competing, but that feels okay.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. Because most of the time I seem to win them. Rarely do I not win them once I do that because then I put my mind to it. And once again, you know, one of the things I learned, as this young girl in the advertising business, is to make a presentation. But these kids are way ahead of me, believe me. I've never seen presentations like them. And maybe what makes me win is that mine looks a little crude compared to them. So maybe they look like there's a human being involved. I don't know what it is. But the way people make presentations today, I mean I really am a primitive. Absolutely. Also I think there's—it's like compound interest. Once you've won one, then you win two. It comes.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you think about how the public commission are going to be maintained? Is that something you have a lot of concern about? Is it in your contracts when you talked about the piece with the chain link? Some artists would maybe refuse to have certain things done. Do you write that in? Are you concerned? Or after it's done you basically feel it's up to them to maintain it?

MS. PEPPER: I wish I could say that I hold onto them like mad and I keep them. But I want to be free. I want to be free more than anything else. So if they're out in the world, let them take care of

themselves. Now I do, if I think I can affect something, I make an issue about it. For instance, the sculptures on [inaudible] Way. They wanted to pick them up and bring them someplace else because they were doing this building. And I went to a meeting of all these people, and I said, "I have two objections." I said, "One is that it cost you over \$250,000 just to pick these things up." I said, "That's government money. And if you're going to do that all over the country, you're going to be spending hundreds of millions of dollars. So as a precedent, I don't want to do that." I said, "Secondly, my contract says that it's not that I made sculpture. But that'll be seating." Dah dah dah dah dah. "Also, it's under my supervision and my fingerprint. So I'm not going along with this. I'm going to go along, once the building's finished, to see what kind of—whether we take away trees or what we do and see how it is." I was very tenacious about that.

MS. RICHARDS: This is an instance where your piece was experiencing a change in the building next to it.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. So I wanted to just change the relationship of the—not the sculpture; and actually it works fine now, you understand—but I wouldn't let them do that. I'm rarely told that anything's happened to my works. Whatever's happening, I don't know. When it's done, I don't go back. I go forward; I never look back. If there's something I can do something about— Now I'm very sad about San Diego because they have that around it. I'm not going to go fight for that. You know you choose your battles.

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

MS. PEPPER: And that one I won't win.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: So I'm not to go use up my energy. But I also have this wonderful relationship with my dealer in the fact that he'll go and fight for me since he was head of the GSA for many years before he went to the Marlborough. He knows how to do those things. So I'm very fortunate there. But he's one of the rare people I've met in my life that I trust completely. Well, almost completely. [They laugh.] Almost completely. If it's an aesthetic decision, no. I mean he's good, but he's not going to get inside my head.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes. Maybe we could talk now about one—the big piece called *The*—T-H-E-L.

MS. PEPPER: That's at Dartmouth.

MS. RICHARDS: At Dartmouth. That seems like a very important work, the way it's situated in the school, the way you interacted with the students, if I understand correctly.

MS. PEPPER: Did you read any of that stuff?

MS. RICHARDS: A bit, yes.

MS. PEPPER: What did I tell them? I said, "I've taken away your beach, but I've given you seating areas." [Laughs]

MS. RICHARDS: I wanted to ask you about your relationship to the public, at least in terms of the time you were there working on it. And you have a situation—I don't know how unusual it was—where you wanted the students to understand the work.

MS. PEPPER: No, I didn't want the students to. I couldn't care less. I wanted the work to be built. I'm going to be completely honest. I do not make sculpture for the public's taste. I make the best sculpture I can make for the place. I take very carefully into consideration all of the positives and negatives of the space. I make art that goes in public places as if it is a studio art going into a private place. Having very early in my life seen a few of the installations of work sold to big collectors, being horrified of what they do with the work, what they put next to it, I realize they're gone, and I have no control, and I never want to see where they go. I learned to—once the work is over, unless I really can affect something, I just don't want to know about it. When I make a work of art for a public place, I make the best piece of private art you can get that will go into public. I will not accommodate, having met some of this public, their tastes. My idea is to elevate them, not to go down to their level.

And with the students in Dartmouth, I understood that it was going to be a major problem. It was part of the—it was part of the process of making the work. It was not about the aesthetics. But it was the process of getting the work done. I am very realistic about this. I'm not going to sell my soul to get the work done. But I'm willing to shave it a little bit [laughs] here and there to get the work done. Those kids—a bunch of ignorant little children who knew nothing what they were talking about—were making such hell about this thing taking away the space where they sunbathed, they this—I said, I'm giving you deckchairs, on the sunbathing thing. I spoke to them because I was asked to. And I wanted to get—I thought it was a wonderful piece to do. But if I had to accommodate them, I would have to water down my work. I'm sure other artists have said this to you. You just—Public art is not for some kind of public taste. Public art is to have them experience something they have never experienced or they've experienced and want more of. Or you want them to see something they've never seen and have them look again.

The public always hates what you put down first. They just hate it, you know. I remember putting up a show at the San Francisco Museum [of Modern Art] where you use the whole plaza in front of the museum. So I had the big sculptures all around. And some guy came up, very belligerent, and said—I was just—in those days I bolted and screwed those things. I was lying on my back bolting this thing. And he said, "What the fuck you doing, lady?" And I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "What're you doing with this stuff?" So I said, "I'm building a bridge from here to there." And he looked at me: "Far out! A bridge!" What was I going to tell him? You know. Also in San Francisco, I found people living in the sculptures, you know. [Laughs] You don't accommodate those people. But you hope you touch them somewhere. If you give something a label, like a bridge, that they can identify with, they don't feel threatened. They're threatened about what they don't know. The only time I was—

MS. RICHARDS: Is this something you always knew? Or something you gradually learned?

MS. PEPPER: Intuition again. I heard myself saying it. The rudest I have ever been was when I was putting some sculpture outside the Jewish Museum, stainless steel pieces. And a woman—child—

MS. RICHARDS: This is in the '60s?

MS. PEPPER: Yes. A child running in the sculpture. They're not even bolted together. And I said, "I think, madam, you should take your child. It's dangerous what you're doing. Hold onto the child." About a five-year-old, something like that. And once again I'm on my back. And the child's running through. And I said, "I think you get your child away from here." And she said, "This is a museum." I said, "That's what I mean." She said, "No," she said, "they've got to experience art." I said, "Experience art doesn't mean physically experience art." I said, "Furthermore, if it falls on your child, everyone's going to be sued." She said, "I'm going to turn you in." She thought I was a workman,

something like that. So the child jumps over me. I get up, and I pick up the child, and I bring her to her mother. And I said, "I want to tell you something. You get your fucking child out of here before he gets hurt. But more important, go learn what it means to experience art. It's not a swing. It's not a jumping jack. You have to learn what the word 'experience art' is. Now, get out of here." The only time I've ever— Well, the sculpture would fall on the child. Also the ignorance of the public experiencing. The word "experience art," she thought it was run through it. She was experiencing art.

I've done enough places all over the world, and most people are just wonderful about it. Because art is magic, you understand? For most people art is magic. They don't understand it. But they see this thing suddenly coming up, and most people really want to understand. And then there are these very aggressive personalities who confront you. So you don't either accommodate the people who think art is magic anymore than you accommodate the people who are going to confront you. You do the best you can, the best piece of art you can. And that's the best service you can give the public.

[END DISC 3.]

MS. RICHARDS: This is Judith Richards interviewing Beverly Pepper at 84 Thomas Street in Manhattan, on July 2, 2009, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, disc number one.

Let's pick up from yesterday and talk about works you made in roughly '78, '79, tall works that used the forms of tools that might chip or chisel.

MS. PEPPER: Well, one never knows how one comes to something.

MS. RICHARDS: Excuse me for a second. Could we lower the music?

MS. PEPPER: We can turn it off. [Laughs] We can turn it off.

[Audio Break.]

[Inaudible] because I like company. We can reconstruct how they got to something. But unless one— Let's put it this way: I don't work consciously. I follow myself. I mean I can reconstruct how I arrived at someplace. But only after I've been there do I know I've been there, see. And I think the tools which came after all those big triangular things—and it wasn't until after I did AT&T—

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: —and Dartmouth, and I think it became, between those two, I sort of exhausted, in terms of interest for myself, those triangular shapes. Which is very funny because I never gave up the triangle. But that again is hindsight. It's very complicated to talk about process. But when I think that I wanted to get back to doing things with my hands, therefore you know I had all these tools in front of me all the time. You sort of scribble and do that kind of thing. And once going through my little notebooks—I have so many of them—I would find some of these tools scribbled, you see. And those sculptures that were made that looked like the tools I used—and they were the simplest tools; they weren't complicated tools, but they were screwdrivers, files—I'm trying to think of what else—drills, bits. They were things that I constantly was using putting to machinery or doing something like that. Somehow they became the extension of my hand, and I found that I started to make—that's what happened. I started to use the tools, the literal tools in my hand, welding them and making them in their actual size. And I thought to make the plaza works that I did.

And what's so interesting for me is that many people always refer to Giacometti for those plaza pieces because they're—Giacometti wasn't even in my mind. Certainly he was in the back of my mind. But certainly I never—not 'til people pointed them out. And when they pointed out even today, I'm surprised. Because I'm a big admirer of Giacometti, but I don't want—I never wanted to emulate him. I didn't want to make that kind of sculpture. But in fact when I got to the *Umbrian Markers*—I just saw a plaza piece with *Umbrian Markers* last week by chance at someone's home who owned it—and I realized that it is very indebted to Giacometti. But it was not that I sort of, oh, Giacometti, that's a great idea. I think someone said that we own everything we see. We have to just make it our own. I hope I did that.

But anyway, the tools became the actual sculpture. If you look at those pictures, you'll see. I know what happened. I saw these extraordinary screwdrivers that had wooden handles that had the metal going through the wooden handle. And they were such beautiful things that I bought a lot of them just as objects. Now I'm reconstructing it for you. And so I got a catalog to see if there were any more of those beautiful objects. I was not thinking about the screwdriver. And I got—there was a place in Switzerland that had a lot of these. So I ordered them up and started welding them together. Well, once I'd made the groups of small ones, they looked big to me. They suddenly became big sculptures.

MS. RICHARDS: When you welded them together, did you think of them as small sculptures or as working maquettes?

MS. PEPPER: I thought of them as small sculptures. In fact that's why I put them—they were too small to be one. That's why I put two or three on a plate. Because, you know, you'll find drill bits that I used. You'll find an awl, an old awl, that kind of thing. But my work is by definition monumental because of scale. And the scale, when I would look at this work, was so big that I felt I must make this big. And so I started working with my assistant who is a very good woodworker, to make them in wood first to see.

MS. RICHARDS: Full scale in wood?

MS. PEPPER: Full scale in wood. And I had a couple cast in a small town near me. It was a place that made lampposts.

MS. RICHARDS: And cast in what material?

MS. PEPPER: Iron. Because that was their original material. Steel was their original material, but steel is not that malleable. And since these were twisted shapes and things like that. But then I also used the wood. I put the wood in the big sculptures, too. And slowly they became more and more monumental in size, not just in scale. But I went through that period. I was so relying on the actual tool that I began to feel hampered, and I had to get free from it. Well, you know, conceptually I think what one wants to do is feel that, though we have an archive within ourselves that you constantly open drawers yourself and take something out, but you like to feel that you're putting the things in the drawer that you're taking out. Working with the tools at one point, I know what happened.

John Deere. John Deere—all my good luck with my factories. I don't know how—I had gotten a letter from John Deere that asked if I'd like to be in their, I guess it was a lecture series. I was alone on the top of this hill. This sounds so funny. But it was a Heathcliff night: rain, lightning, everything else. And I thought, I'll call them at John Deere rather than write them. You know it wasn't—it wasn't computer time. You had to write a letter and mail it. You had to send a telegram or a cable or something like that. So I thought with this lightning storm, if the telephone call goes through—

because you're [inaudible] in a small town and everything always blows—then it's a sign that I should do something about this.

And so when they answered immediately, and I said, "I'm not really interested in a lecture series. I would like to work in the factory because you people invented ductile iron. And I'm now working in iron, and I would like very much to learn all there is about ductile iron. I said, "I'll give a couple of lectures. But more interesting—I'm willing to have your public walk through while I'm working so they can actually see things and works." And the woman—her name I believe was Lois Jenkin—something like that; J-E-N-K-L-I-N, I think—said to me, "That's a great idea. Let me get back to you." And I loved her because she was going to call me back, you know. People didn't do these international phone calls the way we do now. I, being a journalist's wife, always used the phone as if it was just a five-cent or a ten-cent call, you see. And within two hours she got back to me and said, "They're all very excited at John Deere. The idea that an artist will come and work there. How long will you stay?" I said, "I don't know, two weeks, three weeks." She said, "That's terrific." And so I took the idea of the tools with me.

MS. RICHARDS: How did you know at that time that they had invented ductile iron?

MS. PEPPER: Well, I was interested in iron, and I did a lot of reading on iron. And John Deere and someplace in England, both of them at the same time, added magnesium to, I guess it's the ore. And made it more malleable. And also made it so that they could cast the motors of their tractors, and also cast so they could do also the cutting material and everything like that. And steel is a tough material to use to cast unless you have some other element in it. Furthermore, I missed the factories. I hadn't been [laughs] in a factory for a while. That was my love affair, you see.

MS. RICHARDS: What year was this, do you recall?

MS. PEPPER: It must be the '70s.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. PEPPER: If we just look up—

MS. RICHARDS: Seventy-seven.

MS. PEPPER: —[inaudible]. Maybe I should get a book of mine.

MS. RICHARDS: The *Todi Columns*, those were—

MS. PEPPER: That was '79.

MS. RICHARDS: Seventy-nine. So it was before that.

MS. PEPPER: Before that, yes, yes, yes. The *Todi Columns* aren't cast, 32, 35 feet. Though I did a 60-foot cast sculpture after working at John Deere. No, what happened was that it was once again like being back in the Spoleto project because I had a factory at my disposal. It was absolutely the most extraordinary thing. And this was—

MS. RICHARDS: This was in Iowa?

MS. PEPPER: Yes. Actually it was in Moline. Moline is [inaudible], and it's on the border of Davenport. I stayed in Davenport, Iowa. And I worked in Moline. That's how I learned my geography [laughs],

when I travel. I'm a New Yorker. I think New York is three quarters of the United States, and then there are the other places. But I learned so much there because I worked in the pattern shop with these guys. I have a real rapport with working people who work with their hands. I have really a very good rapport. And they were so wonderful to me. The only thing I can't forgive them for is they had documented the whole thing. And so many years later I called and asked for the film. They said we have just cleaned out all our things and destroyed all those things that we were not using [inaudible]. They had three weeks of daily documentation. [Knocking sound.] But the story of my life, I have almost no documentation. I have some of it from John Ross the photographer who followed me around in U.S. Steel and places like that. But it wasn't a film. But that was film. Anyway, I had a Ph.D. in pattern making. I also have extraordinary experiences because I went from the tools—I wanted something more massive, and that's when I did the first of my wedges, my giant wedges. And I—

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Is that Vernano Wedge?

MS. PEPPER: Termana.

MS. RICHARDS: Termana, I mean.

MS. PEPPER: *Termana Wedge*. That's later, but it's very similar to the one—I don't know what I called the John Deere wedge. I'd have to look. But I left it there for them.

MS. RICHARDS: This one was '80. So it would be before that. Before the *Todi Columns*.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. Well, the *Termana Wedge* was done in Terme. That's why it's called *Termana*. The John Deere wedge is at John Deere, and it's only one of two—they're not the same form—cast wedges. Because they at John Deere had never cast anything in that size. And they had great difficulty because it was huge. And it had a wide top and a very narrow bottom. And therefore the way the distribution of the multi-layered ore was very difficult to control. And it kept blowing up in the foundry.

MS. RICHARDS: When that happens, is all the material unusable? Or can they reuse the material? I'm thinking about the cost.

MS. PEPPER: Well, that's the nice thing about working in a place in those years in John Deere, where they— It was Open Sesame. They wanted me to do something they'd never done before. I remember my discussions with this man, lovely man, head of the foundry, who looked like an undertaker. He had the most dour, unhappy face. He was a very nice man, and I don't think he was unhappy. But it was a hard job, you see. And we were discussing. And I said, "You know I do a lot of cooking, and at one point I became a soufflé expert. And I'll tell you what I think is going wrong because I think the same concept happens. I think you're not letting it cool long enough in the furnace. Let's try not taking it out—leave it for a few days in the furnace and let it cool off."

And he began to laugh. He said, "You've got to be kidding, kid," as they used to call me whenever I worked in those places. Even when I was older than someone there, I was always "kid" because I was a woman. [Laughs] And I didn't mind it. You know you had a camaraderie. The whole idea is to belong, not to be above or below but just to belong. And I always loved those guys because people who work with their hands are very close to artists, you know. There's a pride of work that's quite extraordinary. Anyway, after a number of tries, we got this extraordinary big wedge. And then we did, I think we did—

MS. RICHARDS: Were you right? Was the key to leave it in?

MS. PEPPER: Well, I think I was right. But I have no idea because he—I had never said to him, Was I right? I wasn't going to— Now we're talking about men and their manhood, pride, and expertise. He never said, Boy, that was a good idea, you know. So I haven't any idea. You know to survive in those places, you have to learn how to live with those guys, you know. We were really— And intuitively I survived very well in those places. When I was young and very well put together, I had to survive beyond my physicality. As I got older, I had to survive on the level of not giving orders although I was always in the position of giving orders. So it was a whole other thing. I just love factories. I walk through a factory, I feel at home.

MS. RICHARDS: I'm curious. You made this wedge there, and you said it's still there.

MS. PEPPER: Oh, I left it with them.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you feel that you owned it and you gave it as a gift? Or did you feel they— I'm talking about just the [inaudible].

MS. PEPPER: It was my wedge, and I gave it to them. I gave them another wonderful piece, too, indoors.

MS. RICHARDS: Did they recognize that you were giving them a valuable work of art?

MS. PEPPER: Of course they knew that. But I felt that they— I'm left with 20 sculptures, you understand. I made an unbelievable group of what I call the *Moline Markers*.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: And Phyllis Tuchman wrote a wonderful—one of the most brilliant pieces—about the *Moline Markers* that also explained them to me. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: When you got set to go there, did you have a written agreement that covered who would own what? They didn't ask you for that?

MS. PEPPER: I never walk into a factory unless I'm paying. And I've been like an [inaudible]. I guess you sign papers about—I don't even remember but I must have—about physical dangers and things like that. Because unions are very complicated. I worked—in the seventies I worked in a factory where I was paying the people, but I wanted to be able to work. So I joined the Boilermakers' Union for a small moment then. But when they wanted me to sign a loyalty oath or something, I said forget it. It's just against my politics to do this. But I was paying them. But it's understood that you're taking these things with you [ph]. They had no idea what I was going to do. Neither did I.

MS. RICHARDS: So there was never an issue of, oh, you're taking those with you. "Don't you owe us for the materials?"

MS. PEPPER: No, I was invited to experiment and work there. It was understood. You know I'm not a very—I'm a very practical person making art. But I'm not a very practical person in terms of those kinds of details. I live a very serendipitous life, and it works for me. Also, I think if you started going there—unless they ask me; that's another thing but they never did—if I go in there and say now what I take away, changes the whole chemistry of your relationship, you see. I was going there to experiment. They'd never had anyone like me in there. People came in from the neighborhood and say this woman working on these things. I worked very, very hard. I worked as usual two shifts. I've

never been happier than I did when I'm in a factory. [Bell sound.] I don't know whether they've left, so I'd better see. Excuse me a moment.

MS. RICHARDS: Short break. Continuing to pause.

MS. PEPPER: [Inaudible] I thought I'd bring this so I can bring some records and show you things. I really should've gotten the Spanish book. Is this the Spanish book? Okay. I've got one of each. Okay. So now I will talk to you about the *Moline Markers* so I can show you what—

MS. RICHARDS: Do you want to— The *Todi Columns*—

MS. PEPPER: Are long after this.

MS. RICHARDS: Right. So we're going to skip that.

MS. PEPPER: No, we're not going to skip it.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay, okay.

MS. PEPPER: No, but I want to explain about the *Moline Markers*.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay.

MS. PEPPER: I think they're in here. They should be in here.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, I have that book.

MS. PEPPER: They should be in here. Here. This was actually taken in Moline. And you can see these are files.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Would you say that these forms are more formal in some way than the previous body of work? The surfaces are smoother. Would you say that was true?

MS. PEPPER: I tell you I never think of my work in those terms. I don't think of them in art historical terms. I don't think about the language of formal or non-formal. I guess they could be called more formal in the sense that they are—they're related to something. They have specific orientation. Their origins—once they're explained—they're quite clear, you see. But then I went from these.

MS. RICHARDS: What we're looking at—just for the recording—is an image with eight forms, eight vertical installed as a group on a concrete area outdoors.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. They all were made in Moline, and this was photographed in Moline.

MS. RICHARDS: Were they meant to stay in that place?

MS. PEPPER: No, no. These traveled. There are a number of shows. I had to show the *Moline Markers*.

MS. RICHARDS: They weren't meant to stay together as a group in the future?

MS. PEPPER: It would've been nice. But some people bought one—a few people bought maybe two.

MS. RICHARDS: But what about the base-like form of some but not all the pieces?

MS. PEPPER: I remember—

MS. RICHARDS: How did you decide what kind of base to use for each form?

MS. PEPPER: I don't know. They just evolved through the drawing.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you think of each as a base, or do you—

MS. PEPPER: I think in the way of—they're not really a base in some of them, you see. This is certainly not considered like the base. But some of them are holding up the sculpture, a few of them. Some of them like this is the base. But I remember the first show I had of this, these sculptures. A sculptor named Jan Hutchinson, I believe her name was, said to me, "But these bases alone would make sculptures." And I looked at them, and I wondered if I wanted to make sculptures of these bases alone. And actually it would've been very interesting—sometimes I'm sorry, you know—as a whole sculpture if you look at this one in particular. But having said that, already destroyed the possibility of me making it. There are collectors who bought two or three of these.

MS. RICHARDS: Each of them has a different name.

MS. PEPPER: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Is it just a number?

MS. PEPPER: No, where are they? I've got to tell you the names. I can't remember because I think of them as the *Moline Markers*. But then the *Moline Markers*— What page is this? Let me just see. Now interesting. These are the ones that I cast in Terme before I went to Moline. These are cast in that small town, and they're much cruder, and in many ways much more interesting because they had much more my hand. They weren't—didn't have that perfection that you see. You see how much—

MS. RICHARDS: I called it smoothness, but yes.

MS. PEPPER: But there is a perfection that comes when you're working in a place that— We didn't have machinery to put this on a lathe here. So anything round I did there was, you know, done by hand. So you had the hand. In fact the ones I did after Moline, I've often thought were much more interesting because they had my hand. Those things I call the "divine accident." I just want to see the names of these because I can't remember them. But I can't find a page number here. How silly these books are. Here, this is the *Termana Wedge*. You see this? Now this is one of the wedges—

MS. RICHARDS: *Termana Wedge*.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. But this was done in Terme because the man who owned the place was Romano Something-or-other. So I named the wedge after it. But that's the kind of thing I—Now this is cast, which is unusual because all the wedges asked about were fabricated because it was so complicated to cast them. But let me just find the names of them. I'm curious myself—110. So let's see. The theses come by pages, I think. Or do they? Yes. Okay. So—well, you see, I called them by—I've called them wedges and columns. But then I would put something like *Tarquinis Spiral* because of some relation to Tarquinia in Sicily. Or *Mauro Column* because the name working with me was involved in it.

MS. RICHARDS: What was this man's name that you just mentioned?

MS. PEPPER: Mauro, M-A-U-R-O. It was one of the people that worked with me.

MS. RICHARDS: And before that it was Tarquini?

MS. PEPPER: Tarquinia, T-A-R-Q-U-I-N-I-A.

MS. RICHARDS: So each had a name associated in some way with an event?

MS. PEPPER: I didn't think so as I can recall. I don't name things for people to have explanations. Sometimes they name themselves. So that I then—it was named Termana because all the wedges I did, that was done in Terme, you see.

MS. RICHARDS: There's a *Termana Wedge*—there's a kind of a two-step low base.

MS. PEPPER: Two steps, three steps. They change.

MS. RICHARDS: Can you recall what was involved in your considering those bases? I imagine it was quite a process to decide about the bases.

MS. PEPPER: Well, I like to— I have to fill this out. I try to make what we're calling the bases all part of the sculpture. But in fact, since many of these elements came from the tools and they had to stand up, I simply what was considered. The first Termana I had was done—it was called *Terme*; I don't know—had a much different base. Actually it's owned by those collectors in California, the Fishers, Doris and Donald Fisher. Somehow I evolved into those circular things. Then they were almost a sculpture within themselves.

MS. RICHARDS: People have called them altars.

MS. PEPPER: Oh, I call them altars, but not these. Those altars I made were specifically—

MS. RICHARDS: I know later there were pieces called altars.

MS. PEPPER: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: But I thought that I read that even the earlier two-, three-step bases gave the sensation of one was approaching an altar.

MS. PEPPER: We get to a point of something about my work that has always fascinated me. Many people think my work is very spiritual. Many people. Most people who think about it. And I remember my first show of the *Moline Markers*. Pincus Whitten, Robert Pincus Whitten, came to the gallery, and we were alone. And he said to me, "Beverly, where's the organ music?" It took me two beats to figure out what he was talking about. Because there isn't—I'm not only not religious, I'm anti-religions. I'm not anti-spiritual. And people ask how I get that spiritual effect in my work. I haven't any idea. I know I work until I feel the space outside the sculpture exists. My sculpture might be like this. But I'll keep going until there's something I can't explain that's there. But I have no idea how you put it in. I have no— But I don't think content is something that you can—that's mental achievement. It's something—I think it comes from—these auras come from someplace else. I haven't any idea how it works.

MS. RICHARDS: You've talked about a sense of continuity in the history of human forms, whether

they're sculpture or monuments or whatever. Do you see it connected to a sense of archetypal forms? Is that in a way what you mean? That you have a sense that your work shares that kind of spiritual content?

MS. PEPPER: But I don't think of my work in its spiritual content. Other people think of my work as spiritual content. When I finish a work, it's finished. And I don't go back to find out. I go back over the years hoping that I feel more satisfied with the work than I was—I think I explained to you, whenever I finish a work, I always have that hole, that thing that something has to be done. When I talk about continuity, it's something that—I'm not sure how I feel now given what's happened in the world in the past 20 years, when you live in a world where you're not sure it's going to continue. But before then, I felt that the one thing that art did was the art is a link—all art—a link from one passage of time to another passage of time. And that those links are what keeps us going. It's not specifically just the art. There's everything else that are linked.

But given global warming, given man's sense of mass destruction possibilities now, I think of continuity in terms of a much smaller group. Let's say I think of Tribeca for continuity or Todi for continuity. I try not to be as pessimistic as my daughter who feels nobody should have children now. There's not enough water. Should limit families to one child. She is very concerned whether her children should have children, you know.

[Telephone rings.]

[END DISC 4.]

So continuity, I think it's essential that we hold on those threads of continuity. We hold onto the idea that we believe. I'm too old to think the world is going to come to an end. Basically because quite clearly my life will come to an end; but I like to think that the world will then go on. And I think the world will also go on with or without man, you see. But continuity has always been almost the *raison d'être*.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you see it as connected to modernism in a sense? Artists at that point in time, at least up until then, had a sense of their work being part of human achievement and continuity.

MS. PEPPER: Absolutely. But this is my generation.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: In 1948 my paintings were very abstract. They would have, if I'd stayed in America, undoubtedly I would've kept going deeply into Abstract Expressionism. But I think even Pop art had hope. I think it's been in the last ten, 15 years, the hopelessness. Of course I don't understand art at all today. I don't see anything that I relate to among the new people working. It's very—it's too cerebral, conceptual. They know where they're going when they start. It's statements. I think the mistake I made when I did social content paintings for a couple of years, I did—was I learned that if you going to do anything in visual to reach a lot of people, you might as well make posters. I mean paintings reach too small an audience. It's utterly ridiculous to try to make waves with a painting. You may wake a very small group of people.

MS. RICHARDS: I want to return to some of this in a little while. But going back this minute to the work and the forms that we were just talking about, when you finished the *Moline Markers*, you continued to explore those kinds of totemic forms.

MS. PEPPER: But I took them away from—they were not rooted in a reality, the reality of being

tools. They went much further and became, when I stared everything I cast, it became actually much more involved with my hand. I took those tools and I aged them and destroyed them, and sometimes they looked like they had gone through centuries of decay. I became very obsessed with the idea of having time as part of the work that I was doing. So the *Umbrian Markers*, which were once again the next generation of *Moline Markers*; but they were now decayed, they were in bronze. They weren't—I did a few cast iron. But cast iron itself can show decay without having to actually destroy the form. I wanted to destroy the form and have a sense of time having ravaged the form. I can't tell you that I decided to do that. I found myself doing it. Once again, it's the fact that I follow myself. I'm not ahead of myself. I look back and understand what I'm doing. But at that time I was also very involved with the landscape. I'd moved from Rome, the city of monuments, to the country.

MS. RICHARDS: What year was that?

MS. PEPPER: Nineteen seventy-one.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh!

MS. PEPPER: Or '72.

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

MS. PEPPER: And so now I was living in a medieval hill town. And that was stopped time [ph]. While in Rome, you had time, layered time. So that you went from the Caesars through fascism to contemporary architecture; it was one of the great lucky things that happened to me in my life, that I lived in Rome. As opposed to Paris, which is very different. Paris, it is not in a time zone. You're in an energy zone, which is quite different. But when you live in Rome, you have history in your face. You turn a corner, and you see Baroque Rome. You'll go someplace else, and you'll find the Rome of the Caesars. There's fascist Rome right in your face. I am so glad that my desire when I first got to Rome to tear down all the fascist monuments never came true because once again, they're markers. They tell you where we've been. And certainly suddenly you begin to look at some of these fascist monuments, and you see very interesting beauty in them if you divorce yourself of the content. But then you have to remember that the Caesars weren't so democratic either. So, you know. Then you also in Rome have little touches of Egypt that's quite amazing. But then when I moved to the country, you find I'm doing more and more earth-oriented work.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Speaking of that, you did a piece, *Cromlech Glen* at the Laumeier Sculpture Center [St. Louis, MO], which I happened to get to see last year, just after they restored it.

MS. PEPPER: How did it look? I haven't—

MS. RICHARDS: Good!

MS. PEPPER: Good, good. I love that piece.

MS. RICHARDS: That was an earth sculpture, you'd say?

MS. PEPPER: Yes. Earthwork.

MS. RICHARDS: Earthwork that you did after you had done the *Moline Markers*. What made you decide to go to do that? In a way taking a break from doing those—

MS. PEPPER: Well, I was always, as I told you, making conceptually little things that should have been huge. But you have to have someone finance it. But *Cromlech Glen* came right out of the fact that they asked me to make something for the park. And when I walked through the park, I saw this grove. And I thought, well, I would like to do something there. And I just—I don't know why. But you see my tran [ph] also there, which is so interesting. The thing that I have never understood until hindsight is how I never gave up the triangle at any point. It's in everything I've done. Here it is on the cover of the Spanish catalog, you know. That kind of thing. I don't know the answer. I hang very loose when I go to a place. I go there with an empty mind and let the place inform me. At this point in my life I have a vocabulary, an archive of experiences. Sometimes something completely new comes out from somewhere. But that's the thing I'm doing in California now with these huge boulders. But circumstances will lead me to that.

MS. RICHARDS: You've called it "a collaboration with nature."

MS. PEPPER: Yes, exactly. Because I was informed by the site. And I tried to use only the earth. I just put very little [inaudible]. But there are just some steps. But it was all shaping the earth. And the previous director just—I don't know how they get directors like this. She had no conservation program. She destroyed a number of works as they got old that were made of wood. Jackie—whatever her name is.

MS. RICHARDS: Ferrara.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. Removed that piece. She was going to do the same with mine. So it happens that I have a number of collectors, friends, fans in St. Louis, who loved the piece. And they told the newspapers, who read about it. And someone called me. And I flew to St. Louis because that piece is part of my soul, that particular piece, you know. And it was irresponsible. And the fact that she'd already taken down the Jackie Ferrara. But the man who's there now understands that if you have a park of that magnitude, you have to have a conservation program and a conservation budget. And I went there when they were restoring it. I never saw it completely finished. But I did have some input. And one of the problems with working with land—earth, growth—is that they have to have maintenance. Which means you really can't just do it in someplace that doesn't— Basically the thing I'm doing in San Francisco is a private collector. The one—the theater in Upstate New York is a private collector.

MS. RICHARDS: That brings me to a piece you did very soon after, called *Sand Dunes*, which was a temporary piece.

MS. PEPPER: Installation.

MS. RICHARDS: Of course there's no maintenance involved with that. It'd be hopeless on the beach. What was intriguing to you, that made you decide to do that temporary piece?

MS. PEPPER: Well, [inaudible] temporary. It's not my nature. [Laughs] I was invited, and actually I was on the board, of the Atlantic Center of the Arts, and they asked if I would come and stay there, in which you usually have a series of young artists who you lecture and work with, etc. I never teach, so I thought it would be interesting to maybe—for me it was interesting to make a work. It would be impossible for them financially to have done that of stainless steel. Also Barbara Rose was there at the same time. So she made a film of it. And what's Marty's name, that composer? It'll come to me. Great composer.

MS. RICHARDS: Morton Feldman.

MS. PEPPER: Yes, Morton Feldman. Morty wrote the music for it. And as a matter of fact, Barbara said, "How do you want me to play it?" He said, "Oh, you can play it backwards or forwards. Either way you want." And she did both ways, you see. It was an amazing experience. The kids were wonderful. I was so proud of them inventing that Mylar coding. They didn't invent Mylar, but the use of it to make it look that way. In fact Rosalind Krauss wanted it on the cover of this book—I should have listened to her but I didn't. And it would have been so much better as the cover of the book than this. But I was doing these at the time. You know what happened. Artists become blindsided. What happens is you're doing something, and that's what you want at that moment. Even though if you look at the whole body of work that was in there, you should've put something else, that was what I had just finished. So I wanted that. Which is wrong; it should've been the other one. She was right about it. You know—

MS. RICHARDS: And yet that piece was somewhat atypical. So maybe you were right.

MS. PEPPER: Maybe. But actually it's not atypical. [Doorbell rings.] I hope somebody's in. They said they'd tell me when they're leaving. Here it is. Let's see if I can find it.

MS. RICHARDS: In that it's temporary, on the beach?

MS. PEPPER: Yes, that's it. But if you look at the fact that—

MS. RICHARDS: Not the forms.

MS. PEPPER: It's no different than the sand dunes things. Look. I used the sand instead of earth.

MS. RICHARDS: Right. Like the piece in Dallas.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. So it was actually very much more inventive, I must say.

MS. RICHARDS: Or the piece at Dartmouth.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. It was very typical and would have been very interesting and probably a better cover, I don't know. I liked this cover. I thought it was, you know, that was what I was doing. I was beginning to work with stone, which is something I hadn't done. So everything was coming together in this work.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes. Shortly after that, I recall you did some columns that had color on them.

MS. PEPPER: They're right there in that room.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes, that's right.

MS. PEPPER: Well, what happened, I've started to paint again.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes! I saw a note that you had a show of paintings in the eighties.

MS. PEPPER: Two or three shows of paintings at Charlie Cowles's.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, that brings up many questions. Why painting? Why Charlie Cowles?

MS. PEPPER: Well—

MS. RICHARDS: And what were the paintings? I haven't seen images of them.

MS. PEPPER: There's one on the wall in there if you want to go look. Right. There's one over there. Go. No, the big one over the couch. You see that the Odyssey Series [1987-1989].

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, yes.

MS. PEPPER: Why Charlie Cowles? I was separating the sculpture from the paintings. Charlie wanted to show them.

MS. RICHARDS: Why did you want to separate them?

MS. PEPPER: Well, I'm not such a hip artist. I don't know what's—how it works, you see. I come in from another side. Probably if I were hip, I would've wanted to put them all together.

MS. RICHARDS: But what did Marlborough advise? Marlborough or Emmerich?

MS. PEPPER: Emmerich. I never—I didn't ask them, I told them. Another defect: I only reflect about it afterwards. Also it was very funny because Charlie had André Emmerich's old space in SoHo. So I knew the gallery so well, too. And André and I were not just dealer and artist. We had been old friends before I went to his gallery. Because I went to him after the Marlborough. And if he thought I should have shown with him, I think he would've said so. I think they didn't know what I was going to be doing. Neither did I. I just wanted to paint. My first paintings were much more abstract than these paintings there. It was—when you make very big sculpture, the creative process is very complicated because all the creativity is at the very beginning. And then you have to do a Zen job on yourself to keep the creative juices open. But you're more an editor as you go on with the big things. So I wanted something that I started and finished without having an in-the-middle. I needed it. I was hungry for it. And it was very important for me. It was something I wanted desperately.

MS. RICHARDS: Did it take some effort to set up a painting studio?

MS. PEPPER: Well, my studio had lots of different rooms at that time. Now it's only one.

MS. RICHARDS: In Todi?

MS. PEPPER: Yes. And I just used a room, one of the rooms. And there is an enormous joy of starting something and finishing it all in your own hands. The joy is the— First of all, you lose yourself. I lose myself in sculpture in the creative process. But when you're making the sculpture in terms of iron or steel, as opposed to let's say when you're working like the— Oddly enough, the sculpture on Broadway at Federal Plaza [*The Garden at 26 Federal Plaza*, General Services Administration, New York City] was a complete creative process because it was all done by hand, believe it or not. It was done with plaster and Styrofoam. And so it was like starting—it was like painting from beginning to end. And then there was the casting and all that. But when you're working in steel, a big steel, there is so much mechanical things that are going on, that there's a part of you that's an editor, not the writer. You see. It's a very different thing. In painting there is no part of you where you are not still creating all the way to the very end.

MS. RICHARDS: Having not shown painting for some 30 years, was there a part of you that was very anxious about how they would be received since you had a tremendous reputation as a sculptor?

MS. PEPPER: I don't—that's not my personality. Because when it's finished, I'm on to the next thing. I haven't got a great relationship to art critics and art critique, that kind of thing. And I don't count on it. You know I'm not in the middle of the trough. So that my life is a miracle that I exist and well

known at all. Because as someone said to me, What do you do here? You don't pay your dues. You know I didn't know what she meant. It took me a while to figure out, you know, you're supposed to pay your dues to the art world in some way: suffering through it or drinking with them or whatever it was. So I didn't think about it. I know that they were very well received.

MS. RICHARDS: And you said you had three shows?

MS. PEPPER: I believe three shows. I'd have to check it out.

MS. RICHARDS: I have three.

MS. PEPPER: I had the Odyssey Series, which is there. But then the first show was completely these abstract ones [inaudible].

MS. RICHARDS: However, you stopped painting then.

MS. PEPPER: Well, I somehow got involved with all these huge projects that I—you can see [inaudible].

MS. RICHARDS: Charlie Cowles's "Paintings," '87. Must be a show right before '85.

MS. PEPPER: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: It doesn't say Charlie Cowles, however. It says John Berggruen [inaudible].

MS. PEPPER: That's sculpture.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. And [inaudible] '86.

MS. PEPPER: I've had two or three shows.

MS. RICHARDS: Charlie Cowles's "Paintings." Oh, 1990, Charlie Cowles's "Paintings."

MS. PEPPER: There should be one more, I think.

MS. RICHARDS: It doesn't say paintings, but '94, Charlie Cowles.

MS. PEPPER: Yes, that's it, "Paintings."

MS. RICHARDS: And also '96. So those would all be painting because at the same time you were showing at Emmerich.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. I don't know that the Marlborough would've gone along with my—not that I asked them, you understand.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, Emmerich. How did you meet André Emmerich? Just to take a pause from the work again.

MS. PEPPER: In 1952 I think was my first painting show?

MS. RICHARDS: In Rome.

MS. PEPPER: No. No, it's '54 or '56.

MS. RICHARDS: Fifty-two was in Rome.

MS. PEPPER: Then '54, '56.

MS. RICHARDS: Before New York, Barone?

MS. PEPPER: And he was friends of the people who owned the gallery. Came to the show. He had—he was selling pre-Columbian art out of his apartment. And he had some of his father's paintings because they were refugees. And they were like—I remember Vlaminck and things like that. And there was someone who bought one of my paintings who was a collector of pre-Columbian art. People named Weinstein. And so I brought them to André's apartment. I had met him. That apartment, I don't know why, but it's absolutely printed in my memory, every detail of it: how it looked when you walked in, everything about it. And we became friends. And I've been good friends with him over the years. You know he was around the art world.

MS. RICHARDS: He was a great champion of sculpture, too.

MS. PEPPER: Yes, yes. He loved sculpture. They used to say André came kicking and screaming into the 20th century. [Laughs] I'll tell you, you know, mentioned somewhere along something about critics, I mentioned. I'd like to talk about John Russell for the record, you know. Do you know—

MS. RICHARDS: I was going to ask you about critical reception to your work.

MS. PEPPER: No, no. John Russell was a particular story. Have you ever read that criticism?

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, yes. I read John Russell when he wrote for the *New York Times*.

MS. PEPPER: But did you read what he wrote about me? Well, even when he died now, they mention that he's never written a mean thing about anybody, but he then quoted the mean thing— He wrote the meanest, meanest, meanest review that anyone has ever, ever written about anybody. And it was like he was drunk when he wrote it. It was an angry review. And I never understood why he did it. I was having a show at the Brooklyn Museum. I mean it's so mean. You can look it up. It's the meanest thing ever written. And it took me a long time to figure it out and then find out what happened. First of all, I'll do it the way I understood it and then how I went back into it.

When I lived in Rome, Bill was head of *Newsweek*. I did a lot of entertaining for the *Newsweek* things, and there were a lot of things going on like that. I used to say I was Mrs. Pepper and then I was Beverly. And I vaguely remember someone— He was staying with friends of mine. And Bob Hughes wrote that I was never a careerist. He said I'd never been— I've never been— Obviously I should have invited him to dinner.

MS. RICHARDS: John Russell?

MS. PEPPER: Yes. But I had no room at the dinner when my friend called. There was just no way to have John Russell to dinner. I don't remember the circumstance or anything else. But evidently I offended him beyond belief. But that— And I remember being at a dinner party where—long before the show—where I was seated next to him, and he got up and changed his place. That just shocked the hell out of me.

MS. RICHARDS: Before that?

MS. PEPPER: Yes. And then he wrote this terrible review, and I couldn't understand why. Finally a friend of mine two years later—very close friend—said, "You know, I've never apologized to you for the John Russell review. And I'm so sorry. This is the worst thing that's ever happened to you." I said, "What did you do, Jane?" She said—she was very close friends with the Sulzbergers—she was—the elder, late Punch [Arthur Ochs "Punch" Sulzberger]. And she kept saying, "Why isn't the *Times* reviewing Beverly?" So—

MS. RICHARDS: Can you say what her name is?

MS. PEPPER: Jane Rosen.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. PEPPER: Her husband used to be some kind of eminent [inaudible] at the *Times*. He did work for the *Times*; they were one of his accounts. And she pushed Punch to push John Russell, who did not want to write the review. And he was going to go on holiday. And he stayed to write the review. And it is—I've always wanted—I've never known how to correct the record. Here we'll correct it. It was just unbelievably— But he did me in one way a great service writing such a mean review. Because even today, and it's like 25 years later, people will come up to me of a certain age, and say, "What did you ever do to John Russell?" You know. Because it was such a— And of course it's come up again in his obituary, they refer to it. Because it was so out of character. I keep thinking of whether they're going to refer to it in my obituary. But nobody says why. You see. I keep thinking I should call the *New York Times* and set the record straight. I don't know what to do about it, you know.

But to this day and when it first came out, nobody took the review, outside of New York, as anything but a personal attack. But it gave me a very distorted relationship to the museums world in New York for a long time after that. Because, you know, John Russell is John Russell. Quite an extraordinary experience. You know, what's that expression? Let me take care of my enemies. Just God save me from my friends. It's quite amazing. You should read that review. I never read a review about anybody like that. It is such a personal attack. So the one sculpture, which is about this size, that the Albright-Knox owned, that was in the show that he liked—because he wanted to write something—the frenzy of that thing that even the sculpture was published the photograph upside down. You know, amazing. So now that we've got that straight.

MS. RICHARDS: I'm surprised he didn't ever go back to you and say something about that.

MS. PEPPER: Never saw him again. Never, ever saw him again.

MS. RICHARDS: Did it have a negative impact beyond the museums in New York?

MS. PEPPER: No. My career has always been this way, going uphill: I don't mean uphill in the way that it's fatiguing to go uphill. [Richards laughs.] It's that it's like compound interest: It's one and one are two, two and two are four. I have had very few down spiral things. I think when I did those very thin, sad sculptures it was a low work point. But there was a real reason for it.

MS. RICHARDS: So the critical attention you've gotten has likewise followed?

MS. PEPPER: I have a reputation. I mean you must know it or you wouldn't be here. You know I'm considered—particularly when my son was at Princeton, he said to me, "You understand it's my generation of people who are going to be your fans in the future." And it is true. I have an enormous — I was in some show—sometimes I show up, and some young person comes up and practically

faints when they meet me. So I think I must look like I'm out of some spiritual film when I come there. No, I can't complain. I could say that I probably would have had a much more major reputation. But I'm not greedy.

MS. RICHARDS: If you'd lived in New York?

MS. PEPPER: If I'd lived in New York, and I didn't have—and I had cousins-up [ph] to John Russell. Had I made an attempt after he wrote the piece.

MS. RICHARDS: An attempt to—

MS. PEPPER: See him or something. I have enough friends who were very, very close to him. I had so many friends who were close to him. On the other hand, it's interesting. Bob Hughes had made an appointment with the director of the Brooklyn Museum who at the time was Bob Buck to review my show. And after the Russell piece, he didn't do the review. Never came to see the show. People are cowards. It's amazing. I couldn't possibly have done that. Under those circumstances—I would've showed up under any circumstances, you see. But this is because I'm my mother and grandmother's daughter. You go out fighting. I was in such a depression for one month.

And then I thought, well, as Bob said to me: Critics don't kill artists. Artists kill critics. I said, "I haven't noticed it, but I should." [Richards laughs.] But I did get up and go to work and just smiled by. But it became easier for me because people would come up to me and say: What did you do to Russell? And my friend, who I only knew two years later who did that, used to say to people, "Oh, she said no." But my friend really did me an incredible disservice, you know. In fact I keep thinking maybe I should ask her to go to the *New York Times* and have them take it out of the obit, you know.

MS. RICHARDS: You started painting again. And you had several shows, and you were painting for a good number of years. Did that wind down again, or do you still paint from time to time?

MS. PEPPER: No. I've had this amazing good fortune to have so many huge projects. I travel more than I've ever done. I'm working more than I've ever done in my life. I can hardly believe that I'm almost 87 years of age. And I keep thinking I would like to paint again. But my studio has changed that there's no place for me to paint. Because I have all this work going on. I'm working on stone sculptures right now for a show early next year uptown Marlborough, small stone pieces. I'm working on this project in Calgary—two of them in Calgary.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. So painting isn't enough of a priority—

MS. PEPPER: No, it's not a priority.

MS. RICHARDS: —to displace these exciting—

MS. PEPPER: No, I figured when I get old I'd paint. [They laugh.] But when I get old I'll paint. I'll you know—

MS. RICHARDS: How old was your mother—

MS. PEPPER: No, my mother died younger than I am. She died in her seventies. My father in his eighties. But they didn't live the life they did. They ate very badly. They didn't exercise. You know they—I live with a vitamin-freak husband and organic food husband. And also I'm very lucky. I'm working. But then I have a 90-year-old brother, you know. And my father's sister lived into her nineties and you know.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes.

MS. PEPPER: But I think when you work, if you're lucky and have your health, it keeps your juices going. And I think it keeps you somehow—

MS. RICHARDS: Artists don't retire.

MS. PEPPER: No, no. Artists don't retire. Artists die. And I think people who retire shouldn't. I think retiring is the antechamber to death.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Moving on from the *Sand Dunes*, you did a major, major commission for Barcelona. It's north of Barcelona, is it?

MS. PEPPER: Yes, [inaudible]. Yes. It's near the Arch of Triumph there, Arc de Triomph

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. And it's called *Soli Umbra*.

MS. PEPPER: It's not Sun and Shade in terms of the bullfight. It's Sun and Shade in terms of the seasons. So that there's one whole— In the wintertime there are places to sit in the sun.

MS. RICHARDS: Did they give you carte blanche?

MS. PEPPER: Carte blanche. It was an amazing—

MS. RICHARDS: You talked about this being a wonderfully positive experience.

MS. PEPPER: Oh, one of the most wonderful experiences.

MS. RICHARDS: And yet there were so many changes that went on. It took a long time.

MS. PEPPER: It's 35,000 square meters. That's the size of two football fields and more. And it's very interesting. It never occurred to me it was a big project. I did a model the size of the table there. And therefore it was controllable in my hands. I was doing what I wanted to do. And it was Open Sesame.

MS. RICHARDS: They didn't give you any needs and say we want you to incorporate A, B, and C into this?

MS. PEPPER: No. Make a park. And as a matter of fact, in this project, in which everybody was an artist of Joe Helman of the Blum Helman Gallery.

MS. RICHARDS: I'm going to change the tape.

[END DISC 5.]

This is Judith Richards with Beverly Pepper, July 2, 2009, disc two.

So you were talking about Barcelona.

MS. PEPPER: Well, you know, it was "open sesame." Joseph Helman, Joe Helman, the Blum Helman Gallery, was really the prime mover of this whole project of Americans there, and only took his artists, which was Kelly, Lichtenstein, Brian Hunt, Oldenburg. Let me think. Well, of course there was—Miró was not his artist. Miró was alive then. And I always thought he got me the commission. For

years I thanked him about it. Only about two years ago did I learn that he didn't. He said that what happened is that the sculptor, Xavier Cobero.

MS. RICHARDS: How do you spell that?

MS. PEPPER: C-O-B-E-R-O. Xavier with a Z—no, with an X.

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

MS. PEPPER: I got a call and said he'd like to bring Bob Hughes, Robert Hughes, to my studio here to see what I've been doing. Never occurred to me that was about the Barcelona park. But then I got a letter saying would I like to come to Barcelona and see the space? I was stunned because the biggest project of all the projects in Barcelona. I mean bigger than Toledis [ph], you know. At one point I asked why did I get this project? And I was told, well, very few artists can see a whole space. They see a work. I was very pleased by that. It was an amazing experience. I didn't want it to end. From '86 to '92. And I love the Spaniards. But also the challenge was phenomenal. It was—I've never worked in ceramics.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you speak Spanish?

MS. PEPPER: I speak Italian and understand enough Spanish because it's very close, you know. So, you know, and then I was there a while and picked up all the Spanish. I pick up the language I need when I stay in places. But then also if you put Italian in between the Spanish, you can comprehend. But I even learned 20 words in Japanese when I worked in Japan. [Laughs] Only thing I remember now is [inaudible], "Call the waitress." [Laughs] But I felt that Gaudi, Miró, that I really should use ceramics. But I didn't want to use the way they used it. I wanted to do something different. And so I decided I'd make them out of watercolors. And I had this great master ceramicist. And it took us one year to perfect the first tile. Also these little tiles. These were big, I wanted big shapes. I love going into the unknown. And I go into the unknown with such faith. [Laughs] I don't know how I do it. I think it's because some part of me has to be very stupid and insensitive that you don't start thinking about what's going to happen. You think it's going to happen.

MS. RICHARDS: Sounds like you're an optimist.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. It was an amazing—I'm half full, you're right. But it was an amazing experience. Just talking about it makes me feel so good. I just loved it. And then I had this show in Majorca two years ago, three years ago, four years ago. I forget the date. Five years ago. Once again working with the Spaniards. I just love it. I just love those Spaniards. They have an energy unlike other people.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you think that artists are basically treated differently in Europe than in the U.S, if you can generalize about Europe?

MS. PEPPER: I'm thinking very carefully. I think that one must remember that the world is divided not horizontally but vertically. So I think artists are treated like artists everywhere. And artists get to meet people who are artists or the working people. Lawyers meet lawyers. Dentists meet dentists. And they have the same language. So I don't feel treated differently. When I was younger, you could've asked me: Do you think women are treated differently in Europe? And I would've said at the time: The Europeans are more gracious towards women at that point. You know they held out the chairs. They opened the doors, you know. There's more respect. I think the whole world is homogenized now. There's too much information that's all exchanged. And what I understand

about Twitter now, it's really—I only learned all about it. My daughter gave me a lesson in Twitter [laughs] and how it's— That Iranian situation was absolutely run by Twitter.

So there's not even six degrees of separation anymore. I think the answer is when I first got there, artists were called "maestro," you see. And they're still called maestro. But that would be I live in a little town. If you live in the city and you're living in the art world, it's the same art world. It's an international art world there. The Gossin [ph] Gallery in Rome, you know. It's more provincial, let's say in Rome. Paris is less provincial. But it's still—what's the word I'm looking for now? There's a specific word. Well, it's turfism. Everybody has their turf. So in England they have the British Art Council, and they're protecting the British artists. In Paris they're protecting the French artists. The Italians are protecting— Except until recently and probably almost—there was always an open door for American artists, ever since Abstract Expressionism. Of course the real market is still New York, you see. And it's about the marketplace. The art world is now a marketplace art world. And if you think about it, you can't make art. So you don't think about it.

MS. RICHARDS: I want to go back to some questions about the art world. But coming back to Barcelona, so that project took six years?

MS. PEPPER: But I was back and forth. Because if you look at the same time, I had a show of some of it; I think I had had.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes, yes. Lots of things.

MS. PEPPER: It's just— Remember there is so much—it took me six months to come up with my concept, the drawings, this. The Spanish architects came to stay with me in Italy. So that the models were there. They did the drawings from my models. Then I would go every month for a few days, sometimes a few weeks, you know, depending—

MS. RICHARDS: Were you supervising on-site? Were you checking on the progress?

MS. PEPPER: Well, I had to check every tile that was made. Also it was an astonishing experience. I made a drawing for every tile. I made one big drawing. The drawing was about three feet long. And the way the Spanish made this—I'm sure there has to be a computerized way to make it, or even another way then—they took my drawing and blew it up to actual size, which meant they made it about I think it's 80 feet long from three feet long. Then they numbered every one of the little spaces with a tile on my drawing. Or did I number them? I don't remember anymore. And then each one was cut out and put on a piece of clay and then cut out exactly with the template, put the number on the template, and then each one had to be—we had to do the colors on them. And that's where—each time colors would come out, and they wouldn't be right. We did something which I think was very experimental at the time because no one had ever done watercolors that looked like watercolors. I don't know whether you looked at that thing, but they do look like waters.

MS. RICHARDS: Not in person. Yes.

MS. PEPPER: We put it back to bake again, another layer. Very experimental. As I say, it took us a year, and it cost over a million dollars. I mean nobody questioned it. But the man put it on the cover of a book he wrote because it was, in terms of what they considered success and therefore it's not to do with the art's success, that it was—it's a very, very popular park. I haven't any swings. I have nothing for them to play in.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you have water?

MS. PEPPER: Yes, some water. No, no, there's water to drink, not water otherwise.

MS. RICHARDS: No water to play in.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. No, it was—the seats were in the grass. They weren't seats; they were the shapes of the tiles I just put in the grass. I put some benches in it. But what I did is I made a spiral of ceramics for the summertime so that there were spiral trees. So people could sit under the trees. But none of it was done in any way that you said, That element is something that kids could play on. I didn't want them to play on it, but they're on it all the time. We had to remove some things in the triangular—there's a big triangle grass patch where they'd go up with their motorcycles. And only in Barcelona it's 24 feet high; no fences, nothing to keep them from coming off. But we had to eventually plant very unpleasant plants there. It doesn't have that same look.

MS. RICHARDS: Because?

MS. PEPPER: People went up with their motorcycles.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, I see. So you planted these plants to prevent them from doing that.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. No. Because the grass was constantly being destroyed. I wanted to put fake grass in. But then we would've once again had the problem of the kids going up there and falling off. Though it looks like there are no barriers, but actually I have a meter between the top and the grass. So there really is that, you see. But then on the very top, which is eight meters, which is 25 feet I guess, on the other walls, I simply put prickly plants around it. So they couldn't go close to the wall. There's nothing to keep them from jumping off if they went through the plants. That is a wonderful—

MS. RICHARDS: Around the same time—1987 maybe?—you did some bronze reliefs. I read about reliefs.

MS. PEPPER: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: They've been compared to easel painting.

MS. PEPPER: To what?

MS. RICHARDS: Easel painting, these reliefs.

MS. PEPPER: Eagle?

MS. RICHARDS: Easel painting.

MS. PEPPER: Oh, easel.

MS. RICHARDS: They weren't the last reliefs you ever did, but—

MS. PEPPER: No, but wasn't I working on the thing for Switzerland then? When did I do Switzerland? Let's just see; it's right here. *Palingenesis*, right here. What date?

MS. RICHARDS: *Palingenesis* is '94.

MS. PEPPER: Okay. So this is ten years before?

MS. RICHARDS: Seven, eight years before. Maybe it was '87, '88.

MS. PEPPER: Okay. Because in the park, you see, I was doing these ceramics that were really painterly ceramics. They're very painterly. And then also these— [Doorbell rings.] They told me they'd let me know if— But where the hell is Christy? Is it ten o'clock. Oh, she must be there. I think I was still painting, wasn't I?

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: Yes, because color became part of my vocabulary at the time.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, we've touched on that in terms of this sculpture.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. And I painted— The reliefs, the patinas, were very challenging and wonderful. And they were made in plaster. And I was working—what was I working on? Because I eventually made the *Palingenesis*, which is the most—another one of my amazing projects that I had. And somehow they all, as I told you, I worked a lot of things at the same time, and they all informed each other. So I had color in the ceramics, you know. And I had a painterly thing happening. I don't have a reason why I did that. It just came together. It's also very satisfying to do the reliefs. But what you're doing is you're working with—

[Telephone rings.]

Excuse me.

[Audio Break.]

MS. PEPPER: I'm going up to where I did the theater and spend the night there and try to— But people are so funny. [Laughs] God! [Inaudible] might as well have a working Fourth of July and do that.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you want to talk about *Teatro Celle*? Or move right to *Palingenesis*?

MS. PEPPER: Well, as you realized, *Teatro Celle* is the culmination, the first—not the culmination—the first expansion of the textures.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, I think it's important.

MS. PEPPER: The wall reliefs. As I tell you, each thing informs another thing; that's what's so interesting. Is that —it's not planned. But I always refer to my art as compound interest. I was working, I guess, on Barcelona, and Gori had heard from Barcelona. He had this theater he wanted done, and there's a very famous [inaudible].

MS. RICHARDS: Did you say Gori?

MS. PEPPER: G-O-R-I. Giuliano with a G. G-I-U-L-I-A-N-O. Giuliano Gori who owns the Celle—Celle, the whole sculpture gardens. Amazing place. And he was waiting. He wanted someone to make a theater there. Porcinai, the landscape architect—

MS. RICHARDS: Who's the landscape architect?

MS. PEPPER: Porcinai. P-O-R-C-I-N-A-I. Said he didn't think he should do it, but he thought I should. He knew my work and was a big fan. And I had no idea what I was going to do. I was working on

Barcelona, and I was working on the show for New York. But this was such an incredible sculpture park. And the place they were giving me was so important, so extraordinary, that I thought I should come up with something. And I did come up with something that then became a kind of versions of and extensions of my signature that I have done in many places now. It's the seminal work for things in Lithuania, in Tokyo, in where? Upstate New York. What I'm doing in California. It's sort of a signature that keeps changing, but it's all related to *Teatro Celle*. And there, too, was— Well, it really was not like Barcelona in that it was "open sesame." Basically because we argued terribly about the height of the sculpture. And also the openings. And I guess people who do what he does, they like to feel they have some input.

So he—the sculpture, I would've made it much taller. But it is about—what is it? Three feet taller than he thought it was going to be because I just lowered the ground. [Laughs] He didn't know the difference, you know. [Laughs] Because he's a man about my size. And so he saw things looked big. But I, you know, in terms of the cast iron, we must come to that. I made a 60-foot cast-iron piece for Houston, which directly came out of my experience at John Deere, that very few people have done. They were done in 20-foot sections. I don't know how these people, you know—

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, *Palingenesis*—

MS. PEPPER: Is that *Palingenesis*? No.

MS. RICHARDS: In Houston. Oh, no.

MS. PEPPER: Was it *Palingenesis*, yes. Now what's the name of—

MS. RICHARDS: No, that was '81. Eighty-five was in Buffalo?

MS. PEPPER: No. It's no— Is it *Palingenesis*?

MRS. RICHARDS: *Genesis Altar*?

MS. PEPPER: No, I'll get it for you. It's right here. I thought— That's right, it's *Palingenesis* because *Palingenesis* is Switzerland. Anyway, that cast iron piece told me I can do almost anything in cast iron. So I decided to make the Gori thing in cast iron. And he found me the foundry that could cast the iron. So what happened is thereafter I had that foundry that could cast all the other iron things I did because I'd been working in this small place that made lampposts in Terme. And they were very limited, so I couldn't really do anything. So here again, the experience working with Gori— And I don't work like an architect. That is, I don't do drawings. I don't know how to do those kind of drawings. I make models. They'll be in clay, they'll be in Styrofoam. And then give the models to someone to make the drawings for people to build it. But even then I don't keep to the exact drawings because I like to feel there should be a fluidity and I should be able to change things as I go along. So with the Gori piece, for instance, we have one of the reliefs too many because I took some out and moved them around, you see.

I like to treat each work as if it's a drawing that I can do whatever I want on a scribble paper, even if it's 40 feet, whatever it is. I like to feel that it's in my hands still, not being done by other people. That's where 99 percent—because I'm thinking one thing I wasn't there for—of the work that I have fabricated, I'm there. I'm there practically every day so I can make little changes, cut this off, add that on. I'm doing a thing for a place in Calgary, a huge twist from my last show, but it's being done almost 20 feet high. And so I felt as it went up, even though it's the exact thing, I changed it a little bit. I manipulated. I like to feel that everything I do, I don't care what size it is, can be controlled by

me and changed, whatever my sense of something off or not off. Okay?

MS. RICHARDS: So when you were approaching this piece, the theater, you negotiated the height [inaudible].

MS. PEPPER: I negotiated the height and the opening to go through. Because between the two walls, I wanted a very small opening. He said he wanted to use it, and people had to come through it. And he said his wife couldn't get through it. And I said, "Your wife's fat. I love her, she's wonderful. But of course she's too heavy to get through that." And people who couldn't get through that opening could walk around it. There were many ways to use it. I said, "It's primarily a sculpture and then a theater." And that is actually a mantra for the work I do. Primarily it's art and then the use. It may be uncomfortable to use it as a theater; it may not be the perfect thing for it. But it has to function first as art.

MS. RICHARDS: And so as you made this piece—

MS. PEPPER: What I'm about to tell you: So we argued, and we finally got down to 30. He said, Alright. We'll do it 33 centimeters wide. We'll compromise. I said, Why 33. He said, That was the age of Christ when he died. [They laugh.] So we made it 33. It worked. But it was that kind of thing.

MS. RICHARDS: That's pretty narrow.

MS. PEPPER: Yes, it's pretty narrow. Yes. [Laughs] There are lots of anecdotes about; because many artists, you know, once it's a drawing, it's a finished work. You know the mechanical drawing or the engineering drawing and everything of that. And I think it's terrific to be able to walk away from it. I'm a control freak. I say I have millimeter eyes. I see a millimeter off, and I want it to be grounded. They will look at me: Crazy in something this big. But I say, Maybe you don't see it. But you feel it. That hairline changes it. And it worked for me. Anyway, it keeps me engaged otherwise if I walk away from the thing, you know.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. How has it worked as a theater?

MS. PEPPER: It's wonderful. They have summer performances. They have performance artists working, doing things. I've only been to two of the things there. The first one, I must say, I designed the staging of the dance that they were doing because when I did this, everyone was dressed in white as they went up the grass. And we projected slides on them of different sculptures of mine. After that I didn't get involved, you know. I would love to design some stage things. I have so many ideas. But I don't—I'm just so dispersed.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you think consciously of ancient theaters when you were designing that?

MS. PEPPER: No. But I think that—I lived in the world of amphitheaters. I traveled to places where there are amphitheaters. I wasn't think of an amphitheater. I was thinking about a sculpture. And if you look at the sculpture, you realize it's the triangles that I was using at that time, the same forms. So that it— And the place was a natural theater because it was a sloping hill, on which he changed the slope to some degrees around it. But I used the land the same way that I did *Cromlech Glen*. My tableau is what the landscape is. And I try to keep as much of the landscape as I can when I work on something.

MS. RICHARDS: What about the surface, the use of the rust, the formation of the rust, on that piece?

MS. PEPPER: Well, at the beginning I help it along with certain acids and things. And then time. What I love most, time fingerprints, imprint of time is what happens. The rust has its own inclinations. You know you do it—what it wants. What's wrong with the thing I'm going Upstate for Sunday is that they told me it was going to have a natural patina, the material they used. And it hasn't. It just hasn't aged, and it looks new all the time. And it must age. So I'm bringing up certain acids to put on it so that we will just make it.

MS. RICHARDS: Can you control the color of the rust?

MS. PEPPER: Not really. You can control a certain amount of it at the beginning. And that's why I like to use iron and steel rather than, say, corten because corten becomes one color. But iron and steel reacts to the acid in the rain, the atmosphere it's in, and it changes it. You know it becomes redder, it becomes darker. It has its own life. And if you give the essential form that you want, and those non-changeable, immovable aspects of it that retain the aesthetic that you start with, then they nature moves in, and it becomes this like of wonderful happening all the time. It's like things you look at different hours of the day. It's also different times of the year. Why stainless steel? When I acquired one of the polished things about stainless steel that worked was that the landscape entered the stainless steel and changed it different times of the day. I like sculpture to have a life and its own life. Not something— Something that it is not— The form is controlled by me. But then I want the natural world whenever possible, obviously, to enter it.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Do you know the work of Anish Kapoor?

MS. PEPPER: Oh, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And I was thinking about his reflective pieces, the piece in Chicago, a totally different effect. But that perhaps takes a piece from what you had done in the '60s.

MS. PEPPER: Yes, yes. It's a— I'd love to work again in stainless, but you can't go home again, you know. And I think he's a very good artist. And I understand what he's doing because I don't many people who really worked with polished stainless steel, particularly the way I used it. So I know [inaudible].

MS. RICHARDS: Again you did many more pieces, but going perhaps to the *Narni Columns* we talked a bit about earlier. We could talk about those or move right to *Palingenesis*.

MS. PEPPER: Let's move to *Palingenesis*.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay.

MS. PEPPER: The *Narni Columns* come under the umbrella of the *Moline Markers* and the work done in Terme. Most of the *Narni Columns* were done in Terme actually. They were shown in Narni. They have a wonderful castle.

MS. RICHARDS: One quick initial question about the naming of this piece, *Palingenesis*. Because I immediately think about the Lee Krasner painting titled *Palingenesis*.

MS. PEPPER: I don't know it.

MS. RICHARDS: She did a huge painting titled *Palingenesis*.

MS. PEPPER: Well, *Palingenesis*.

MS. RICHARDS: Not that it's the only [inaudible].

MS. PEPPER: No, no, no. But *Palingenesis* is almost a literal explanation of the sculpture. Because what I have is this wall where it's the birth of the sculpture. The very beginning reliefs, the very—

MS. RICHARDS: This is a huge, long 200—more than 200-foot piece.

MS. PEPPER: And in the very, very beginning they're kind of an pedimenta, almost an embryo of the sculpture. And each element then, for the first five or seven elements, the sculpture on the relief is getting bigger and bigger until it becomes a sculpture, and then it's off the wall. And then that, too, grows. The shape is still undefined, and it becomes more defined and more defined until the last three or four are columns that have— So it is the birth of these columns. And that's what *Palingenesis* means. The seed of the last is in the next. It's one of the most literal names I have given anything I've ever done because it is literally that: The sculpture is— And I have a photograph of it in here.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] That was a commission for Credit Suisse?

MS. PEPPER: That's right.

MS. RICHARDS: What was your experience of working with them on this commission? You've—

MS. PEPPER: That's a very good question.

MS. RICHARDS: —been able to do important major pieces as commissions from corporations.

MS. PEPPER: Look, come here. They're too heavy to pick up.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: Watch. This sculpture starts down there as a very, as I say, almost like a pedimenta, even though there's nothing exists. And as it grows, you see the sculpture comes out, out, out, until it gets off the wall. And then [inaudible].

MS. RICHARDS: Beautiful setting.

MS. PEPPER: It is a beautiful setting. But I would like to tell you that it may have been the most inefficient experience I have ever had in any commission. This is the big joke about the Swiss. I first designed something where they had an alee of trees, in which certain trees were cut down. So I had put where the cut-down trees were, I put sculptures made of the tree trunks, which there was cast iron above them. And it was a major and wonderful statement for me. And a fabulous gate for the entrance. And the Credit Suisse explained to me that they did not own—they learned that they could not close the gate, and they didn't own the right to that land. So they then gave me something on the other side of that to do. And I worked very hard. And once again I came across—I came up with something very original, I thought, and I was very excited to do it. And they discovered that only half of that land could they build on.

MS. RICHARDS: This is—

MS. PEPPER: This is Credit Suisse.

MS. RICHARDS: Is it appropriate to say: "You wasted my time, and you need to compensate me for

that?"

MS. PEPPER: Oh, this is going to be a very big commission. So then they found—this is such an interesting experience—they found a strip of land they thought was the whole background there. And I said, "Why is there a fence there?" And they said, "Oh, because the cows are on the other side, and they belong to someone else. I said, "It means I can't build on that side." And it was now the middle of August, and I was to meet— And I said, "I don't want to meet a lackey now. I want somebody very important." And in actual fact the president of that Credit Suisse, which is the major thing, blew in with his own plane to meet me in Zurich to go over the thing. And I said, "You are now the president. You and I are going to shake hands. This is a done deal? You can use this land? I don't have to go back and find another thing?"

MS. RICHARDS: He was aware of what had transpired?

MS. PEPPER: Of course. That's why he flew in. Why would he ever be involved in it? But the most interesting thing about it, it was such a narrow strip of land that I didn't know what I was going to do there. I didn't know. And I'll tell you something, I woke up in the middle of the night—and I keep pencil and paper—and I drew exactly what I was going to do that night. I never changed—it was the shape, everything else. And it's one of my most exciting sculptures in terms of its solution. It really is a wonderful sculpture. And it's part of my theory of the divine accident. Had I not had that space, I would not have done something of that extraordinary originality because it's very rare to do that kind of thing.

And it was a major, major breakthrough for me, you know, and a wonderful experience. But the first few months it was hair-raising. And though I was paid very well because I didn't have a gallery in the middle; they'd come directly to me— I'm trying to think of how I got that commission. Oh, they had seen the sculpture at Gori, the people from Credit Suisse, and they called me. So I didn't have a gallery in the middle. But even so, because of the shenanigans and everything else, by the time we got to do it, about 20 percent of the original fee was less because of who knows what. But they get us artists, we're suckers. We want to do the work. We just want to do the work. My idea is not to lose money, you know, just do the work, you know.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes.

MS. PEPPER: That's what's so good about being with Dale Lanzone and the Marlborough—with Dale Lanzone. He makes sure that I do not lose money. It's not that he makes me cut corners. But he points out that— He's said, "You've got a very inventive mind. You can come up with a solution where at least you're not going to spend all your money. Spend their money." I'm very fortunate because with him, I have a kind of Open Sesame in terms of creativity. And he takes care of everything else other than that. And he takes such care of me. It's really the most wonderful experience. I never had—I've only had him the last 20 years. All the time before then I was on my own. Maybe it's 15 years; must be 20. How long I've been at Marlborough now; I don't know. Since I went back.

MS. RICHARDS: Hmm.

MS. PEPPER: Artists need. They need someone to take—sculptors mostly—need someone to take care of the practical side of their work. It's worth any amount of money to have someone to take care of the practical side.

MS. RICHARDS: You mean the engineering reports and the—

MS. PEPPER: Check out the foundation. Find out what things cost. Check to make sure— All I do is get involved in aesthetics. And that is also—you're free then.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. Yes. Speaking of that, very soon after you did another GSA commission, the *Manhattan Sentinels* [Federal Plaza, New York City].

MS. PEPPER: Oh, was that a—

MS. RICHARDS: Was Dale involved in that, too?

MS. PEPPER: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Was he at the GSA?

MS. PEPPER: He was at the GSA then.

MS. RICHARDS: Nineteen ninety-six is when you completed it.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. So that's how long— Let's see, '96? So it's only about 15 years that Dale's been taking care of me. Feels like he's taken care of me all my life. That was an amazing experience because I got the commission for the African Burial Ground.

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

MS. PEPPER: And as I got a commission for that building there. And they then discovered the African Burial Ground. And I'd already had a signed commission. And politically it was very—I was in Italy by then. I got calls— First of all, I got calls from people at the State Department asking me would I— I'd then said I'd be willing to move across the street; though I wanted desperately to do the African Burial Ground. I can tell you I would've done some really amazing thing. I had such an amazing idea. But white, woman, African Burial Grounds? I understood it. But they sent me papers to sign, releases. Two big markers— One of them, I can't remember, the very famous someone in the State Department, called me and said, "Now, Mrs. Pepper, you're satisfied with this? No one's coercing you to move across the street." All these things. I'm sure they were recording everything. [Laughs] And Dale was guiding me through this. And I only had the corner of I guess it's Duane Street One [ph]. But I said, "If I'm going to do this, I want both corners." And I said, "We can keep the same budget." This is once again artists, you know. But I felt it was very important that nothing go on the other corner, that they were like bookends to the building.

And it was an amazing experience because there was such political aspects of it because of the African Burial Ground. They didn't understand me. They—I am very sympathetic with anything that's got to do with the black community, you know. I think, however, the young man [Rodney Leon] who did the African Burial Ground [Memorial] did a very good job. He just was too young. So what he did, conceptually, was excellent. Had he been a little older, he would've had more texture to it. It would've been—you'd have more pathos, which is what it needs. You have to certainly look into the African Burial Ground, and your heart should break, you know. Conceptually he did it all right, but it just—I would've made it so that you stood there and cried, which is what I thought should be done, just the whole idea of that. However. But I enjoyed that experience.

And it was also—when Dale came to see me in Italy and wanted to see what I was working on, he tells the story, and he always starts to cry, he said, "I come into her studio." I have an enormous studio. "And there she is, she's covered with plaster, and she's making these columns by hand." He says, "Nobody in New York does that. No one in America. There isn't an artist in America who does

anything by hand anymore. And these are 36-foot columns." And by God, it's true. But I wanted all the textures by hand. [Laughs] But I didn't realize—because he never told me how surprised he was. But I love the project. I love the problem. What I love is the problem. As long as I have a problem to solve, I feel excited.

MS. RICHARDS: And those were cast iron.

MS. PEPPER: Cast iron.

MS. RICHARDS: Cast in Italy?

MS. PEPPER: Cast in Italy.

MS. RICHARDS: And then shipped over here. Was that complicated?

MS. PEPPER: No, on a lowboy open bed, flatbed, it was completely rusted by the time it arrived. It had the color I wanted. Because cast iron has that wonderful patina. And now the patina's just great. Have you seen them recently? They're almost black, brown, blue. They're wonderful. They're the only works that I have done that I see again and again and again, except for the few I have around here. And it's strange because usually I have no relationship to the work once it's done. It's gone. I have—it doesn't feel. But because of the building changing and all that, I have a relationship with [inaudible]; I feel very close to them. And I can say it's really the only work I feel about that because I see it all the time.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you have to go through any kind of community response experience, positive or negative?

[END DISC 6, TRACK 1.]

MS. PEPPER: [Speaks on phone.] Hello! Oh, hi! How are you? Just talking about you. Well, I'm being interviewed for the Archives of American— Still doing it, but I said that you are my lifeline. You're the reason I'm alive in the world.

MS. RICHARDS: We're going to pause for a sec. [Pause.] Continuing the break. Okay. We'll start again.

MS. PEPPER: Do you know him?

MS. RICHARDS: I don't think we've met.

MS. PEPPER: He's an amazing human being. He's the only person I have ever met in my life that I trust to talk for me on certain things. [Laughs] But to take something and present it or anything like that. I've never allowed anyone else do that. But he has a kind of presence that's so credible, you know. And I trust him.

MS. RICHARDS: Soon after the GSA commission, in 1998 you had a show at Belvedere in Florence.

MS. PEPPER: Oh, that!

MS. RICHARDS: A major retrospective. And also I think that was the point you first showed stone sculptures? Maybe that's not quite correct?

MS. PEPPER: It's the first time I showed— I didn't— First time I had a public stone sculpture. I did

little things that I never showed them, you're right. And I had this one big stone sculpture.

MS. RICHARDS: So there's a lot to talk about—

MS. PEPPER: Sure.

MS. RICHARDS: —in that. Maybe we should start with the stone—

MS. PEPPER: Okay.

MS. RICHARDS: —and how you started to work in stone then.

MS. PEPPER: I'm trying to remember how that happened. What was I doing?

MS. RICHARDS: And what kind of stone? I don't remember if that was basalt or—

MS. PEPPER: No, wasn't it Pietro Serena?

MS. RICHARDS: —marble?

MS. PEPPER: Pietro Serena? I think it was Pietro Serena. Here is the catalogue from that. That was one of the most—it is one of the most major venues you can have a show.

MS. RICHARDS: Mmm.

MS. PEPPER: And I just—recently someone told me that they say in Florence that that show and Henry Moore's show are the most successful use of the space. It was—I hate it to come down. I was so sad about it coming down. I loved that show so much. It's not this one. The experience was hair-raising because the logistics to get things— You know I had these Todi columns that were 30-some-odd feet. You had to get them through narrow streets, which is almost impossible. We had to change trucks. I had a model of the Belvedere, of the rooms, of the whole space, for one year on my dining room table. We never could use the dining room table for a big anything. And I made in-scale models of everything that was going to go in the show. And I would constantly change them.

MS. RICHARDS: Change the position?

MS. PEPPER: That's right. Until they became absolutely correct. And at that time I—by the time I got to the show, not one thing was changed. The installation was exactly what I had, which saved us a lot of money and was quite extraordinary. Don't they have a photograph of this in this book? They must have it here.

MS. RICHARDS: It must have been particularly challenging to think of it working within that building.

MS. PEPPER: The building was the least of it. It was the outdoor thing. You know, look, you had Florence in the background. And that's where I had these major-scale things there, so that they could survive the background. And it really—

[Telephone rings.]

... It was a challenge, and it was—it gave me a great sense of accomplishments. Here, this is it. Now we'll see the date. It doesn't have a page on it? It doesn't say it.

MS. RICHARDS: It's there somewhere, yes.

[END DISC 6, TRACK 2.]

This is Judith Richards with Beverly Pepper, July 2, 2009, disc three.

So we were talking about the complexities of the retrospective in Florence.

MS. PEPPER: Well, it's quite an experience to see your life in front of you. And it was—I've had other museum shows. But this was something else. I mean the enormity of it, the honor, you know. I even compromised my principles for it and took money from Philip Morris. [Laughs] But as Joseph Califano said—he was fighting cigarette people all the time—I called and said, "Joe, I want you to know that I'm going to take—Philip Morris has put up a million dollars from my show. And I'm going to accept it. And I just want you to know I'm doing that." And he said, "Well, Beverly, you can do it once in a lifetime." [Laughs] I said— And he came to the dinner, and he stood up and said, "I have fought the cigarette companies all my life. I must tell you that I'm really thrilled to be here. I can't believe that I'm here at Philip Morris's behest." [Laughs]

MS. RICHARDS: – something good –

MS. PEPPER: But it was unreal in many ways. I mean I kept thinking this must be a dream, and I'm going to wake up, and I'll be in bed in Brooklyn, and I'll be ten years of age. And this is what I want out of life, you know. It was an amazing experience. But my life is a miracle. You know, my life is a miracle, and I don't let myself forget it. To be able to spend my life doing what I want to do and to support myself through art instead of having to do advertising; to travel all over the world. To live in another language is an amazing experience when you think about it. I never forget about how privileged I am. I mean just to be born and be an artist is a privilege. But then even have children, which I never thought artists should do or have, and still married to the same man, it's a— And to be able to allow my fantasies and my disciplines to merge and come out into something solid, and to be almost 87 and to still be doing it, is also a miracle. I don't take life for granted. I think I am responsible for every day that I live, whatever I do now. And I can't believe it's me, you know. So that show, you know, I had been there when— I went to Henry Moore's show, to the opening. Never occurred to me at that point I would have a show there. It's an astonishing thing

MS. RICHARDS: Who was responsible for deciding to present your work?

MS. PEPPER: They people who organized the Belvedere came to me and asked if I would like to have a show. [Laughs] I mean like you've got to be kidding. And they said they had to raise the money, etc., etc. But do I have the work? All of this, you know. I said, "Well, it's much dispersed, a lot of the work. But, yes, I think so." And, you know, it was almost two years in the planning. Then one year I had the model of the place. Also usually I get very distressed when I see all my work together because what I should've done. This didn't happen in this show. There are a few things I would've probably not have put—probably should have left out. Strangely enough, they were the *Moline Markers* because they weren't of the scale of the place, and I had them outdoors. But since the *Moline Markers* are seminal to my work—with the *Moline Markers* I think I was born in some ways, you see.

No, that show was amazing. But if you look at my biography, figured out what I was doing at the same time of that show, you know, speaking of multitasking. And it's not like I have a staff, you know, that— And I wasn't with the Marlborough. And I think it was André closed six months before. So it was a hiatus. So I didn't have the gallery involved in it. Because I know Pierre Levai came to see the show. And he brought me my contract for the Marlborough then. I think if people take life as serendipitous, but at the same time don't allow it to get out of hand, there are lots of rewards, you

know. No, that show was simply— I know the shows I had in the museums across America, they're a wonderful experience that you want, that I had shows in different parts of America. But the Belvedere was something else. It was really something else. An astonishing experience. My name across the streets of Florence and those banners. Florence, where Bill and I had our love affair, you know. It was so strange. So strange.

MS. RICHARDS: Shortly after that, or maybe planned before, you had a third GSA commission?

MS. PEPPER: What was that one?

MS. RICHARDS: That was the *Sentinels of Justice* in Kansas City [Charles Evans Whittaker Courthouse, Kansas City, MO]. So that was '98, and the exhibition in Florence was '98.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. I got an award for that one, for one of the best indoor— I don't know whether it was GSA or just—

MS. RICHARDS: Those were steel.

MS. PEPPER: They were steel. They were— I don't have— I'll show you what they are in this book, I think. In this book—might be in this book. I'm glad you have all the information because I really and truly—

MS. RICHARDS: How could you remember all of it?

MS. PEPPER: Well—

MS. RICHARDS: I think that book was published—

MS. PEPPER: Before it?

MS. RICHARDS: I think it was published in '96.

MS. PEPPER: Okay. So the other one has to be in this book because it's in one of these books. But it was based on this series, you see.

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

MS. PEPPER: Incidentally, here's a perfect example of— You see why would I think of Giacometti when I was doing this? But then I became—people keep going back to it. But here are the actual files, you see.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: These are the actual instruments. These I made. But these are the actual ones that I welded.

MS. RICHARDS: Pointing to part of this piece.

MS. PEPPER: Here's a file, and I made this piece. But that's another file.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, actual files. And we're looking right now at which series?

MS. PEPPER: We're looking at the plaza pieces, and you remember—

MS. RICHARDS: For the GSA. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. PEPPER: Yes. But these are the ones it came out of. This has the wood. Now I'll find you the GSA big one because it was—I think what happened is—I can admit it now—is because I was so involved with the Belvedere show, that I tried to find a solution that would work, but that it would not require an enormous amount of work on my part. And so I—I'm trying to find the picture. Now where is it [inaudible]. I know it's in one of these books. I did something called *Central Park Plaza*. I have it in front at the entrance to Central Park. Is anything written there about when I would do that?

MS. RICHARDS: Let me look. Yes. *Manhattan Sentinels* was '96—oh, no, I'm sorry. That was different.

MS. PEPPER: It was in Central Park.

MS. RICHARDS: I remember seeing pictures of that.

[END DISC 7, TRACK 1.]

MS. PEPPER: We were talking about the GSA commission that I did—

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: —while I was doing the Belvedere show.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: Well, I thought of what I wanted to do and then realized that I could use something that I had done, just change it. And how serendipitous life is. Because what I did was take this sculpture that had been at Central Park and added another piece. It was indoors, and it's one of the most successful installations I have ever done. It's quite extraordinary. You can't tell by this photograph, but you walk in the door, people walk through there. They should've had a photograph with the people in it because the people are this size. And as I say, I got this GSA award for it. Which is, I think, directly attributable to my experience in advertising, even though it was 40 years ago or something by the time I did this. Because you have to learn a certain amount of flexibility and thinking on your feet when you do that. And there is nothing—you don't have sacred cows. You may have things that you like and things you want to do. But you learn that there is always something just as good. Something may be better or something that'll work—Christie! You want to come in.

CHRISTIE: [Inaudible.]

MS. PEPPER: That's right. So that's how I managed to do the commission at the same time.

CHRISTIE: Here is the lunch. Okay? Hi!

MS. PEPPER: If you want to have lunch, we can order lunch. But in any event, what else did I do that year? Actually once the show was up, I wasn't involved thereafter. It was the year before that took all that work. And then at first it was the planning. So if this was in, what was it, 199— ?

MS. RICHARDS: The GSA?

MS. PEPPER: No.

MS. RICHARDS: Ninety-eight.

MS. PEPPER: And the show was—

MS. RICHARDS: The Belvedere was 1998.

MS. PEPPER: Which meant what did I do in 1997? That would be interesting.

MS. RICHARDS: I didn't write that down.

MS. PEPPER: I just—

MS. RICHARDS: I didn't write everything down.

MS. PEPPER: Belvedere.

MS. RICHARDS: — Fattoria Di Celle?

MS. PEPPER: Oh, I was working on Celle while I was doing that. That's interesting. You know I really have almost no memory of any of this stuff. I have no memory anyway. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: You have an extraordinary memory. [They laugh.] In the late '90s, if I am correct, you created bronzes that had a texture like rough stone.

MS. PEPPER: Well, they were hardly [ph] texture. Wait a minute, because that's in the '90s when I did those.

MS. RICHARDS: Rather than the smooth bronze.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. But let me see what date these are because it might be. Because there were some I did that ended up looking like stone.

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

MS. PEPPER: I think they have to be here somewhere. Get the date. No, this is 2002. So we're talking about the bronzes, must have been 1988. So I don't know which one—because these are the ones that looked like stone.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes. And what are the dates of them?

MS. PEPPER: These are 2002. In 19—well, it might be these. Let's see. No, these are the *Moline Markers*. I don't remember those. Do we know what they were called?

MS. RICHARDS: Well, let's skip over that for a second because there's so much more to talk about. You said that Pierre Levai came to you with the contract when he came to visit the show, the Belvedere.

MS. PEPPER: But we had already talked before then.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. And so that marked the beginning of your return to Marlborough New York.

MS. PEPPER: To Marlborough, that's right.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you expect to have a contract? Some artists don't work with contracts.

MS. PEPPER: Well, I don't have one now. It's not necessary at this point. But the Marlborough, my experience at the Marlborough at the beginning, as [ph] the same was in the 1960s, is that they always have contracts. And then at one point, you know, I think legally if you stay on, probably your original contract is what is still binding. But knowing the Marlborough, I thought it was better to have a contract. The Marlborough is an extraordinary gallery. But it is very much a business. André Emmerich was very much a business, but it was a very [inaudible], one-on-one kind of thing. My joke is that I'm at the Dale Lanzzone gallery, you know. I tell everybody. But it's—from the point of view of galleries, it's a quite extraordinary place to be. But it's so big and so spread out and so business-oriented, that I wouldn't have been comfortable there had no Dale been there, you see. Because I guess you get assigned—I don't know how it works. When I was at the Marlborough the first time, it was the beginning of a big gallery. But I was at Marlborough Rome for three years, I think, before I went to Marlborough in New York. And it was a, once again, a [inaudible] hands-on kind of gallery. And even though the Marlborough in New York—which was an extraordinary thing to happen to me because I was certainly the youngest artist in the gallery, I don't know that there was another woman in the gallery; I can't remember André's gallery, there were lots of women. But I don't remember another woman in the Marlborough.

MS. RICHARDS: Magdalena Abakanowicz?

MS. PEPPER: Not, not at—in the '60s.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, in the '60s.

MS. PEPPER: I'm talking about when Frank Lloyd was around, and it was a—he owned and started the gallery. And he had all the Abstract Expressionists. It was an extraordinary place to be. You know it was being in the center, in the eye of the storm. But it was also, even though it was very big and they had other galleries, it was a much more [inaudible] gallery at that time. And then Emmerich's was a complete—everybody was in the family kind of thing. I have that relationship because of my relationship with Dale. And when Bob Buck was there, the other thing. So it was like going back home in the sense that I was comfortable. But it's not a gallery like other galleries who work for—they're not involved with making a name for their artists. They don't send out— They don't do much to— They don't do a lot of advertising. And they don't—they do a lot of work to sell. But they have a very particular attitude toward art magazines, and of course that's Pierre Levai. It's not a reputation-making gallery. Your reputation may be made by the fact that you show various places, but that's— It's not like say Gagosian or Pace that they work on their artists. And they have far more artists than the other galleries.

MS. RICHARDS: Marlborough does.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. If you look at the enormous amount of artists in the gallery [inaudible]. You know Spanish, South American; it's a very big roster.

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

MS. PEPPER: At this point in my life it suits me fine. André was the right place to be when I was much younger because you had to feel that someone was taking care of you. And though as I say Dale takes care of me, I do feel that but in a completely different way, you know. Galleries are

something that are very complicated for artists. And today they're even more complicated because it's such a big business now. Art has become such a business.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you expect the gallery to, let's say, protect your work if it comes up at auction?

MS. PEPPER: This gallery wouldn't do it. André might have done it. I don't know about other galleries. But it's a very—it's a unique place. They're very, very well-financed. They really don't need money. They have stock of Francis Bacon and Abstract Expressionists. You know if they just sold their stock, they can go on for a long time, you know.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you expect them to maintain your archives, or do you expect that you need to do that?

MS. PEPPER: Well, I think— What do you mean by archives?

MS. RICHARDS: The history of all of your work and your shows and the correspondence and the—

MS. PEPPER: No, they don't do anything about correspondence, only the correspondence that they're involved in with me. They certainly have all my work documented, that they do. And they have very big warehouses, so my work's stored.

MS. RICHARDS: Are they responsible for taking good photographs of all of your new pieces?

MS. PEPPER: I'm in Italy; it's very different. I don't know how they work with their American-based artists. But they probably take photographs of everything I've shown, everything they have. Yes, I'd assume they have photographs of everything there. But they have a very good archival system. They know where everything is. From that point of view, it's a business, you understand. It's not like galleries used to be when I was young. It was a business, but it was a family. I knew all the artists at Emmerich's gallery. I don't know most of the artists in this gallery. I meet them occasionally, you know, but I don't know them. You know you don't—they don't come to everybody's shows. When André would have a show, the artists would come, the other artists would come; whether they knew you or not, they would come to the openings.

MS. RICHARDS: I assume that most of the artists then at Emmerich lived in the New York area. Whereas the artists at Marlborough live all over the world.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. That's right. But even the New York artists, unless you know them, you don't see other art of theirs on exhibition.

MS. RICHARDS: There isn't the sense of a support system.

MS. PEPPER: It's a completely different art world. The art world is part of big business. It hasn't got to do—it isn't the same thing. Al Held was at the Emmerich Gallery; we became very good friends. He came to live near me in Italy. You know it was a thing. I used to see Nancy Graves and Helen Frankenthaler. It was a completely different kind of situation here. There are very—I know a few of the artists; some I've known before. But I only frequent maybe one or two artists from the Marlborough, you know. It's different.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. I wanted to ask you about the artistic community as you experienced it, and how has it's evolved. You weren't here; you were in Italy. But how did you experience the artistic community and the relationships with other artists in the early years?

MS. PEPPER: Well, in the early years I was the young artist at the Marlborough. I got to know Rothko and spent time with Mark, and that was quite marvelous. I knew Gottlieb. I'm trying to think of who else I knew at that time. I can't even remember. But it was, as I said, you had a show, and the artists came to the show. Though the Marlborough always was a particular place; but at that time it had a very important role because it had all the Abstract Expressionists, you see. I got to know Bob Motherwell. You know I was this young artist in this very glamorous place. And the Marlborough in Rome was such a small town, we all knew each other. So Fontana and Burri and all those artists. And Dorazio and Arnaldo Pomodoro and Joe Pomodoro.

You know it was different. I don't know whether it's got to do with my distance or my age. Mind you, I have—most of my art world friends are considerably younger than I am. They're big young artists, that kind of thing. And then I've always had assistants who bring their—they're all artists my assistants—and they bring their friends around. But it's a different world. I don't know what it's like in other galleries. But the Marlborough Gallery, it hasn't got that paternity that André's was, you see. But then André would have dinners, you know. It was a [inaudible]. The most elegant dealer in New York, but he was still that way. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes.

MS. PEPPER: Also André and I were friends. But I think he was friends with all his artists. He certainly was a good friend to Al Held. But we were friends. He spent every summer with me, and we were friends before. So maybe I can't really judge from that point of view. I have never been—in fact I've only had this place since 1980. So you must remember that for 20-odd years I didn't have a place in New York. I would come, and I would stay with friends, or rent an apartment. In fact I have this place because Nathan Kolodner, who was the director of the Emmerich Gallery, and one of the most wonderful human beings alive, told me I had to buy a place, a storage place, for my things. And I said, "I haven't got enough money." He said, "Of course you have." I said, "I do?" [Laughs] Because he took care of me that way. And so he helped find this place. And then this side came for sale, so I got this, too. Originally it had no light in it whatsoever. I put the back windows in across the back wall. But I would never have gotten it if Nathan didn't think I should have it. And Nathan was to me the way Dale is. Nathan, Emmerich, but it's different. I'm friends with Pierre Levai, but André was an old friend, and Nathan and I were close friends. You know it was that kind of thing. Nathan used to come to stay with me, too, when I came to New York. They all took care of me.

But I think it was another time also. I don't know what other galleries are like now. But I have been around Charlie Cowles since he was a very young man. And I should tell you that I don't remember any of his artists coming to my painting shows. They may have after the opening, but I don't remember during the opening unless it was someone I knew personally. So I really can't speak for other galleries. But remember, Marlborough Gallery's a multinational gallery. It's not like a SoHo or Chelsea gallery where it's a gallery. They have the Uptown Marlborough, they have the Downtown Marlborough. They have the London Marlborough, the Madrid Marlborough, you know. It just goes on like that. So— And I've been very lucky because imagine as a young artist to go [ph] your first real gallery was the Marlborough Gallery. But it was another time. And anyway, as I tell young artists, luck is a major part of life. And what you have to do is recognize that luck. You have to recognize what it is, whether consciously or unconsciously. But if you expect someone to take you by the hand and lead you, it doesn't work that way.

Luck is a very important part. But I think courage is the most important attribute an artist must have. Really courage. Because you have to learn to live when it's love and live when— That I survived that John Russell review is one of the great miracles of my life. I never knew how strong I was until—I did go to bed for about two weeks. I almost had a nervous breakdown. But I did come

out the other side. I don't know how I would've been had I been in New York. But it so happens that the review came out the day before I was leaving for Italy. So I didn't have to bump in to anyone on the street or see anybody. I was, you know, in my bedroom in my upsetness. Probably had I been in New York City, it would've been devastating because everybody had read it.

MS. RICHARDS: Hmm.

[END DISC 7, TRACK 2.]

MS. PEPPER: [Inaudible] she showed up at Upstate New York for this very fancy opening with a transsexual. [They laugh.] But she introduced me to this person. Dale and I were standing there, and he said to me, "Looks like a man." I said, "It can't be a man. She wouldn't come with a man dressed up like that." So when I spoke to my assistant in Italy the next day [inaudible], I said, "Christie came with this woman who looked like a man." She said, "Oh, that's Erica. She's just wonderful. She's a transsexual." [Laughs] She's so spacey, oh, God! But who would want to work in a place where you're alone all the time. And she's sweet and lovely. But, boy, did she beat it wrong, that place filled with bejeweled people from Upper New York.

MS. RICHARDS: Maybe they enjoyed it.

MS. PEPPER: Some of them were horrified. Buttrick [ph] came to me and said, "There's some people who crashed this party, unless you know them." I said, "No, they didn't crash. They're my friends." [They laugh.]

MS. RICHARDS: It reminds me of the story of Rauschenberg being kicked out of an event at which he was supposed to get an award. He was wearing jeans, and they didn't allow jeans. And he was wearing a shirt and not a tie and jacket.

MS. PEPPER: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Going back to the work from the gallery—You did this amazing piece—I'm skipping a few years—the *Denver Monoliths*.

MS. PEPPER: Oh.

MS. RICHARDS: There are pieces you did in between, of course, lots of them.

MS. PEPPER: But the *Denver Monoliths* was a groundbreaker in the fact that it was made of a kind of a cast stone. It was not— Because of those measurements, there was no way we could do it in stone. They wouldn't take—the weight wouldn't take it. But because of the Libeskind design of the building, I wanted to work against that, you know. All these exaggerated triangles and I don't want to say it's—I'll say it over here—it looks like a *Queen Mary* that crashed. [Laughs] It looks like two *Queen Marys* that crashed into each other. So I wanted to work opposite, right against that.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you apply for that commission?

MS. PEPPER: No, no, no.

MS. RICHARDS: Was that a competition?

MS. PEPPER: I never applied. If Dale, does— But that came through a major collector of mine who was on the board of the Denver Museum. People named Bartlett, one T, Fred and Janet Bartlett.

And they were, in many ways, responsible for the commission. They certainly paid from what I'm told. And I wanted to do something that really—I'd been working a lot in stone at that period, and I wanted to do something that was against that kind of modernistic frame. I wanted to humanize it in some way. And so we did a lot of research and found this place in Wisconsin that made casts of stones all over the world—the whole Grand Canyon, you know, believable these casts. And then using, in my particular case, fiberglass gunite. I guess since it was going to be granite, ground granite, a composite that we then—I picked stones I wanted cast. And because of their system, it could be cast flexibly. So that we could curve—we would take the cast and flex the cast so it followed the curves.

And I lived for, what, three months in Milwaukee? [Laughs] Radisson Hotel that they threw me out of at one point. [Laughs] Very funny stories. But I have lived in strange places in the world. I don't mind it. I am living in a cocoon. I have lived in places as long or less long. In Barcelona they had very little lavish hotels. They put me in the best hotel because the government paid for it, whatever prices they got. But there I did have a liveried chauffeur who picked me up every day from the Radisson. The reason it was the Radisson was because it was closer to the factory, and the factory was outside of Milwaukee; it wasn't within Milwaukee. And it was an amazing experience. It was—I think it's—I don't know anyone who's used that material to make sculpture. Amazing experience. I did try to get—

MS. RICHARDS: What's inside of it?

MS. PEPPER: There's a metal structure that is the inner form of the sculpture. It's like the—it's the yin yang. The outside is the yin and the inside's the yang because it's hollow; that was the whole point, because you couldn't do that. And it allowed me also to put my hands on it because it was—you're working it and it's wet. As it dried, I could scratch what I wanted to do. So it was like sculpting at that size. And I went up this crane elevator to the top of the thing. I had a wonderful time.

MS. RICHARDS: You said it was molded on an actual stone or two stones?

MS. PEPPER: No, it was molded from casts. I'm not sure what the stones were; I can't remember now which stones I chose. I remember there—

MS. RICHARDS: Were they stones in a quarry or stones in a mountain?

MS. PEPPER: They went to various mountains, and they went to various—they went to the Grand Canyon. They went to places in the—

MS. RICHARDS: You mean they had an inventory of stone surfaces and forms.

MS. PEPPER: Hundreds of them.

MS. RICHARDS: [Gasps.]

MS. PEPPER: And I took them and photographs and made models using the stone. Made an actual stone model. My model for that project was in stone.

MS. RICHARDS: On what scale?

MS. PEPPER: Very small. Only about that size.

MS. RICHARDS: Sixteen inches or so.

MS. PEPPER: I had 24 inches or something like that. But I was a long time there getting to learn the stones. What happened, however, is they became too inefficient cost-wise because they— Because they never did anything like that, and I was new at it, it wasn't cost-efficient for them because we had to redo a lot because they didn't know. So they would do more casts of the things than they needed to do. So that the next things I wanted to do would triple the price, which made it impossible to do it. But I found another place in Seattle, sends people out and works on the site with you. And the sculpture I did for Upstate New York theater is the same material, but it's not cast; what we do is absolutely construct the stones the way we want them, you see. And that's— so I used it up there, which was quite wonderful, too. And the people I worked with there are the ones who did the Bronx Zoo 20 years ago. You go look at those in the Bronx Zoo, they're made a similar way.

MS. RICHARDS: What's the name of this fabricator?

MS. PEPPER: In Seattle?

MS. RICHARDS: The place?

MS. PEPPER: I know the person's name is Joby. I don't know the name of the—

MS. RICHARDS: So these monoliths, as you call them, were you thinking of ancient monolithic stone works?

MS. PEPPER: I wasn't really thinking about them. I was thinking about something that was contrapuntal to the building. And I just thought of carving small—this size—stone things for what I wanted to do. And I knew that I wanted to have curves as opposed to those flat areas. And I wanted no geometry in it because it was all geometrical. And I told you before: I really—the front of my mind comes to work as an editor. I don't start at the front of my mind as a concept. I scribble a lot. In fact I probably have a scribble of that in here. I think I saw it. I scribble a lot. And then when I'm about to start something, I go through my scribbles and see what I've got, and see if it's anything that interests me.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So it was really thinking about a contrast to the Libeskind building.

MS. PEPPER: Absolutely.

MS. RICHARDS: And intuitively thinking about the handmade and the almost primitive quality of stone.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. Now here I was sculpting them. I was just doing these little scribbles like that. These are all—Let's see what I've got here. Yes. You see I have scribbles of them in this book. And some of the scribbles are after the fact, some of them are before the fact. You know if I start before I come to a conclusion, knowing where I want to go, I don't have—I lose the immediacy, you see. It's—as I told you before, I want to discover what I'm doing at the same time that I'm finished, you know, in terms of beginnings. I don't want to reproduce something I have. In this case I did. I used what I had and added another one to it.

MS. RICHARDS: Pointing to the GSA work, in '98.

MS. PEPPER: That's right. It's a rare kind of thing. But I was in a terrible bind, and I thought this would work, and obviously it worked well enough that I've been given the architectural award for

that in that year. Probably if I came up with something new, I wouldn't have won it. [Laughs] You see. I think everyone has his own process. And mine is backing into my work.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. There's one that you recently, well, relatively recently, finished, *Ptolemy's Wedge*. That looks like a fascinating project. Minneapolis Central Library. That's stone?

MS. PEPPER: No, no, no, no. That's fabricated steel.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, that's the steel.

MS. PEPPER: Fabricated steel.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, I was looking at— There's an onyx piece. Yes, fabricated steel.

MS. PEPPER: That piece—

MS. RICHARDS: That's a very large—

MS. PEPPER: I'll tell you what happened. I make a lot of small sculptures just to make small sculptures. And some end up—many of them are just in Styrofoam. And I was working with a series of wedges that I wanted to do quite the opposite of the *Normanno Wedge* [I, Detroit Institute of Arts]. I wanted them unconventional wedges. And when I saw the library, I thought this would fit very well there. The space was not a wide space. It was not a generous space. But I thought I could go up and keep it very slim. And I was very fortunate. It works very well there. And it's an amazing piece when you see the piece. I think it's not very photogenic because it's a piece you feel as much as see because of the precariousness of the wedge. The wedge is really coming toward you. It's not a wedge—a static wedge. You have a sense it might be moving. But it has also a truncated wedge at the bottom, which it gives it a stability. So it's a lot of trompe l'oeil in that piece. But I think it's a very un-photogenic piece.

MS. RICHARDS: Then you had a show in 1980 at Marlborough titled "Voyages Out" ["New Steel Sculptures." Sept. 11-Oct. 12, 2008]. And I was curious—

MS. PEPPER: That was 2008.

MS. RICHARDS: Sorry, two thousand eight. Did you give it that title? Do you title your shows?

MS. PEPPER: I title my shows. Sometimes before I'm working on the work, and sometimes at— Do you have the catalogue of that show?

MS. RICHARDS: I have, yes. Not with me, though.

MS. PEPPER: Sometimes I refer to the show—it picks up its own name, and I refer to that. And sometimes I give it a title afterwards. So that basically for me to identify them more than anything else. But it was a complete deviation from my other work. Started from the *Denver Monolith*, it was about curves; the whole show was about curves. And it was actually my going out into different experimental forms.

MS. RICHARDS: Hmm. That's why you called it "Voyages Out."

MS. PEPPER: Yes, it was me going and traveling into other shapes.

MS. RICHARDS: That show was in the Chelsea space.

MS. PEPPER: Yes. Did you see that show?

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, I did.

MS. PEPPER: It was a very interesting show. I have—one of the sculptures I made too big to get in the space. I had to remake it. So I have it in front of my house. [Laughs] I had [inaudible]. They told me it was a 17-foot ceiling, and actually it was a 17-foot ceiling before they put the ceilings in, you see. Between the floors it was 17 feet. And I had made a 16-foot sculpture because I wanted everything to be within a foot from the ceiling. And they'd laugh at the gallery because I'd call practically every week saying, "Now check the ceiling height." And each time they confirmed it from the drawing. But the actual fact is the drawing was the raw space and not until they put the actual ceiling in. That's nice. I have the big one in front of my home in Italy, and I love it. I never have my own work that way.

MS. RICHARDS: Aaaw.

MS. PEPPER: But that was a show that I made an absolute decision. As I say, usually I move one thing into another. But I made a decision at that point after the *Denver Curves* [*Monoliths*], that I would like to not do geometry in that way. And it was a very satisfying thing. And also I was asked to make a sculpture for the St. Peter's Church in Assisi, this big 21-foot thing called *Ascensione*. One big curve.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes.

MS. PEPPER: So I thought I would like to make a smaller version of it for the show, which I did. And that set the tone of the show. But the other thing is I have built a model of that gallery, which I have. And I made all the sculptures for the gallery in the model. Which when you move sculptures like that around, as I've told you before, you have to know where they're going to go first. So in a funny way, that whole show was one piece, you see, because the pieces related to each other. I loved making that show. I loved it because it was all new for me.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. You have this piece that looked new—a *Horizontal Twist*.

MS. PEPPER: That's one of my favorite pieces. I wanted to make it very big. I still think I'm going to make it very big.

MS. RICHARDS: In the catalog it shows two different sizes for some of the pieces.

MS. PEPPER: Yes, in this show they had some small pieces. They weren't models. I just felt that it would be nice to have garden-size pieces, you see. And since I like to make them before I get to the very big size, I like to make medium-size so you can correct everything that happens in that size.

MS. RICHARDS: Very practical.

MS. PEPPER: Well, it's not just practical. It's about—you experience sculpture differently than you do painting. A painting has one view. You stand in front of a painting. My sculpture is an attempt to give you a different experience as you move around it. So you have unpredictability, which is something I really try to nurture in my work. And so I make a steel model that might be ten, 15 inches. Then I make one that might be five feet. And then for this show then I went up to 12-1/2, 13 feet. And they're not exactly the same because I have tweaked them.

That show was amazing. Most of the work sold. And then there was the crash, and a good portion

of them were then cancelled.

MS. RICHARDS: The sales were cancelled. I read in the catalog that the large pieces are in an edition of three—I mean potentially—and the smaller pieces an edition of six.

MS. PEPPER: I don't even know that. I guess the gallery decided that.

MS. RICHARDS: Is that not a decision you might have made?

MS. PEPPER: They confer with me. They confer with me.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. PEPPER: And I think it's—I've never done that. I did a cast thing. I never did—I thought it was a very good idea, and it's turned out to be a good idea because many people want the same sculpture. So and then because once you make it a size, and you have all of the engineering drawings at that scale, you need engineering drawings, then it is like making another cast. So if you treat them as casts— The first time, if you look at all my catalogs, it's the first time that's ever been— Except for I think the *Moline Markers*, which were additions, too.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, so this is a new, relatively unusual situation: having multiples.

MS. PEPPER: They are for me. Except when they're cast bronze when you have them.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: That's a whole other thing.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MS. PEPPER: So it was a decision that they conferred with me about it, and I thought why not? It's a good old lady's solution. [Laughs]

MS. RICHARDS: Do they confer with you at all or would you want them to in terms of who buys something? Who is offered something? Or is that totally a business decision?

MS. PEPPER: It's a business decision. They confer with me if people are bargaining and want discounts and things. Then they have to confer with me whether I will go along with it.

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

MS. PEPPER: So you know—

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. Now getting to pieces you're currently working on, one of them is a huge fountain in Terme, Italy.

MS. PEPPER: I'm still working on it. It's not just a fountain. It's a park, a small so-called garden in the city of Terme.

MS. RICHARDS: How far is that from where you live?

MS. PEPPER: A drive of about 35 minutes. You go south. It's toward—one hour from Rome. Maybe it's 40 minutes. But it has not just the fountain. I've designed all the seating areas. I've designed the

whole park, you know. And it's an interesting thing. It's been going on for years and years and years because when you work in Italy, it's not quite the same way. They have a certain amount of money for this, so you do that. And they have a certain amount of money— Then they have an election. And if your party hasn't be reelected, then you're in trouble, you know. [Laughs] It's a completely different way of working. You develop another rhythm.

MS. RICHARDS: How far into this would you say you are?

MS. PEPPER: I should hope—I think we have another year. I think we've been working on it ten years. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Ninety percent done?

MS. PEPPER: No. [They laugh.] I think they finally got all the money for the fountain. But it's a very expensive thing to do. I mean just the border spigots and all that inside the fountain will cost a couple hundred thousand dollars, maybe even more. But that's just the inside. Maybe it's \$300,000. So, you know, it's a big undertaking. But it is a park for the locals.

CHRISTIE: [Inaudible.]

MS. PEPPER: What? It's going to be very exciting if I get what I want because since most fountains have no water in it, you know. All over the world fountains are always turned off. I designed it as a sculpture actually. But I have polished plastic something; it looks like a mirror, where the water will be going. So when the water is off, you have this like polished stainless, but it's not. And you have a complete reflection of the fountain. So you see the fountain in the sky both from underneath and from above, the reflection is so— It should be a very interesting thing. I would love to get—it's been going on forever. But it's a very good thing. And the benches are different than I've done anytime because they're made of carved stone, but they're set into the grass. So the grass goes all the way up the back to the fountain—of the benches. The benches then come out. So you're seated into the grass. It's a very interesting thing.

MS. RICHARDS: That's cool.

MS. PEPPER: Yes.

[END DISC 7, TRACK 3.]

MS. RICHARDS: So now we'll start again. We were talking about your current work. And you were talking about the fountain in Terme. If you're finished talking about that, I wanted to ask you about this theater for a private garden in New York.

MS. PEPPER: That's the one that's Upstate New York.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes. Is that unusual to do—

MS. PEPPER: It's the first one I've done for a private person. I'm now doing a second one right now for California which will be even more interesting because we have these prehistoric volcanic boulders that they went to northern California to find them. And they are astonishing. They each weigh 15,000 pounds. And it's going to be an astonishing experience, this whole thing. Really amazing, private people you can see how you can change your direction while you're working at it, you understand.

[Audio break.]

MS. RICHARDS: Okay, we're going to start again.

So this private sculpture garden in New York—

MS. PEPPER: Is own by a collector, a good collector, who happens also to be a theater producer, a Broadway theater producer. And he decided he would like—he didn't know what he was in for. He'd seen something I'd done. And in the end he has this really beautiful outdoor theater. And he had—he sort of had an opening for it in terms of inviting people to see it last Sunday. And he had the brass section of the Philharmonic, the New York Philharmonic. And they only played jazz and things like that. They were astonishing. It was astounding. And the acoustics are absolutely perfect. I don't know if it's true, but all the theaters I've done—not because I know what I'm doing—I just have this divine whatever looking after me. [Laughs] You know the [inaudible]. Whenever I do these theaters, they work.

MS. RICHARDS: You're doing something similar in Northern California?

MS. PEPPER: Yes, that's going to be the most astonishing I will have done to again private collectors on their ranch. It won't—they won't really use it as a theater. But I think they will entertain in it, that kind of thing.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you feel at all disappointed that more people can't see these privately commissioned pieces?

MS. PEPPER: Most people can't see the art you sell. I am very simple. When it's gone, they're gone. They leave room for me to make another one.

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

MS. PEPPER: I have built many houses in my lifetime. I've never gone back to one that I've moved out of. My husband and my son are very romantic; they always go back, and they miss the place, and they're sad about it. Jorie and I never go see them again. We're on the next piece of work. And I can't be tenacious about anything I make or I'll never make another one. People say, "How do you feel about your children going out in the world?" And I say, "They're not my children. They are not my children." And anyway, I think children should go out in the world and call before they come back. [They laugh.]

MS. RICHARDS: What about a piece you're doing for Lawrence Technical University in Michigan?

MS. PEPPER: I've made a sculpture very much like *Ptolemy*. It was one of my generous gesture things. I was paid for it but probably half the price [inaudible] so they could have the thing they asked for. As long as they were willing to take a version of *Ptolemy*, it was all right with me. So it's fine.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And then you're doing another piece, an earthwork in Michigan?

MS. PEPPER: It was going to be an earthwork, but—it's in Grand Rapids. No, I'm doing a 36-foot monolith that is something—it is so simple, I can't imagine how it's going to be. It's just—it's something I've been wanting to do for a long time. And it's for the Meijer Sculpture Garden [Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, Grand Rapids, MI]. And it's near their lake. It should be very

dramatic. And in October when we install it, Jorie and I will do a song and dance together. I'll do a slideshow and talk. And then we talk to each other. And as she put [ph] I, We usually don't agree in public. [Laughs] And we make very good amusement for the audience. And she'll read a poem of hers or two or three.

MS. RICHARDS: Great. And I guess the last one I'm going to ask you about is the commission in Calgary that you mentioned.

MS. PEPPER: An endless commission.

MS. RICHARDS: Ah.

MS. PEPPER: A major, major earthquake. They had seen Laumeier [Sculpture Park, St. Louis]

MS. RICHARDS: Is this the city of—

MS. PEPPER: Calgary.

MS. RICHARDS: Calgary.

MS. PEPPER: They had seen Laumeier, and they're reconstitute—how do you say? Reconstuating?

MS. RICHARDS: Reconstituting?

MS. PEPPER: Reconstituting. Sometimes I don't speak such good English. I was mixing two languages. The wetlands, and they've been making incredible landfills there. And I have this enormous piece of land which is very much a cousin to Laumeier. But it is more formal. And it has three huge sculptures and a long walkway to it which will be somewhat undulating. And we should have it—at the end of August I should be putting it in.

MS. RICHARDS: You are very busy.

MS. PEPPER: I really have to look at lists to see what I'm doing. I keep forgetting because I'm also doing a sculpture for the Lungarotti wine people and probably design them a wine cellar, an underground wine cellar. And what else am I doing? Let me think. Oh, on October 26th, I'm being given an honorary citizenship by the city of Todi. And we're putting back a couple of my sculptures that were in the piazza, we're putting them somewhere else, at the entrance to the town. What else am I doing?

MS. RICHARDS: Well, that brings a question, too, that I want to ask about honors and awards. You've gotten so many. What do they mean to you? When someone wants to honor you, what are the thoughts that go through your mind? [Laughs.]

MS. PEPPER: I'm the fisherman's wife. I don't understand why in all these years having been on the board of the Sculpture Center why I haven't been given that award—that's the fishes one. [Laughs] I like it. But it doesn't change anything, you understand? I have a—I don't know whether it's a protective coating or what. But these things don't affect me. It's nice. Then I sometimes forget I even got them, you know. I like very much the one in Todi because I've been there for so many years. And I like the idea of having sculptures stay behind because I'm very identified with the place. Lots of people refer to the area as "Beverly's hills" because so many friends have bought there. And I feel good about that. I'm very pleased about that. It doesn't change anything. As my father would say, "That and two bucks you can get on the subway." I did ask if I can get on the buses free when I

got the what's it called? The French [inaudible].

No, doesn't change anything. I never wear the little thing in my lapel. It's nice, but it doesn't affect me in terms of how I could be a better artist. It's pleasant. It's part of the miracle of making it over the world—over the bridge actually—from Brooklyn. Did I tell you I was in the Brooklyn Celebrity Path? That really I enjoyed. There is in the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens a path that is called—for people who made Brooklyn famous. And there's Mae West, Walt Whitman. So you can imagine how pleased I am. [Laughs] That I like. I like that. Between Walt Whitman and Mae West, I like being on that. That's particularly nice.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. Oh. I think we've covered more or less—not every little thing. But just to ask some follow-up questions. I think we have just a little more time. How do you feel about considering whom you would entrust your work to when the time comes? This has to do with estate planning, thinking about how to control the future which—

MS. PEPPER: At this point I am talking with Pratt Institute about a possible Beverly Pepper Garden. And that would make me very happy. And we're talking seriously about it. I haven't really done enough about my estate. If I died tomorrow, it'd be pure chaos, though I'm working on it. Obviously I'll have my friend Dale there to guide it and take care of it. But then my daughter is no lightweight. And she will be very good at it. But she won't have the time for it. Once again, I will trust to serendipity. I don't think in terms of a legacy. I think about the estate as I would like my work to not disappear. But I have so much, my joke has always been that my grandchildren, great-grandchildren can sort of do a trip around America and the Far East and places and see what Grandma did. And that's a legacy in itself, you see. Of course if you do a lot of permanent work, as I have, it's there. It is there. One of the joys of the sculpture down the street, the *Manhattan*—whatever they're called.

MS. RICHARDS: *Sentinels*.

MS. PEPPER: *Sentinels*. So it's nice having them. I should be more respectful and more planning about my work and all. And I've tried. But, as you can see, I'm so scattered that it's very hard [inaudible]. We're trying to get lists of all the work I have everywhere, etc., etc. But I've been working three and a half years on my website, and it's still not finished. You know, there it is.

MS. RICHARDS: So much to do. Well, this is maybe a good point to close. Thank you very much.

MS. PEPPER: Thank you.

[END DISC 8.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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