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**Oral history interview with Judy Fiskin, 2009
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Judy Fiskin on November 13-22, 2009. The interview took place in the artist's home in West Los Angeles, and was conducted by Hunter Drohojowska-Philp for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Judy Fiskin and Hunter Drohojowska-Philp have reviewed the transcript. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: This is Hunter Drohojowska-Philp interviewing Judy Fiskin at the artist's home in West Los Angeles on November 13 in the afternoon for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, disc one.

Judy, let's begin at the beginning. When you were born and where were you brought up?

JUDY FISKIN: I was born in 1945. I lived the first 18 months of my life in Chicago and then my parents moved to Los Angeles.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Now, what did your parents do?

JUDY FISKIN: My mother was a housewife. My father had, in Chicago, had inherited a clothing store from his father. And also a lot of investments that his father had made. And his father died when he was 21. And when he was 26, he decided he wanted to move to Los Angeles. And he basically retired at age 26, sold the store for a big profit and retired.

And what he would do every day is go to a brokerage house in Beverly Hills and watch his stocks and talk to the other people there. And then he—at a certain point, he realized that he was making a lot of money for other people by giving them advice and so he bought out his broker, made his broker his assistant and became a broker. And that's what—[they laugh]—that's what he did.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what are—what were your parents' names?

JUDY FISKIN: Fred and Cecile Bartman.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Bartman.

JUDY FISKIN: B-A-R-T-M-A-N.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Thank you. And do you have siblings?

JUDY FISKIN: I have an older brother.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what is his name?

JUDY FISKIN: John Bartman.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay. And did either of your parents have any interest in art?

JUDY FISKIN: My mother was an art history major at the University of Chicago. And I have early memories of her taking me to see art—I know there was a [Vincent] van Gogh show at the LA County Museum before they moved to Wilshire Boulevard. I think they were in the basement of the Natural History Museum. She would take me there with her. And I also think that she took me to the gallery—open gallery nights on La Cienega Boulevard. And there were a lot of art books in the house.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So yes. The answer is yes, you were—and how—did your family influence your interest in art?

JUDY FISKIN: Oh, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And in what ways? Beside that.

JUDY FISKIN: I think just being exposed to it. And it didn't take until after I left the house, really. You know, just—I think for the usual teenage reasons, I wasn't going to be interested in what my mother was interested in. So we went to Europe in the summer of 1960. I just—I was 15 and I just wanted to go home. Three years later I went on junior year abroad—or four years later—in Paris and I just ate everything up. So it was, you know, it was dormant while I was in the house, but I really do think it came from her.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Where did you go to school before you went to college? Where did you go to grammar school and high school?

JUDY FISKIN: I went to Fairburn Avenue School in West LA and then Emerson Junior High and then University High. And then my senior year at Uni High, I was allowed to spend the afternoons taking classes at UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles]. They had a program for that.

JUDY FISKIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative].

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Oh really? In high school.

JUDY FISKIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative].

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what did you take at UCLA?

JUDY FISKIN: I took, like, you know, the beginning English course and Italian, I think, were the—and art history.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Ah-hah. And was anybody else in your family involved in the arts? Aunts, uncles, anything like that?

JUDY FISKIN: I had an aunt who was really interested in art and she—oh, God, what is this—there's a 19th-century poster artist; I think his name is Théophile [Steinlen]. No.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Close.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. You know who that is.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Yes.

JUDY FISKIN: But you're not allowed to tell me. [Laughs.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: No, I'm trying to remember the—how to pronounce the last name, but I think Gautier is close.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. Anyway, she amassed a huge collection of his work and then gave it to the art museum at Rutgers later in life. And I had a cousin who—Bill Bartman—who became interested in art. He was in the movie business for a while. And then he started a nonprofit organization—the acronym is DUI. It was a book distribution system for getting art books to underserved libraries—so rural libraries, inner-city libraries. And he ran that for a long time. He unfortunately died a few years ago.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: He put out the *Art Press* magazine with your interview, yeah?

JUDY FISKIN: Yes, he did. Yeah. He did that as well. He put out a series of small monographs of contemporary artists.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Which has such a good interview with John Divola.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Now, so up to—you went to your—did your junior year abroad in —

JUDY FISKIN: In Paris.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: When you were still in high school.

JUDY FISKIN: No. No, no, no. In college.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: When you were in college.

JUDY FISKIN: I had gotten—I was young for being a junior, but—because I had gotten ahead of myself by—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: What years did you go to Pomona College and why did you choose to study there?

JUDY FISKIN: I went there from 1962 to 1966. And you know, I basically didn't want to go out of the state. I had been at UCLA for a semester because I graduated in midyear, I graduated in January. I didn't like being at such a big school. And you know, there aren't that many small schools in California. I had gone to look at Stanford [University] and there were too many people in tennis sweaters there—[they laugh]—for me. So it was just sort of by default. My brother was already there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: At Pomona.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. So I just went there with no idea whether I would like it or not.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Would you consider yourself to have been a good student?

JUDY FISKIN: I was a very good student.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: You were interested in studying.

JUDY FISKIN: No. [Drohojowska-Philp laughs.] I just did well. No. I just, you know, in our household, we were expected to do very well in school. And it was a way to stay out of trouble. So no, the only thing that I was truly interested in once I started college was art history. And when I think back on it, you know, I did so well. But everything else kind of just slid off me. But art history stuck.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what did you—who did you study with at Pomona?

JUDY FISKIN: Mostly with Maurice Cope.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And how do you spell his last name?

JUDY FISKIN: C-O-P-E.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay.

JUDY FISKIN: And then also Jim Demetrian was there, like for my last—I think my junior—no, I was away junior year. So must have been senior year he was there. And I took classes with him. And then there was a new guy who replaced Maurice Cope and that was Nick Cikovsky. But—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: That's a familiar name.

JUDY FISKIN: He was an expert—oh, God—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: S-I-C-O—

JUDY FISKIN: Cikovsky was I think C-I-

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: C-I—

JUDY FISKIN: C-I-Kovsky. K-O-V-S-K-Y or something like that. I don't know. That I would have to look up.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: His name's familiar to me. What is he an expert in?

JUDY FISKIN: George—a 19th-century American landscape painter. And I can't remember his name. Really minor kind of character. He was—yeah, he was not really the right person to be taking on—there were only two art history professors at Pomona. So you needed like a really broad scope.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: But you enjoyed studying art history with them.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, well, mostly with Cope. He was fantastic.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what was his specialization?

JUDY FISKIN: You know, I don't even know. But he was just a great teacher. He used to—the night before tests, he would have us over to his house and we would play art charades. [Drohojowska-Philp laughs.] And he took us to LA all the time. He sort of taught us to be curious about the city and also gave us a kind of gallery- and museum-going habit, which I think, you know, was something that was really, really valuable because I see in my own students at CalArts they don't just do that on their own. You kind of have to lead people to that sometimes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what year did you graduate?

JUDY FISKIN: In '66.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: In '66. You said that. And but the junior year at—you spent your junior year in Paris?

JUDY FISKIN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what was that like? You loved it, but what did you do?

JUDY FISKIN: Well, I went with a program. I went with the Sweet Briar College program. And they had—they had it set up so that most of the students took their classes together, but they didn't have any—you know, anybody teaching art history. So I didn't do anything with them. I just sort of got ejected into the Institute of Art and Architecture all by myself. And it was like really shocking for me because they—you went to one lecture a week.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And where was this?

JUDY FISKIN: This was the Institute of Art and Architecture in the—and it's part of the Louvre I think. Not the Louvre, I'm sorry. It's part of the [University of Paris-] Sorbonne. Or not. I'm not really sure, actually. [Drohojowska-Philp laughs.] But it was in the same neighborhood as the Sorbonne, you know. And they had their own building.

And the professor would lecture and then at the end of the course, they would just tell you to regurgitate one of the lectures. There was no thinking. There was no reading books. I actually went out and bought myself some books because I was interested in the subject. And besides I had to learn about, you know, like Romanesque cathedrals in French, having never learned about them in English, so I needed some written material to help me with that.

And the guy who taught Romanesque architecture was—we thought he was blind—[Drohojowska-Philp laughs]—because he never turned around to—he would point at the slides but over his shoulder. And I found out later, he actually had Parkinson's, but he had given those lectures so many times that he could point at the part of the slide behind his back without looking. You know, it was all just so routinized. It was nothing like our education.

But having so few classes really left us at liberty. And my boyfriend had come over there to be with me. He'd taken a year off from Pomona. And we just traveled all over the place and had the best time. And we were both interested in Romanesque architecture, so we just went around Europe looking at Romanesque cathedrals. That would be sort of like the spine of our trip.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And were you interested before you went to Paris and had this teacher?

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, actually, I was.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Yeah. This is started even in Pomona.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay. So at the end of the year there, you came home and—

JUDY FISKIN: They had fired Maurice Cope and replaced him with Nick Cikovsky.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Oh dear.

JUDY FISKIN: And we gave him a really hard time, for which I apologize now. [Drohojowska-Philp laughs.] Because he had better credentials. You know, he had a Ph.D. from Harvard or something. And so they—and Maurice didn't.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: I see. Well, then after Pomona, you then went to UC-Berkeley I guess.

JUDY FISKIN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Immediately, like in 1966?

JUDY FISKIN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay. And what was UC-Berkeley like?

JUDY FISKIN: It had a very good art history department. And there were a few famous people doing medieval art there, which is what I was still interested in. But I—unfortunately, they—when I got admitted, they sent me a letter as part of the admission letter saying, if you can't pass two language tests by the end of your first quarter, you will be thrown out. And I was the only one in my class, my entering class, naïve enough to believe that. And so I went to the language immersion school—I already knew French—but I went to the language immersion school in Monterey [CA]—used to be an army school for language—and learned German.

And I was the only one in my entering class who then passed the German test, which meant that when they handed out assignments, I was always given the assignment that took—where you had to read German. And so I spent all my time in the library translating with a dictionary because I didn't really know German. You know, if they had given me the French stuff, I could just read it, but I spent all my time in the library. I missed the People's Park demonstrations. I missed everything.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Oh. [They laugh.]

JUDY FISKIN: I had to come home and see it on the news at night. So it was okay. I realized immediately that it was—that graduate school was a different game. That I was actually more of, like, that I was an art lover, but, like, I wasn't going to be an art historian.

And I even quit the first week. And I went to the university employment office and when I saw what the jobs were that I could get, I went back because I was on a scholarship. I just figured, okay, it's a job. But I already knew I wasn't going to do it. Didn't know what I was going to do. So I did okay. I just wasn't that interested in it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And I was going to ask you about being in San Francisco in 1966. So did you have any participation with the political goings-on or the—

JUDY FISKIN: More with the love-ins.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: The love-ins. Yes, exactly. [Fiskin laughs.] The change in the society.

JUDY FISKIN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Tell me about your experience there because it was probably a pretty important year.

JUDY FISKIN: You know, it wasn't. I was not really very attuned to all that. I didn't like living in Berkeley. I felt like there was like a lockstep where you didn't even discuss things. It was just assumed that everybody agreed on everything. So we did meet people. My husband was getting his—I married him in graduate school and—my first husband—and he was getting an M.F.A. in painting there. So we met artists. We had—Mark Rothko came to our apartment—[laughs]—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: My goodness.

JUDY FISKIN: —because he was a visiting professor that year. That part was really interesting. We were friends with another painting student and his wife who was a really ceramist. I really liked the people that we met in the art department. Everybody else it just seemed to me was—it just wasn't interesting. You know, it was very dogmatic up there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: What was your first husband's name?

JUDY FISKIN: Jeffrey Fiskin.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And he was a painter.

JUDY FISKIN: He was a painter up there. He became a screenwriter when we—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And how did you meet him?

JUDY FISKIN: At Pomona. He was my boyfriend. He was the one who was with me in Paris.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Oh, I see. So he went with you from Pomona to Berkeley.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay.

JUDY FISKIN: We were trying to decide whether to go to graduate school in New York or in Berkeley and we had—he'd gotten into Hunter [College]. He wanted to study with Ad Reinhardt. I guess it was Brooklyn College—maybe—it was either Hunter or Brooklyn College that he was teaching in. And I wanted to study with Meyer Schapiro, I thought, at Columbia [University].

And we'd gotten into all these schools. And we went to the little village theater in Claremont and saw *The Pawnbroker* [1964], which is the bleakest picture of New York. I'd hardly ever been to New York. And on the way out we said, let's go to Berkeley. [They laugh.] That's how we made that decision.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Fantastic. [Laughs.] How long were you married?

JUDY FISKIN: We got married in January '67. And we split up in '75 and the divorce was final in '76.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Did you have any children?

JUDY FISKIN: No. And he did become a screenwriter. Am I going into too much detail?

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: No.

JUDY FISKIN: Okay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: No. This is exactly what—I don't think so. I mean, it's my—

JUDY FISKIN: Okay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So you then left Berkeley after one year and came to UCLA, I think.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, because his M.F.A. was done in one year and he always knew he wanted to be a screenwriter. So he wanted to move back down. He'd gotten an agent. His cousin knew an agent and had taken him on. And he wanted to get started. So we moved back to LA and I went to UCLA. And they'd accepted almost nothing of the credits that I'd had at Berkeley. So I had to start—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: How surprising.

JUDY FISKIN: Don't get me started. [They laugh.] And Berkeley was like, you know, one of the top five ranked art history departments in the country.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: It's also in the—both UC system. I don't understand.

JUDY FISKIN: I don't either. But they didn't. I mean, one of the things was the guy who did medieval art at UCLA was a Marxist. And the guys at Berkeley were not. And what was his name? Otto Werkmeister.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: At UCLA?

JUDY FISKIN: He was horrible. Yeah. And he actually kind of chased me out of that major. You know, he—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: How can you be a Marxist medievalist? [Laughs.]

JUDY FISKIN: Well, what you study is the economic background of how the cathedrals got built.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Yeah, I see. Okay, I understand that. I was just thinking—

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, that's how.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay. I understand.

JUDY FISKIN: But I, you know, I didn't understand it then, but now I understand it—is what happened is I was a student of this guy that he absolutely hated because he was a guy who wrote about, like, the spirit of the Romanesque. And to this Marxist, that was complete anathema.

So when I walked into the first class, was a little late, he had these slides up—of cathedral interiors up. And he said, oh, it's our new student. If you're so smart—because I'd gotten a very good letter from Jean Bony was his name—if you're so smart, what are these slides of? And since I had traveled all over France and been in these cathedrals, I knew. You know. But he was trying to humiliate me and he was just awful. So I switched majors immediately.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what did you switch to?

JUDY FISKIN: Modern and contemporary.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Art history.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And who was teaching that at UCLA then?

JUDY FISKIN: Kurt Meier. Kurt von Meier.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay. And tell me about Kurt von Meier.

JUDY FISKIN: Kurt von Meier was a very wild guy who'd come from Princeton [University]. His girlfriend was Philippa de Menil. She used to sit in the seminars in the corner and not say anything. But she'd come to all of the classes. And he was really interested, like, in John Cage and Merce Cunningham and—

But he also had us doing things, like, I took—I think every quarter I took a seminar from him. And what I remember the best are that he took us to the pier with a small television that he'd bought. And we threw the television off the pier. And I never knew why. [They laugh.] We went and parked our cars near the airport and got on the roofs of our cars and laid down while the planes came over.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: At LAX?

JUDY FISKIN: At LAX, yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Goodness.

JUDY FISKIN: It was smaller then.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: I was going to say, that was a while ago. [Laughs.]

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, it was smaller then. And then he was writing some history of rock and roll and I remember spending a lot of time in the library for one of these seminars going over the Billboard listings for him, just doing his research, which was fine with me because, again, I already knew I didn't want to be an art historian, but I was getting paid to go to school. So whatever they wanted me to do, I was glad to do. But he was really—but he was actually quite brilliant.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So what contemporary art and modern art did he introduce you to? What were the parameters of what he was offering in 1960—I guess 1967? Yeah? [68].

JUDY FISKIN: You know, we did a lot of reading. We didn't look at a lot of stuff actually. So he was really interested in the question of—he had the idea that critics were going to become artists. They were going to become the new artists. And that was all linked up with John Cage. I remember doing a paper on John Cage with that in mind. I don't remember that much. I didn't absorb that part of it. I absorbed the stuff we did that was so wild.

And also the people in those seminars at that time were Fred Hoffman, who became a dealer, and—oh, she became the provost of CalArts—Beverly O'Neill. It was also just sort of like meeting these people that were in the seminar who were really interesting people.

But I already had a big art magazine-reading and gallery-going and museum-going habit and those were the years when things were really happening in LA So I don't remember what I got from him. But I remember a lot of what I saw.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: In 1968?

JUDY FISKIN: Well, I can't tell you year-by-year, but—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: No, but you started—

JUDY FISKIN: I started there in fall of '67. And it took me three years to get that degree.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay.

JUDY FISKIN: Which was good.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So '67 to '70 you were sort of—

JUDY FISKIN: No, it was to '69. So maybe it didn't. '67 to ['6]8, '68 to ['6]9—yeah, maybe just two years.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And during that time you started going to galleries in Los Angeles, which would include—well, Ferus [Gallery] is almost over by then, but—

JUDY FISKIN: But Virginia Dwan [Dwan Gallery] was there, Ace [Gallery] was there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Nope. Virginia Dwan is barely there.

JUDY FISKIN: Was she already gone?

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: She leaves in—around the middle of, like, when you start at UCLA, so—

JUDY FISKIN: Well, I was—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: You'd gone before.

JUDY FISKIN: So I saw her when I was at Pomona then. We would come in and go to the main galleries then.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Eugene—let's see, who would have been there? I mean, David Stuart [Gallery] was there. And Nick Wilder [Nicholas Wilder Gallery] was there.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. Definitely went to those. I don't know if—what was her name? She was Japanese.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Riko Mizuno [Gallery].

JUDY FISKIN: Was Riko there?

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative].

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. So I went there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And Eugenia Butler—

JUDY FISKIN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: —who were partners briefly. And they had—anyway, they had—you'd been going to galleries and so how do you make the transition from not wanting to be an art historian but taking these classes to becoming an artist? How did that happen for you?

JUDY FISKIN: One of the seminars that Kurt von Meier gave us. One of the things he had us do was get cameras, borrow cameras. And then he gave us each, like, a symbol that you could find in popular culture. So he gave somebody an arrow, I remember, and I got the heart. And then we were supposed to shoot a roll of film, finding those in—you know, wherever we could. So I remember, like, in an ice cream parlor, there was a chair, a wrought-iron chair that had a wrought-iron heart as the back of the chair. That kind of thing.

And so I shot this roll of film, but when I put the camera up to my face, I don't think I had ever looked in a camera before. My family was not big on—we didn't record each other. And when I looked in that camera, I realized—and I didn't even allow myself to think about being an artist because I really didn't have any talent. And I didn't have the idea that—even with looking at all the different kinds of things I was seeing—that you could do it without, like, that kind of hands—hand-to-eye coordination and that kind of talent.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: In other words, you mean, you didn't think you were talented as someone who could draw or paint?

JUDY FISKIN: That's right. I didn't think I could do that. And I thought that disqualified me from being an artist.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay.

JUDY FISKIN: And I don't know if you remember Hal Glicksman—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Of course.

JUDY FISKIN: But he once told me that if he had realized you didn't need that, he would have been an artist instead of a curator. So when I put the camera up to my eye, it was like, you know, this is something I could do. And I just immediately started taking pictures.

And I had my brother-in-law—who was an auto-wrecker in Long Beach, who had a darkroom in his basement—I had him teach me basically how to do the darkroom. And I took one course at UCLA Extension, but aside from that, I had already learned the basics before I took that course. I just started right away. It was just so excited.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And then what did you do with the photographs that you started taking? How did you—what did you think you were going to do with these photographs?

JUDY FISKIN: You know—again, it's hard to quite remember, but I had the goal of making art and showing art. The minute I had, like, a vehicle for it, the goal, like, presented itself.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Really?

JUDY FISKIN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So you just—you, sort of, immediately transformed into an artist?

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. I never thought of it as a hobby. I thought of it as a necessity and as something that I was going to do publicly. And luckily, when I first started, all of my critical faculties just went away—faculties went away. It was like I just thought what I was doing was so great. [They laugh.] And it was just terrible. And for a couple of years, you know, I—but I didn't—I couldn't look at it objectively. It just, like, something let me just do it and think what I was doing was great. But some part of me knew that it wasn't anything I could show either. So it was there in the background, but —

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So what were your early photographs like?

JUDY FISKIN: Oh, my god. You know, I shot, like, the men who play Bocce ball in the Roxbury Park. [They laugh.] I put negatives together. I had a picture of somebody sleeping on a bus bench with like an overlay of ocean water on it. You know, I mean, just really awful—[they laugh]—awful stuff.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, but more of the—more of the, sort of, just photographs from the environment around you.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. I didn't have an idea of what to shoot. You know. I was looking for something to shoot.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: How much did you know about contemporary or modern photography?

JUDY FISKIN: Probably—and again, I'm not sure about the chronology, but you know, they had a fantastic photo department at the Pasadena Museum in those years, I think. I think it was those years. And that guy was putting up multiple shows at a time, the curator, and changing them every few months. So I was just getting a lot of information from that. But also—and this was like the most crucial thing—the Museum of Modern Art [New York City] had printed Walker [Evans]—they had printed—I think the big book on Atget was theirs—on [Eugène] Atget was theirs.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: On Eugène Atget.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. But I know that they had also printed "American Photographs" by Walker Evans. And it was those books that showed me what I wanted to do. I mean, I was seeing lots of stuff and I was seeing as much or more art than I was seeing photography, too. But those photography books were just crucial to what I was doing.

So then I—and the first—my first—I was more interested in Atget than in Walker Evans even. So I was—then I sort of switched over from these corny photographs that I was taking to trying to reproduce Atget photographs. So I was shooting in parks—anything that looked European—[they laugh]—I was shooting.

And then after—I don't know how long—maybe a year of that, I started being able to kind of reproduce the look. And then I realized, well, yeah, but this isn't my work. This is like his work. And so then I started thinking about, well, if he lived here, what would he shoot? And I was living in this little bungalow—neighborhood of bungalows—and I thought, well, maybe this stuff?

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what year would that be?

JUDY FISKIN: Oh, God. Maybe around '71, '72. I started showing in '73.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Yes.

JUDY FISKIN: I started photographing in '69. So maybe I made that discovery like in '70 or '71.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And where was your first show?

JUDY FISKIN: At the Woman's Building [Los Angeles].

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Ah, that's right.

JUDY FISKIN: Well, I also—no, before that, I entered—I think before that, I entered a competition at Barnsdall [Art Park] and I won. And it wasn't just photographs; it was art. So I think either that or the Woman's Building—one of those was the first show, I think.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: That's fantastic. And tell me about altering your 35 millimeter camera to shoot a square format negative.

JUDY FISKIN: I didn't do that till later. I didn't do that—I'm not—I'd have to look up what year I did that, but I just got tired of composing in a rectangle, period. That's all it was. And I didn't want to go—I was already making my work so small that if I'd gone to two-and-a-quarter negative, I wouldn't have been able to put the negative in a enlarger and print it that way. I would have to do it as a proof print. And then you can't manipulate it very much.

So I knew that people had done this before and I found out who did it the best in LA I found out from Ron Cooper actually. And I went to the guy twice and he wouldn't do it for me because he didn't think I understood that I would lose part of the negative if I did that, even though I kept saying, I do understand that. And then the third time I brought Ron Cooper with me because he knew the guy. [They laugh.] And the guy did it for me then.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, also, I wanted to say, I've noticed something very interesting—to me, at least—that I hadn't focused on earlier in our conversations—and that is apparently you edited and compiled the journals of Richard Neutra between '69 and '70.

JUDY FISKIN: Yes. But I didn't edit—I didn't edit a published book. That isn't what I was doing. I was hired—he was not practicing anymore. It was the last year of his life.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Now, this is the greatest modernist architect of Los Angeles. And very famous at the time that you come to work for him.

JUDY FISKIN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And how did you—how did he happen to hire you?

JUDY FISKIN: When I got my degree at UCLA, the day of my last class, I said, now I have to go to work. And I picked up the *Daily Bruin* and there was an ad in the *Daily Bruin* looking for somebody to come and be some kind of assistant or something there. And I knew who he was. And so I said, yeah, that's the job for me.

And it turned out that he hired—well, it's they, you know, it was he and his wife—they hired me—it was a part-time job—for, like, X days of the week and Maria Nordman on the other days of the week. And we never met each other—[they laugh]—because we were coming on different days. And when I think about it now, they probably didn't—they didn't want to pay benefits and so they got two part-time people instead of one full-time person.

And what I was doing there—I was doing some filing. But he was writing. He had written a couple of books. And because he wasn't practicing, he was writing another book. And so while he was alive, I was supposed to be—he would write, in English but in German syntax, and I was supposed to be editing the book in the sense of, like, putting the sentences into correct English syntax. And this was, like, in the days of the typewriter. I have a feeling it wasn't even an electric typewriter—maybe it was; I'm not sure. But I would, like, page-by-page, I would correct it. I would give it to him and he would change all my corrections back.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: To what they were originally?

JUDY FISKIN: To German syntax. Yeah, because that sounded right to him, I guess. I don't know. And so my—[laughs]—it was like—and then I kind of noticed that he was getting a little bit—what was called senile and forgetful in those days. And I thought, well, maybe if I just change a few words or one sentence.

So I'd do the whole thing and I wouldn't change anything. And I'd just like insert one little change and he would always catch it and I would retype the page. [Drohojowska-Philp laughs.] And that was mainly my job. But it was like—it was very—you know, he was kind of a—you know, he was like a maestro. But his wife was extremely warm and charming.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And her name is Dione, right?

JUDY FISKIN: Dione. Yeah. Dione, with an E. And she would have tea and cookies every afternoon. We'd go up to the living room with the view of Silver Lake and sit and chat. And it was quite a lovely job in its own way.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Now, did you look at any pictures of his photographs? I mean, excuse me, did you look at any photographs of his architecture?

JUDY FISKIN: Well, I had—I had already. You know, I had known about his architecture. What I didn't understand about his architecture—and it's very hard to get from pictures—was that it's really the interiors that are wonderful. And you can't really capture that that much in pictures. And so it was like, this was his house that I was working in. This was called the VDL Research House. And it had burned to the ground in—I'm not sure quite when, but they rebuilt it exactly. And so it was like an education in what made a Richard Neutra house so great.

And then he died. And then I had a last task, which was to take, like, all the notes from this book and arrange them thematically. And then I turned that over, when I was through with that and then that was the end of my job, to—oh, God, who's the guy? It's a UCLA professor who's the big expert —

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Tom Hines.

JUDY FISKIN: To Tom Hines.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Thomas Hines.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. I gave those notes to Thomas Hines.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And then he wrote his book.

JUDY FISKIN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay. I see. But did that have an influence, do you think, on your photography?

JUDY FISKIN: I don't think so. I really don't. But it was just part of a general education that I was getting. I mean, the thing about those years in LA is that they were, like, so incredibly rich. And I was right at the sponge age. And I was just, like, taking it all in. And it included, like, being very alert about how is this house put together? And then he would talk about it too. And so I just got a kind of education in his work from being there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Now, let's just pause for a second and also say, okay, your first show was at the Woman's Building and that leads me to my question about at what point were you exposed to the women's movement? These are sort of the formative years of the women's movement in Los Angeles with Judy Chicago and so forth.

JUDY FISKIN: Well, you know, I was the director of Womanspace for a year.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: No. Would you talk about that?

JUDY FISKIN: Yes. [Laughs.] That sort of was—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: That somehow has fallen off your résumé? [Laughs.]

JUDY FISKIN: Oh really? No, it should be on there. I'm sure it's on there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay. Tell me about the women's movement and being director of Womanspace.

JUDY FISKIN: I think it was 19—oh, God, what year was that? Let's see, I think I was 26 or so. So—well, so it was '71 or '72—something like that, I think? And I was still married to Jeffrey. I needed a job. Well, it wasn't just that I needed a job. I was beginning to feel like my work was good enough to show. But I also realized that I had not gone to art school. I didn't know any photographers or artists in LA. And that that was going to be—make things difficult for me. And so I started thinking about I need to get a job in the art world so I can meet some people.

And I think I went to the Woman's Building and showed them my slides, actually. And then around that time, they lost their director. They needed a new director. They were still in Venice. And I just went in and acted like I knew how to do it. And I didn't. [Laughs.] You know, I had never had a job with that kind of responsibility before. But I acted like I could do it. And I convinced them and so I got the job there.

And I thought it was going to be basically, you know, just running—putting on shows. And I figured that I could learn how to do that. But within one or two weeks, maybe even just one week of my taking the job, I remember there was a meeting. And I went to the meeting and Judy Chicago came in and said, we're moving. And we're going to renovate this building in Mid-Wilshire near Otis [Art Institute]. And it was the old Chouinard [Art Institute] building. And I realized when she said that, well, wait a minute, I'm the only paid employee here. [Laughs.] So this falls on me. And that I didn't really feel like I could do.

So I called this woman that I had met through one of my best friends. Her name was Marge Goldwater. And she was in law school at Case Western [Reserve] University. And the reason she was in law school was that she wanted to be a museum director. And she had looked up what museum directors had been before they were museum directors and I guess in those days a lot of

them had been lawyers—[laughs]—so she decided this was the way, you know, to—

But she—I knew she didn't like it there, so I called her up and said, that's not the way to be a museum director. The way to be a museum director is to get—just get into the art world. And why don't you come and we'll do this job together. And she accepted. And I said, and by the way, you'll be in charge of renovating the place and I'll put on the shows. And she accepted that too.

And so we did it together for about a year. And it was my Tom Sawyer moment. [They laugh.] I don't know how I talked her into all that. But I did. And she was in charge of renovating the building. And together—she and I did the shows together as well. And then she went into the arts management program at UCLA and interned at Fort Worth Art Museum and became a curator there right after. So I, you know, it was like—and then was a curator at the Walker [Art Center]. And then for a while was director of the Noguchi Museum.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Wow, so it worked out.

JUDY FISKIN: So it worked out for her. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And for you.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So when the Woman's Building—when it opens at Chouinard, is it called the Womanspace or Woman's Building at that point?

JUDY FISKIN: The gallery was Womanspace; the building was the Woman's Building because they also had classes and other kinds of programs.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what time—what year did it actually open?

JUDY FISKIN: Beats me. It would be on my résumé. The year that I was director is the year that building opened.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what did you—well, then, you were really in the thick of the women's movement, so to speak.

JUDY FISKIN: Sort of.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what did—how did that affect you as an artist and as a person?

JUDY FISKIN: You know, I was not interested in that kind of feminism. It was very dogmatic. You know, any kind of dogma really set me off. It was full of contradictions that they weren't paying any attention to. My kind of feminism was: I want to be an artist. I recognize that women really haven't been artists up to now unless you were married to a powerful male artist. And I'm just going to do what it takes to do that. And they've got to let us in.

And you know, in retrospect I think what they did was really necessary. It just wasn't—I just couldn't do it the way it was done. But I think that without that organized movement and maybe even without the dogma, I don't know, it couldn't have been—I mean, the dogma really does—did unite people.

And it was like, I had that behind me, you know, but I wasn't recognizing it. And I did the job I was supposed to. And I went to a lot of the meetings where this kind of dogma was hashed out and stuff, but I didn't participate and it actually was making me grind my teeth. [Drohojowska-Philp laughs.] It just—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And who else was involved with Woman's Building in those days? Judy Chicago.

JUDY FISKIN: Judy. Arlene Raven. There was an art historian—what was her name? She was—you were around in those days. She was tall.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Not Ruth Iskin.

JUDY FISKIN: Ruth Iskin. Yeah, Ruth Iskin was part of it. Those people seemed to me to be the people that were the most in charge.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, then you had your exhibition at the Womanspace because you were the director. [They laugh.]

JUDY FISKIN: Well, you know, it was one of those things where Marge curated it. And you know, and she talked to Hal Glicksman. And Gretchen Glicksman was part of it too. And so we know Hal, too, because of Gretchen. And she went and she talked to Hal Glicksman about, could she put me in the show? And he gave her permission. So she did.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what did you show in your first show? What kinds of pictures?

JUDY FISKIN: I don't remember. I really don't.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: You don't remember what you were doing.

JUDY FISKIN: But it would have been—it would have been—there were two things I might have been doing then. One would have been what later came to be called Stucco, which were the small stucco houses in the flats of LA that were from like the '20s and '30s.

But before then, I had been doing something that really was more like Lewis Baltz where it wasn't focused on any one thing. It was that you walked around and you looked at—in fact, the whole new topographic movement. You looked at bushes. It was sort of like Henry Wessel too. You looked at landscaping. You looked at shadows. You looked at—but it had that kind of—what were you looking at is things that other people would consider to be banal. And you were finding a photograph in it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, that's what—I was going to just about new topographics and whether I read that your work actually predates that show in 1975, the *New Topographics* show.

JUDY FISKIN: It did. And I was considered for that show. But they sent Lewis Baltz to scope me out actually. It was like the curator did not—maybe he just didn't come to LA. But Lewis was already going to be in the show. And so he came to look at my work and his then-wife was with him.

And she was just outraged that my work was so small and that I was insisting that it couldn't be enlarged. And that in her mind a photograph could be shown at any size and retain whatever it was.

And I was saying, no, it's a choice I'm making and it's a formal choice. And it can't be enlarged. I don't know whether it was because of that. In any case, I wasn't in that show.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Do you remember his wife's name at that time?

JUDY FISKIN: No.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Mrs. Baltz.

JUDY FISKIN: Mrs. Baltz. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, that's interesting because, of course, the—it seems absolutely in tune with that direction in photography and you—but you didn't know—did you know that other photographers were doing that kind of work?

JUDY FISKIN: By then I did. But when I started doing it, I didn't. And in fact, when I took my—it didn't just happen at Womanspace, but I remember that it did happen at Womanspace. When I took my slides to show them—and I remember this happening more than once—they'd put the slides up the light and say, do you know the work of Lewis Baltz? And I was getting very ticked off about it because I didn't.

And then I went to a show, a photo show at Cal State Northridge in their gallery. And I walked in and there was this work on the wall and my—I swear, my first reaction was, who stole my negatives? And it was Lewis Baltz. Only it was—they were bigger and they—the craft in them was mind-boggling.

And I had my own brand of craft, but his was close—mine was sort of made up and his was closer to—I mean, he just knew more about how to produce certain kinds of photographs than I did. I felt my way into that. And I think he just, you know, he had the real knowledge of it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Did you conceptually feel, as many as those photographers did, that they were making that decision because they couldn't really pursue the Romantic landscape tradition or the glorified landscape tradition of—that's so prominent in American photography?

JUDY FISKIN: I think that I had just absorbed the lessons of Walker Evans by then and it was coming out of that. And I wasn't thinking about, gee, I want to be a landscape photographer but you can't now. You know? It was more like I want these to look like a cross between Atget and Walker Evans. And the Walker Evans part was look at the vernacular landscape and that's how I got to it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Am I correct in thinking that the photographs of the bungalows—the stucco buildings—is that the first—your first, I guess, body of work?

JUDY FISKIN: Wasn't my first body of work, but it was my first series. And it was the—I didn't show the other body of work. Although when I look back on it, it was pretty good. And I think some of those earlier ones—I take that back, I did—I think I did show some of those in those early shows.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: What were the earlier ones?

JUDY FISKIN: They were the ones where I was doing Henry Wessel [Jr.], although I didn't know who Henry Wessel—I mean, I didn't know Henry Wessel's work. But where you're just walking around looking for photographs in the vernacular landscape. It was less systematized than when I started shooting those buildings.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And then what happens after the stucco buildings, what's the next series that you do after that?

JUDY FISKIN: You know, I have a little—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: I couldn't quite sort out the chronology when I was going over—

[END AAA_fiskin09_1614.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: This is Hunter Drohojowska-Philp interviewing Judy Fiskin at her home in West Los Angeles on November 13, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, disc number two.

We were talking about—

JUDY FISKIN: What I did after Stucco.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Correct. We were talking about what you did—the Stucco series, which goes from 1973 to 1976.

JUDY FISKIN: Except that the '76 is an addition. It really was, like, 1972 to 1973. And in 1976 I printed some things that were thematically related but that looked quite different. I had found a neighborhood in Atwater, where it was some blocks of houses—maybe four blocks of houses on both sides of the street—that were built by Disney for their animators.

And they were like three-quarter sized. They were like little miniature houses. And every one was different from the other one—all kinds of eccentric shapes. And they fit the frame different from my earlier ones, but they were little stucco houses. So I printed them in '76 and then threw them in with that earlier series.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay. And what fascinated you about these little stucco buildings?

JUDY FISKIN: You know, they were so plastic in their shapes. That's one thing. Another thing is, they were something that, until I and a whole bunch of other people, at the time, started looking at, nobody had looked at in photography. You know, they, for me, are part of what defined LA architecture. And at the same time, after I had worked out all these ideas about, yeah, this is like the real LA in the flats, and these little houses—then Reyner Banham's book came out, and I remember feeling—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: That would be *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*?

JUDY FISKIN: Yes. And he wrote about the flats, but he acted like he invented them. So, you know, I was very miffed at that, because I'd been going around—I had invented them. So it was in the air. Because this is the kind of thing Henry Wessel was shooting, and John Divola started out shooting some of these things. And I think—I'm not sure if Lewis did or not. I think he did. I think he was just looking at vernacular architecture in regular neighborhoods, but not these particular kinds of bungalows.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: This question comes up right about now, which is that your work, at this point, closely parallels developments in conceptual art in LA in the late '60s and early

'70s. And did you have any awareness of this movement, and what about John Baldessari and Ed Ruscha?

JUDY FISKIN: So this was in the late—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Early '70s.

JUDY FISKIN: Early '70s. I certainly knew about Ed Ruscha. I didn't—I thought he was doing something completely different.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So when you look at the standard stations, or his book of some apartment buildings—

JUDY FISKIN: I didn't think he was interested in vernacular architecture per se. I thought he was interested in making a kind of anti-photograph. Or, and if he was interested—and certainly every building on the Sunset Strip had a lot more to do with the myth of Sunset Strip than it had to do with the actual buildings. It was like, I'd never thought of that even as documentary photography. It was like, you know, it was a joke, in a good way. You know, it was like, here's your Sunset Strip.

And I collected his books. I have first editions of all of his books. I don't think I quite got them until I was older. You know, now they seem really obvious, but at the beginning they seemed really mysterious. And once, when I was going to teach him, I went and looked up the reviews of the time, and people were saying things about his books like: We don't know what this is, but we know it's something. And that's what I was feeling. And I think I felt, in a way, that in a certain way he was more advanced than I was. But I was really doing something really separate, and I was really interested in the aesthetics of a photograph, and he wasn't going to touch that with a stick.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And did the conceptual artists who were coming up at that time, who are very interested in the documentary nature of photography—did that have an influence on you in one way or another?

JUDY FISKIN: You know, I know that I get lumped with them, and I think the reason I do is that people miss that I'm a formalist. And they miss it because they don't look like regular photographs, so they're not the beautiful print of, you know, of a regular photograph. But I was really interested in making something that was closer to a drawing or a print. And not everybody missed it, but I'm still being—you know, I was in the show at MoCA, the California conceptualists [*Index: Conceptual Art in California from the Permanent Collection*], and I was going, great, I love being in this show, but I don't know why I'm in it. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, I think that people think of the work as serial in nature, which is part of the conceptual movement. But you said something very interesting in one of the interviews—the interview you did with John Divola. You talk about the work not being documentary. There's a strong difference for you between your work and what people would call documentary photography, which is very much a part of what conceptual artists were coming to terms with.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. I mean, people would say to me, after I did the stucco buildings, and then especially after I did Dingbat [series]—they would say to me, "You know, you made me look at these buildings, and you've opened my eyes to these buildings." And I'd be thinking, like, the minute that the series was over I had no more interest in those buildings. Nor did I feel like I was actually documenting them, you know?

The fact of their being there, you know, you can't deny that and I didn't try to deny that. And I feel

like for me the documentary aspect of photography is something that gives it so much of its power. And it's like the secret power of photography, so I wasn't going to go, like, draw on it, or collage things together, obviously, or things like that. It was like, no, I'm going to use that power, where people are going to go: That thing was really there. You know? But I'm going to do something else.

And the something else was, I was always interested in abstraction and that was part of why I wanted to do something that was more like drawing. That was one of the reasons, anyway. It was more like drawing or printmaking because you could—because they dealt with abstraction. And photographs, normal photographs, a lot of them don't do that.

And I wanted the space to be as flat, as flat as it could be, again, because then you were more in the realm of abstraction than in reality. But I was also using that power of the document, where that would get people excited. You know? Look at these buildings; they're weird. But that wasn't my main preoccupation at all.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, then the other thing that has been written about your work, or that one thinks about—in the views of San Bernadino a little bit, but mostly with the military-architecture photographs—is the advent of minimalism as a very strong movement. And certainly, your pictures are so spare, and often so, just, simple geometric forms—not even in space. As you've said, very flat in their presentation. What did minimalism do for you?

JUDY FISKIN: Okay, I did realize at some point, when I looked at that work: Oh, that was minimalism. [Laughs.] Absolutely, you know? But I wasn't—I didn't like minimalism at that point. But I was looking at it. I was sort of still in that mode of trying to understand everything. I was reading *Artforum* from cover to cover, trying to understand what everybody was doing and saying, and only, probably, partially understanding a lot of it.

And you know, I've come to like minimalism a lot more now. But I didn't even like it, so if you had asked me at the time, I would have said, I'm not doing minimalism. Then, however many years after, I looked at that series and went, hmm? [Laughs.] That was all about—well, it wasn't all about minimalism.

That was what was on my mind consciously at that time, was to really do what for me were radical experiments in abstraction, where you would have this very, very simple building—you know, with maybe a little peaked roof or something—but it would go, and it would be very—like, skinny building—but it would go on for several blocks worth of space. It would be in an empty space, but if there were blocks, it would be a couple blocks long. And it would be a black building. Well, I want to put that, like, right on the edge of being a black shape and being a building. And so I want to print that really, really black, and see how much I can get away with. That's what I was thinking about what I was doing.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Now, this is an interesting issue because, of course, being in Los Angeles—not being in New York—I have a theory that a lot of artists who come out of this period in LA—late '60s to mid-'70s—make a lot of decisions that later get lumped into these movements. They made decisions out of naiveté that give their work a certain kind of uniqueness—

JUDY FISKIN: That's right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: —that it wouldn't have had if it were actually made in the hotbed of Manhattan. Is that true?

JUDY FISKIN: And also, it wasn't restricted by what was going on in Manhattan. I remember listening to—I can't remember, but it was a woman artist, and it may have been even in a TV show, like *Art 21* or something—where she said—oh, no, I know who it was. It was somebody I knew. We have a little piece of hers upstairs. She died of cancer a few years ago; she had a big retrospective at MoMA and then died. She was the generation of, like, Judy Pfaff—and I'm just blanking on her name. I'll ask Jon. I got that piece for him because he really loves her work.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: It'll come to us.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Not Elizabeth Murray?

JUDY FISKIN: Elizabeth Murray.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Oh, okay.

JUDY FISKIN: Elizabeth Murray said when she came to New York, the paintings that she made when she first came to New York were the paintings that she felt she had to make. And then, at some point, she realized that she didn't have to. [They laugh.] And then that's when her own style blossomed, you know?

But here it was like nobody was telling us. I didn't really know many other artists so certainly no artist was going to tell me what I could do or not do. And, yeah, I really think—I mean, [John] Baldessari, I think, has even talked about a kind of, like—in his case it would have been a willful misreading of other people's work. You know, in my case it was just a partial understanding.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: No, I think he thinks it's a partial misreading. I think he thinks a lot of what happened in LA are people misreading what was happening in Europe or New York.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. Everything you're looking at is, like, this big, you know? These tiny little pictures. It was how I learned art history, too.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, you've talked about that a bit—about holding on to the small format in your photographs because that was the size of the reproductions in art history books.

JUDY FISKIN: I think that was an element in it. Yeah, definitely. It wasn't the only reason.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Is it because that's what you were comfortable with?

JUDY FISKIN: I think influences sometimes just seep into you. You know, that was my idea of an image of art. It's this big. [They laugh.] But I also think that my mother had all these miniature collections, and I also think it came from my dollhouse, which I had for many fruitful years of playing with that dollhouse—you know, finding—like, for a rug I would go downstairs and ask my mother if I could have a potholder. You know, that kind of scale thing. And I do think it's, like, it's one of the scales of the imagination.

And then I also think, and I've talked about this—when you look through a viewfinder, you're in a completely different kind of space and scale than when you're looking. And you lose your body, and I liked that. And I think when you look at my photographs, if you're really going to get right up to it and look into it, you're going to lose your body the same way. So I think that was part of it, too.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, you have to come in close.

Now, let's get back to a little of the chronology. We're still in the early '70s. What led you and Jeffrey Fiskin to divorce in 1976?

JUDY FISKIN: [Laughs.] He was a bad boy; let's just leave it at that. [Laughs.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay. So Jeffrey was a bad boy, and you got divorced. Was this a very traumatic divorce?

JUDY FISKIN: Well, it was a fairly civilized divorce. I mean, it had its moments, but it was a fairly civilized divorce. It was traumatic because I met him when I was 17. One of his great attractions for me was that he was already a self-identified artist. Again, I never thought I would be one. He knew what all the interesting things were. He was two years older than I was, and he was advanced, anyway. And I kind of learned from him how to have the life that I wanted to have.

And I don't think I was thinking that, you know, by getting together with him, but I think that that's why I did get together with him. And he was multitalented: He could play music; he could write; he could paint; he could draw. He could do all these things that I couldn't do. I mean, I could have written, but I didn't want to.

And so I already had gotten those things in order when we divorced, but I was 30, and I'd been with him since I was 17. I grew up with him. And so, in that sense, I didn't know if I was going to be able to get along with him—or, without him. But he really had gotten—his behavior had gotten so egregious. And I will tell you off the record, if you want to know—but you have to turn that thing off [laughs]—what the final straw was.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, you can tell me in a moment, but we have to—so you divorce, and you go move into different households. Where did you move at that point? Were you still living in the little stucco house?

JUDY FISKIN: No, in fact, our house wasn't stucco. We had one of those California bungalows from, like, 1910 or 1915. It may have come from Sears, you know? They were wonderful houses, though. No, we had bought a house—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: A Craftsman-style house.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, little—but the real vernacular ones. And when we moved in, the landlord's mother lived next door in a big house. And we always knew that if she died, he was going to sell both properties, and she was 94 when we moved in. So we thought we didn't have long there. But she didn't die until she was 101, [Drohojowska-Philp laughs] and when she died, we were then in a position—he had sold some movies—we were in a position to buy a house. So we bought a house in Beachwood Canyon and then divorced very soon after. But, I mean, we didn't know we were on the brink of divorce and it was the obvious thing to do to buy a house at that point.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what were some of the movies he made?

JUDY FISKIN: His most famous movie is *Cutter's Way* [1981]. And he made a movie for Louis Malle; I think it was called *Revenge* [1990]. It was pretty bad. [Drohojowska-Philp laughs.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: All right, so then you get divorced. And what happened to you then, because I think around then you start working at CalArts.

JUDY FISKIN: Yes, for the first year after the divorce I didn't have a job, and I didn't really need a job. But after a year—and I had been offered a job at CalArts, actually, but I was so neurotic and I turned it down because they wanted me to teach photo history. And I didn't really know photo history. And again, it was like that letter I got from Berkeley, saying you have to learn two languages. It was, sort of like, well, if they want me to do that, then I have to, and I don't know it and I don't want to do it. And so I turned the job down, not realizing that I could have taken the job and gotten out of teaching photo history.

But in that year after turning the job down, I had turned it around in my head to, they turned me down. And then after about a year, I thought, you know, I need a job. And I need to be around people. So I went back and the job was still open, which is just amazing to me. And we didn't talk about photo history; they just hired me. And there was this guy, John Brumfield, who was the head of the photo department, who was hiring women, which the art department or arts school was not doing at CalArts. They were having women visitors.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: But isn't the feminist art program at CalArts already in place?

JUDY FISKIN: It wasn't there when I got there. It must have been earlier; it was earlier.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Or later. You were there in 1977.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. Was it later?

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: No, it was definitely there.

JUDY FISKIN: It was still going? I never crossed paths with those people. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, somewhat, I know. Because of course, so many artists from that period were influenced by the feminist arts program.

JUDY FISKIN: No, I certainly knew about it, and I knew people who had—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: It might have wound down by the time you were there.

JUDY FISKIN: I think it had.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Plus, you weren't a student anymore, so you were—

JUDY FISKIN: No, but if Judy was there, I would have—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: You would have known?

JUDY FISKIN: I would have known, because I had worked with Judy, and Judy's a presence that—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: She might have been gone. I think she and Miriam [Schapiro]—

JUDY FISKIN: Maybe, you know, I think it wound down right before I got there, because I was hanging out with some people from CalArts for the two years before I was hired there, and I ran into Mimi and Paul. When I got there, Paul was not the dean anymore.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Miriam Schapiro and Paul Brach.

JUDY FISKIN: Right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay.

JUDY FISKIN: Paul was not the dean anymore. I think they had moved back east. And Judy wasn't there. I think it had finished right before I got there, yeah. And the art school at CalArts has three programs, so the photo program was hiring women. The art program was having women come in, but did not—it was a very bad ratio in the art program at that point. That's not true anymore.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what was the third part?

JUDY FISKIN: Graphic design.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Oh, okay. Now, so were you the head of the—John Brumfield was the head of the photo department, and what did you teach when you started at CalArts?

JUDY FISKIN: I think I taught the first-year students. That would have been—we all taught, like, two classes, and then our other—and that was, like, 50 percent of our teaching. The other 50 percent was one-on-one, which is the great thing about CalArts. I probably taught critique, or something like that—photo critique.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And who were some of your students?

JUDY FISKIN: I knew Mike Kelly. The first year that I got there, Tony Oursler was there; Mike Kelly was there; Laurie Anderson was visiting faculty. Judy Pfaff was there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: As a student or a visitor?

JUDY FISKIN: She was visiting for a few years, and then, I think, Ellen Phelan was there teaching. But it was, like—and then, Jim Isermann. I'm not sure if he was there the first year, but maybe by the second year. So it was Mike Kelly, Tony Oursler, Jim Isermann. And I just thought that's what art school was, you know? And it wasn't. [They laugh.] That was just an extraordinary group of people.

And there were other people too—students—and I'm not remembering them, but those were the three that made the biggest impression on me. I was very good friends with Judy, and Mike and Jim—Judy was their mentor. And so I got to know them. I wouldn't say they were my students, but, like, I would have lunch with Judy and Mike. You know, that kind of thing.

And they were so prolific and their stuff was so good. I just remember seeing Mike's first show and thinking he should be on the faculty—what's he doing as a student? [Drohojowska-Philp laughs.] I thought he was so amazing. But it's interesting because Mike has always been bitter that the big guys weren't interested in him. But Judy was, and some of the other women faculty were, you know, but that wasn't what he was aiming at.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Your work, then—did your work change at the beginning of teaching there? Because you go back to doing the desert photographs in 1976, and Some More Stucco [series].

JUDY FISKIN: I started in '77. What happened here is, okay, '76 I did desert photographs. In '70—and I had all of these ideas right in a row, the first four series—and really, five, because there was a bunch of stuff I did before the first official series. My ideas were just stacked up. After I did desert photographs, I didn't have that much of an idea, and then I got sick. I got cancer in '78.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Oh, dear. What kind of cancer?

JUDY FISKIN: I had a sarcoma inside a fibroid. And so they took out the fibroid, never thinking that it was cancer because it's such a rare cancer, and very, very rare in young people. And they took it out and found that it was cancer, and what happened to me was—like, the cure was that they took it out. But once they saw what it was, they had to do a hysterectomy. And because they were so freaked out about the sarcoma, they did the surgeries in the same week, which makes you much more subject to infection.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Oh, dear.

JUDY FISKIN: And I got one of those hospital infections, and I was in the hospital all summer. And I ended up, over the next year-and-a-half, with, like, six surgeries. And it was all to do with the complications from the infection. And the cancer was, just, either it was taken care of or not. And 30 years later—obviously, it was. So I didn't have any cancer treatment besides the surgery, but I was really, you know, out of commission for, like, two years.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Oh my goodness.

JUDY FISKIN: And when I got better—but in the meantime, in between surgeries I would work on this other series, More Stucco, which were larger stucco apartment buildings. And I just didn't recognize it—I think, again, because the work was so fragmented and I was not healthy. They weren't interesting. And so I did show that series, but then afterwards I looked at it and said, this work isn't very good, and took it out of my repertoire.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Now, during this time you are showing. I think you're showing. What was your first commercial gallery in Los Angeles?

JUDY FISKIN: I think it was Newspace. Well, yeah, it was Newspace.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And after that, where did you show after that?

JUDY FISKIN: I showed with Asher Faure and then—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: I'll ask for years, actually. What years were you at Newspace?

JUDY FISKIN: I don't know. I'd have to—next time, I should just get out my résumé and look at it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, I could have brought everything with me, but I didn't. So I know that after that you showed at Asher Faure in the '80s.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. And then that became Patricia Faure.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And that's pretty much the '80s.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, and then I eventually moved to Angles. And I was also showing in New York with Curt Marcus for, I don't know, about 8 years or something like that. I could check that, too.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: When did you meet Jon Wiener, your current husband?

JUDY FISKIN: I met him—he was married and I was married, and one of my friends got married. And at her wedding, at the reception, there were, like, tables for four. I don't remember what the setting was. And she put us together, thinking we'd like each other.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: The two couples?

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay.

JUDY FISKIN: And then we all got divorced. [They laugh.] So I met Jon when I was still married to Jeffrey, so it had to be, like, '74, '75? Something like that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what year did you get together with Jon?

JUDY FISKIN: Seventy-nine.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Is that when you got married to him?

JUDY FISKIN: No. We didn't get married for—what we did was a year—he was living, when he moved out, he got an apartment on Wilshire Boulevard in Westwood. And I was living in West Hollywood, and we would just go back and forth. And after about a year of that, we were going, like, this is no fun. Let's buy a house. But we really weren't sure if we wanted to, but we thought, well, let's at least see how much houses cost.

And we got the *LA Times* and marked down some houses and went and looked at them. And this was the second house we saw and we realized, you know, we're not going to get a house like this unless we buy this house. [Drohojowksa-Philp laughs.] It's a really unusual house. And it was just a little more than we can afford, but that's sort of what you always do. So we just bought the house without even being totally sure we wanted to live together.

And then we couldn't figure out how to get married. We lived in New York for two years, and we thought we might get married there. People said, oh, go to Ethical Culture. They have a good space for that. And we went to Ethical Culture, and they wanted \$1000, and we thought that was just outrageous—especially for a place called Ethical Culture. [Drohojowksa-Philp laughs.] So we said, okay, we'll go to city hall and we'll get married in city hall. Friends said, don't do that. It's really depressing.

So we came home unmarried, and my father, every few years, would ask me: Are you going to get married? And when we got back my father asked me, and I said: You know, we kind of would like to now, but we can't figure out how. And he said, well, get married at Ron George's house. He was a judge. He'll marry you. He was the son of a friend of my father and he's now the chief justice of the California Supreme Court. So we said, okay, and we went and got married there. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And at the time—I think of Jon as a historian; is that what he is?

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, but he's also a journalist.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And was he already—where does he teach?

JUDY FISKIN: At UC-Irvine [University of California, Irvine]. He was already teaching at Irvine when I knew him.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what is his position there?

JUDY FISKIN: He's a full professor of history.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And I see here that—I think of his own pursuit of history,

especially loopholes like where he got the John Lennon files that were embargoed and pursued them and he did all that work—it seems like that's a very interesting way to view history. And I wonder if it affected your own view of history, or your own view of art history, for that matter?

JUDY FISKIN: You know, there's always the question of—he teaches American history since 1945 and I know that there is a debate in the history profession about, when does history start? But the other thing about getting tenure is you're free to do what you want, and he's very sensitive to music. He's very interested in music. And he's really political and a big lover of John Lennon. He didn't have to debate whether that was history or not; he just got to do it because he wanted to do it.

So he started by writing a political biography of John Lennon after John Lennon died. When John Lennon died, this idea—he knew that's what he wanted to do. So I think it's a legitimate question, but I don't have to answer it. [They laugh.] What's history and what isn't, and what's current events?

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, I meant, like, does his work influence your work or your thinking about any aspect of your work?

JUDY FISKIN: No, but he has educated me in many ways. But not in ways that I think influence my work. But, you know, it's like—I'm not a good reader of the news sections, but he's got all that information and I just get it from him. And it's a quicker and more fun way to know what's going on. I know a lot more about what's going on in the world from being around him.

And he also has a radio show now that's really excellent. It's an interview show on KPFK, where he does politics and culture. And that also educates me because it's not just that he interviews them—he's reading the book and I'm asking him questions. He actually reads the books, like some interviewers don't do, before he interviews people. So I've become just more aware of the political world through him.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, I think the work that you started making in the mid-'80s, if we can fast-forward—well, I guess we don't want to fast-forward. We want to stay with the moment because after you do Stucco, around '80 and '81, now you're with Jon. And you do some photographs of Long Beach, which are oil derricks and amusement-park rides. Am I correct?

JUDY FISKIN: Right. Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Now, that work is—I hadn't seen that much of that work.

JUDY FISKIN: Well, because it was shown at Cal State Long Beach. Because they had a grant—the NEA [National Endowment for the Arts] used to do these photography grants called survey grants. And they would set loose, I don't know, eight photographers in a city, and just let them photograph whatever they wanted. And then there would be these bodies of work.

So they gave one to Cal State Long Beach, and they picked six or eight photographers and just said: See what interests you in Long Beach and photograph it. And then they had a show of the work. And it was, like, really good actually. There was a lot of good work that came out of that. What happened with me was, I didn't know it, but I was sort of looking for the next era of vernacular architecture, which would have been dingbats—these small, flat apartment buildings that spring up in LA starting in the late '50s, and sort of filled every empty lot.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And by the way, do we know the source of the term dingbat

with regard to these apartment buildings?

JUDY FISKIN: We don't, but Reyner Banham did use it. I think he didn't originate it. And there's two ideas about where it comes from, but it was always derogatory. Some people say it comes from the dingbats in books, in between sections—the little signs—because it's a, kind of, just nothing. And some people say it came from, like, Archie Bunker—something stupid. [They laugh.] Whatever the character's name was, you dingbat. I don't know, but Reyner Banham did use it and it just was in use when I started.

But anyway I was looking for those. I wasn't thinking, oh, this is the next era of architecture. And I couldn't find them. For days I drove around Long Beach looking for those, and then, it turned out—I found out later—that development stopped in Long Beach after the war. And so they just didn't go through that period of building dingbats. And so it was getting toward the deadline.

I did know something about Long Beach—I knew about the Long Beach Pike, and they were tearing it down. The Pike was the amusement park. And they were tearing it down. I don't remember if I went there when I was young, but I knew it was where sailors went and it was kind of a dangerous place for girls, you know? And exciting.

So I went there, because they were tearing it down and it had that, kind of Atget aspect to it. This thing is going to—this kind of amusement park is just going to be gone. And also because I knew there would be interesting forms there, because it was another form of fantasy architecture, in a way.

And then I also knew about Signal Hill, and I knew about the oil derricks. And again, I thought that would be a formally interesting place to photograph. But it isn't what I really wanted. It was just, like, now I have to find something to photograph here because this other stuff doesn't exist here.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And you wound up with oil derricks and roller coasters. [Laughs.]

JUDY FISKIN: Yes. Yeah, very California, actually, if you think about it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, it is very California, and that's one of the—and then, the year after, you do find the dingbats. I guess you come back to Los Angeles because you photographed the dingbats from '82 to '83.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And so what obsessed you about the dingbats?

JUDY FISKIN: That they had these flat facades with this decoration on them. And I was, you know, I do think the way that my work developed—and going from Dingbat to Some Aesthetic Decisions, that shows that I was not thinking about the same things as the people who were doing new topographics. I was really interested in decorative arts. I was really interested in, just, décor in general. And that's what interested me about the dingbats. It was almost like people were painting on these things. They were like paintings or something that got slapped on the front of these totally plain buildings.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: You mean the little motifs—

JUDY FISKIN: The little logos, and the motifs and the starburst, you know, clocks. And the flowing script and all the things that you find—and not only that, but when you start looking, then all of the

kinds of very primitive geometric decorations that they would just do with bricks or something. All of that stuff interested me. It interested me in the stucco buildings, too.

And in the stucco buildings, things like how—I have a photograph in the Stucco series where it's the tiniest little house you've ever seen, and it has a fake window filling up most of the front. It's got, like, panes and everything, but it's not a window. It's just something that they stuck on the front of the building to act as a window. And then above that, there's this little stucco medallion. And I just felt like there's so much aspiration in that medallion that's so out of line with what this thing really is.

I was also interested in the abject and I think the new topographic people were not. So I really think that there were, sort of, emotional tones and other kinds of interests—where my work looked like their work, but they weren't interested in those things, and I was. And then that strand of being interested in décor took me to Dingbat, and then to *Some Aesthetic Decisions*.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Now, the times have sort of changed by the time we're in the early '80s to the mid-'80s. It seems in many ways a less restrictive era because it just was. I mean, there were so many different strains of art coming out that we call the era pluralist at this point. Did you feel freed by that as well? Because you're still at CalArts and you would have been very aware of how the art world itself was changing.

JUDY FISKIN: No, you know, really even then I think we were operating fairly independently of what was going on in New York. And that was still the center of the art world. No. Again, I knew about it, but even though—I may have even been showing in New York. Well, I showed in New York after that, but I aspired to show in New York. And actually, *Some Aesthetic Decisions* was shown at the New Museum.

But I was not modeling myself on that. My feeling was, well, I can show in New York all I want, and I'll never be a New York artist. And so what's the difference? [They laugh.] It's, like, I don't—no, it wasn't influencing me. It was some, just, internal thing influencing me. But I still, again, I was still reading *Artforum* cover to cover. [They laugh.] I don't do that anymore, but I was then.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: We were talking about—you talk about, in the interview with John Divola, you talk about having a period of depression when you didn't talk much. And the photographs were an attempt to allow things to speak for themselves. Which photographs are you speaking of at that point?

JUDY FISKIN: You know, I really think, probably, [laughs] all the way—I just didn't talk in high school. I just stopped talking in high school, and in college I started coming out some, but still, I was standing behind Jeffrey, you know? Jeffrey was sort of doing it for me a lot. But I started gradually coming out of that, but by the time I did the first photographs, I still was fairly recessive.

And I think that I have whatever chemical imbalance it is that gives you depression, you know? So I had that. And I had some depression through all of this. And I think that that showed in a way. I mean, some people, when they would meet me in those days, would go, like, oh, I thought you'd be really cold. But I don't think it was coldness that was radiating from those things. I think it was, like, things were far away. You know, I was far away from things. [Laughs.] It was more that kind of thing.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, you don't really photograph people.

JUDY FISKIN: No.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: At all. Is that true?

JUDY FISKIN: No, I don't. I still don't.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And you've said something about the—

JUDY FISKIN: I mean, I did make a film that had people in it. And it was about the people, too. It was about human behavior, and that was a big revelation to me. [Laughs.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: But in the photography, really, it's not—

JUDY FISKIN: Never, I never did.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: You never did that. And then one other thing we didn't talk about is that even though you were in the photo department at CalArts, teaching, when it came to exhibiting your work, you didn't think of taking your photographs to a photography dealer.

JUDY FISKIN: You know, when my work first started getting shown around, photographers could not understand it. They thought that I didn't know how to print. And John Brumfield came back from having gone to some art school, showing the work of the faculty, and there was just a lot of head-scratching over my work. And the kids were saying, she doesn't know how to print. And finally, their teacher said: No, they're consistent. So whatever it is, she's doing it on purpose. And that was, like, as far as they could get with it, you know?

So there was that. And then I just felt like, well, if I can't be in the photo world, it's better to be in the art world anyway. [They laugh.] And they understand what I'm doing. They don't have all these restrictions on what a print should look like. You know, it's that kind of thing. But I did—when I went to New York, I did take my work. I took my work to Ivan Karp—so that wouldn't have been a photo gallery—and I was offered a show there. But then I also went to Castelli Photographs and they actually did understand what I was doing. And they offered me a show.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: What year was this?

JUDY FISKIN: Seventy-five, I think? Or six? And they gave me a show.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Oh, so you did show at Castelli Photographs?

JUDY FISKIN: I did show at Castelli Photographs. And then I got sick. And I didn't produce for about two years. And I then I wasn't showing at Castelli Photographs anymore. [Drohojowska-Philp laughs.] So.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: I think this might be a good place to stop. And then we'll have another session because we have to review and then go on to the present.

[END AAA_fiskin09_1615.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: This is Hunter Drohojowksa-Philp interviewing Judy Fiskin at the artist's home and studio in Los Angeles, California, on the 22nd of November, 2009, for the Archives of American Art-Smithsonian Institution, disc number three.

Judy, I just want to clarify a couple things before we start on our second interview, and those are, what are your parents' first names and how do you spell them?

JUDY FISKIN: My mother's first name is Cecile, C-E-C-I-L-E. Do you have their last name?

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Bart man.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And it's B-A-R-T-M-A-N?

JUDY FISKIN: Yes, M-A-N. And my father was Fred.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: I have a couple of other questions about names. You said you went to Fairburn—

JUDY FISKIN: Avenue School.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Avenue. And is that F-A-I-R-B-U-R-N?

JUDY FISKIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative].

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And then Emerson Junior High?

JUDY FISKIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative].

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: University High?

JUDY FISKIN: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative].

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And UCLA.

JUDY FISKIN: And Pomona College.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And Pomona College. But Emerson Junior High is in LA as well? They're all in LA?

JUDY FISKIN: They're all in LA. They're all in West LA.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And then I had one more question—one more name question for you as we went through here. At the end of our last interview, you mentioned Ben Lifson. And I don't remember who that was?

JUDY FISKIN: Ben Lifson was a faculty member at CalArts. He was in the photo program. He was the head of the photo program, I think, right before I got there. By the time I got there, he was gone but he—did I tell you the story of him standing up in the emergency meeting about nude swimming in the pool?

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, maybe you should go over it again.

JUDY FISKIN: [Laughs.] Okay, I wasn't there so this is not firsthand but this is what everyone says. The Disneys found out that the students were swimming nude in the campus swimming pool and called an emergency trustees meeting. And everybody sort of got up and said their peace. And Ben Lifson was the faculty trustee and he got up and took his clothes off. And the Disneys took their money out—or they stopped giving money. What I heard is they took their money back. I don't know if you can do that. I think you probably can't.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Do you mean they stopped giving money to CalArts or to the

photo department?

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, to CalArts. And when Bob Fitzpatrick came, one of his jobs was to get them back. And he did get some part of the family back but not all of the family back.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So that's Ben Lifson's claim to fame. [They laugh.]

JUDY FISKIN: Then he became—for quite a while, he was the photography critic for the *Village Voice*. And I don't know what else he's done.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And then can you clarify Ron George?

JUDY FISKIN: Ron George is the chief justice of the California Supreme Court. But at the time that he married us, he was just a judge.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And it's spelled R-O-N George just like two first names?

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay, that's good. Then I just had a couple of those questions.

And now we left—when we last were talking about your photography, you said you wanted to discuss the fact that nobody talks about the fact that it's abstract and the role of abstraction in photography.

JUDY FISKIN: That's a hard thing to talk about without the images but it has to do with—well, if you see my photographs—and people actually did mistake them for prints sometimes rather than for photographs—partly because they're so small, there's a lot of them that have very delicate lines that I'm interested in.

Others—especially, I think we talked about this in the Military series—I was really interested in making certain kinds of experiments with how black you could make something, and have it be a shape and an object at the same time and not let it go all the way into just a shape.

And then there's also a lot of white. I liked the buildings that I was shooting to be kind of very flat and not anchored in space, so I often blocked the sides when I was printing so there wouldn't be anything to the side of them and that there would be this big, blank, white space behind. There were all kinds of ways that they were abstract. And so it just seemed strange to me. People describe them but they never say how abstract they are.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, do you relate that to the kind of geometric abstract painting that had emerged in the '60s? And when you think of that, do you think of having Frank Stella paintings or—

JUDY FISKIN: No, it's not that kind of abstraction. It's not totally abstract like that. But I think it has to do more with that I always wanted to be able to draw. Drawing is more—at least modern drawing—is more naturally abstract than a photograph. And I mean, it wasn't anything I thought out. It was something I realized after a certain amount of time—what I was doing.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And do you think that carries through all of your work or do you think it's confined to the work of the buildings?

JUDY FISKIN: Well, no, I think in *Some Aesthetic Decisions*, there was a lot of abstraction. And I think—I think that in all of them—the other thing is that I really used high-contrast printing. And I shot the negatives so they would be high contrast and then I printed them high contrast. And that also leads to a certain amount of abstraction. It just was what I had a taste for.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And when you started, do you think your work—it seems to me like your work always had that bend. It doesn't seem as though it's something that came about through the course of looking through the viewfinder.

JUDY FISKIN: No, it was something—I mean, you didn't see the few years before I started showing but that—when I started being able to abstract things, that's when I felt like, oh, now I'm doing what I want; now this looks like what I want—without having known beforehand. I mean, I had to go through a lot of saying no to many, many prints before I started to realize, oh, now I see what I want.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: We also left off at around 1984 and *Some Aesthetic Decisions*, so it's a good time to talk about that series and flower-arranging, which is what I associate it with mostly. It might have other parameters that I'm not aware of.

JUDY FISKIN: It had some craft objects in it, too, and then I shot some in peoples' houses, just kind of the décor and the objects that they had around. And I think that it was a lot about taste and class and it was also about—and I did this in my film, *50 Ways to Set the Table* [2003]. It's about applying the kind of judgment that you apply to high art to art that is not high art.

So these flower arrangements, the women really—they would say this to me but I could tell anyway that they thought of them as sculptures. But they weren't sculptures. And so I really like to play with that line between what constitutes high art and what doesn't, and then all the levels of what doesn't, and then the kinds of barriers between them or the lines between them.

And when I went onto do *Some Art*, which was sort of a kind of—what word am I looking for—an extrapolation, or something, from *Some Aesthetic Decisions*, by then I really was juxtaposing fine art directly against these lesser forms of art, or what my husband likes to call, the bastard arts.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And that, *Some Art*, is 1991.

JUDY FISKIN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So that's quite—that's almost—

JUDY FISKIN: It was a long—[laughs]—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, not a long time but it'd be, '84 is *Some Aesthetic Decisions*, and *Some Art* is 1991. So you kind of went back and connected them—the information from an earlier angle.

JUDY FISKIN: You know, I was all—my process was never to sit down and go, like, well, what should I do next? It was to keep shooting. When I didn't have an idea, I would go out and shoot, like, every week, three rolls, and print proof sheets and put them at the bottom of a pile and then come look at them some months later and see what was there. And usually after about six months of doing that, if I didn't have an idea, I would realize there was something in that pile that was an idea. And that is the way it developed. But obviously, I had certain evergreen themes. But it's not like I sat down and thought about how to express them.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, at some point, you said that when you did this, Some Aesthetic Decisions, that you also were—maybe not working through but certainly taking into consideration the—but for a different path that you've had you might have been any one of these women. And could you talk about that a little bit?

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, except that I wouldn't be very—have been very good at it. [They laugh.] What they do.

Yeah, it had to do with my upbringing and also the fact that I was born at a time where I lived—I had an adult mind before the women's movement and then after the women's movement. So it's sort of thinking out my life, what it would have been if there had been no women's movement. I'm not so sure I would have gone to graduate school, which is how I discovered photography. I'm just not so sure I would have done those things.

And then—and it's kind of like watching my mother. My mother had real artistic talent and hand-to-eye coordination and she could sculpt. And she was always taking ceramics classes and mosaics classes, but never, like, really committing herself to anything. And she didn't do flower-arranging but I think those things that she was doing, even though they're closer to art, they had that same feel to it.

And the other thing about it was how really fiercely competitive these people were who're doing the flower arranging. And so I saw the whole thing as a kind of picture of thwarted women who grew up before the women's movement and who were fighting so hard for not much of a reward. And it gave me the creeps. [They laugh.] And plus, most of the places that I was doing this, they were upper-class or upper-middle-class women, which made it for me even creepier.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Because they were so elaborate and contrived. I mean, I think that some of those pictures are quite extraordinary because you can't even imagine why anyone would go to such extraordinary lengths to make that kind of a flower arrangement.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, because they were thinking of it as making art is why. But also, I think the creepy part for me is that the milieu I grew up in, all this kind of—all the kinds of outward signs of being upper class or upper-middle class were applied to the children kind of brutally. It was sort of like, do it this way or die. [Laughs.] Do it this way or be sent into exile. Or, not be one of us. Any version of that.

So just being sort of in an auditorium with these people really made me uneasy, and I used to fantasize that the door was going to close like *Viridiana* [1961]. I think that was the [Luis] Buñuel film where the—you go in and you can't go out. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: I wanted to ask you earlier about—I mean, you talk about your being raised by a Jewish family with a lot of stress on education and going to museums. Was that a factor in your evolution as an artist or as a person?

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I picked up my mother's love for art, and when I went to college, I majored in art history. Again, it was all just sort of, like, when I was in the household, when I was little, my mother would take me to art shows. And I don't remember too much about it or how I felt about it, but I think that seeped in. And then when I was a teenager and we went to Europe as a family, I didn't want to look at anything. And then three years later, when I went myself, there it was. I was so interested. Art history was the only thing I was really, really interested in, in college.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: But there's a lot about—in a Jewish family, your Jewish family, there was validation for your cultural interests. There wasn't a—I mean, your family wasn't saying, no, no, no, this isn't—

JUDY FISKIN: No, no. Oh, you mean for when I started to—when I went to—? Well, not really, no. But it was more of a gender issue. My family, they sent my brother to law school but they did not want to send me to graduate school. I really think they had that idea, you send your daughter to college so she'll get a college education so she can marry a college-educated man. And I had already met the man I was going to marry in college, and so my work was done! [They laugh.] But I got—it's a long and complicated story. I got a federal scholarship to go to Berkeley but when my husband wanted to move back to LA, my degree wasn't finished and the scholarship didn't follow me but I had been told it would. So then I went to work for a while.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: I remember this. This is when you went down to UCLA.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, and then so I went to work for a while and then my parents decided—I told them I was going to be a social worker. They didn't like that, so they said they would send me back to graduate school. That's what happened. [Drohojowksa-Philp laughs.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So when you did *Some Aesthetic Decisions*, I think you got quite a lot of attention—critical attention—for that work because it tied into women's issues and it seemed to tie into a—you know, take your work in a new direction. Do you feel like you were accurately represented? I mean, do you think that reviewers captured the idea of your work?

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, I do, except—because it was the other thing I mentioned to you, that people usually don't write about, except that I thought a lot of that stuff was pretty funny. And they didn't write about the humor. But the person who came closest was—he's at the *San Diego Union*—Bob Pincus. He wrote this article and—is it the epigraph that comes before the article? Whatever that's called.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Prologue?

JUDY FISKIN: It wasn't a prologue. It was just a quote. There was a quote before the article and it was, "We like books with lots of dreck in them." [Laughs.] And that was from, oh god, what—Barthelme, Donald Barthelme, "Snow White," or, "The Seven Dwarves," whatever that story was. And it was one of the seven dwarves saying that. And that said to me, well, he gets how funny these are but he didn't really say it. [Drohojowksa-Philp laughs.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, they are funny. And then shortly after this sort of triumphant body of work, you do what you call *My Trip to New York*. Will you tell me about that? From 1985 to 1986.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, we went to live in New York, actually, for me to do that. And for my husband to do some of his business, too. And it was—when we would—we would go to New York a lot—several times a year. And when we would drive in from JFK, there would be all these houses that were made from materials that houses are not made from here but had that same sort of vernacular feel as the houses here. And I always would just sit and look out the cab window and go, like, God, I wish I could shoot those. And finally decided, well, I could. We'd just go there. And so we shipped our car and I would go to Brooklyn, the Bronx, Staten Island and Queens. For two years, I just drove around photographing. And I was printing, too, because we found a place that had a little darkroom in it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Where did you live when you were there?

JUDY FISKIN: We lived in SoHo sort of before it became a shopping mecca. It was starting to become a shopping mecca but, like, in the building we were in, it was at Broome Street and Wooster, there were still several light-industry factories in there. They were making rugs and lamps and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: How did you find your loft?

JUDY FISKIN: I was friends with Richard Armstrong and he had by then gone to New York. And he knew somebody who was looking to sublet her loft.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: He wrote quite a bit about your work in the early years.

JUDY FISKIN: He did. Yeah, he was a great supporter, and we were very good friends.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And who else did you socialize with when you were there?

JUDY FISKIN: In New York? Mostly with Vija Celmins and Ellen Phelan and Joel Shapiro and—who else did I—and Ellen Brooks. I think I knew her by then. We're very close friends now. But I think—I'm not 100 percent sure if it was from then but I think it was. And—[pause]—it's hard to remember.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: I mean, did you sort of plug into New York life when you were there?

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, I met artists and in fact here, I don't socialize so much with artists. There I socialized pretty much—except for my husband's friends—pretty much only with artists. Oh, Barbara Kasten was there, so I used to see her. And then some people—I know there were more people but I don't remember their names anymore.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Did you consider staying there?

JUDY FISKIN: We did. I wanted to. But Jon couldn't have gotten a comparable job there because he wasn't really doing academic history anymore and although his own department at UC-Irvine was good with that, the kinds of comparable places he could have gone wouldn't have been.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So he was already at UC-Irvine and an established professor.

JUDY FISKIN: Oh, he'd been at—yeah, he already had tenure, I think, by the time we went. He may have had tenure by the time I got together with him. Which is why he didn't have to—he didn't have to do academic history anymore. Yeah, so it was never a question.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: When you show the trip of—the photographs of My Trip to New York, how were they received?

JUDY FISKIN: Eh, I showed them in New York and in LA and people weren't that interested in them, you know, which revealed to me how much the interest in the architecture that I had done in LA had to do with people being interested in the architecture. Like, the picture of LA more than the photographs themselves.

Whereas I felt like I did some really beautiful stuff. I felt like it was the series that I did the most—where I had the highest percentage of really good stuff. And I think in New York, people are not

used to—I mean, I think they thought probably that it wasn't much of a subject. You know, who cares about those little houses? In LA, there's more awareness of that kind of architecture. But again, I think it went to the subject matter and away from the photographs. So nobody was really interested.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Did you exhibit them?

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, I showed—I don't remember the name of the gallery but remember Melinda Wyatt who used to have a gallery here? She had a gallery in the East Village for a while and I showed them there. And then here, I think I showed them at—yeah, I did. At Joni Gordon's—at Newspace.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: I wonder what happened to Melinda Wyatt.

JUDY FISKIN: The last I knew, she was—then she had a gallery in Tucson for a while, and then I think she started studying Chinese herbs and holistic healing. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: She left us.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, she did, I think. At least, that was her intention, the last I was in touch with her.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So after that, I think that there is a gap before we get to 1991 and the Some Art work. Is that correct? Is that when you became ill again?

JUDY FISKIN: Well, yeah, I did become ill again. I also did—I went back a couple years later to New York and shot in New Jersey on the Jersey Shore but that was not very productive. And I also did a series of photographs of furniture—of decorative arts rooms in museum.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Isn't that considered—isn't that the 1991 series, Some Art?

JUDY FISKIN: No, that's not Some Art. That's Portraits of Furniture.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Oh, I'm sorry. All right. And tell me what year that is?

JUDY FISKIN: You know, I'm going to have to go look. [Laughs.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: I'm sorry about that.

JUDY FISKIN: That's okay. I should have gotten this together before—

[Audio break.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So just for the record, in 1988, after doing the trip to New York, you came back to LA and that's when you did Portraits of Furniture and New Architecture. So tell me about the Portraits of Furniture.

JUDY FISKIN: I shot mostly in museums and I shot some sort of roomsapes in the decorative art sections and some, just, pieces of furniture. And I did a lot at the Getty [Museum] in their decorative arts rooms, but I also did stuff at the Met. We went to some preserved house in Houston. Whenever we traveled, I would see if there was something I could shoot.

And then when we—at the same time or maybe just slightly later, I was also shooting houses that had been newly built. And there was a lot at the beach. Little narrow lots at the beach that had

never been developed. That's where I found most of it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: That's when you did the New Architecture.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, sort of up and down the coast. I think I went as—I went past Ventura. But around there and in down to the beach cities here—Hermosa and Redondo and those places.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Now, why did you do the furniture? Because with the Aesthetic Decisions, the flower-arranging is kind of like—

JUDY FISKIN: It's about taste, too, and it's about poor taste in the higher arts.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Poor taste in the higher arts.

JUDY FISKIN: [Laughs.] Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Does this furniture—is this furniture in bad taste?

JUDY FISKIN: It's a lot of—well, I always thought it was pretty funny. And I got permission from the curator of the Getty to do this work in their rooms.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And who was it at the time?

JUDY FISKIN: Oh God, Gillian [Wilson], Gillian, what was her last name? Anyway, she was really—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: The founding decorative arts curator of the Getty Museum.

JUDY FISKIN: Anyway, she said I could do it, but then I would have to come back and show her what I had done. So I was just quaking in my boots because I felt like I had made some fun of. And she started going through and she started laughing and she said, "Louis XIV had such bad taste." [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: That's great.

JUDY FISKIN: So you know, I don't know that world very well and I know people really love that stuff but to me it always looked way, way hysterically overdone. Hysterically, like, funny but also hysterically, like, hysteria in a chair.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And would you choose the pieces of furniture based on their appearance or their provenance, their history.

JUDY FISKIN: Their appearance, their appearance. So I also shot some very simple, like, American furniture at the Met where they have a lot of that. But it was always stuff that was just a little bit—a little bit funny. A little bit what seemed like out of proportion or—so it's very simple but if you look at it for long enough, it's like, man, those pineapples are big for that little table, or something like that, you know? So I was shooting with an eye to humor in that as well. Not all of it, but—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Now, tell me about getting sick in 1990. What happened?

JUDY FISKIN: I have a genetic predisposition on my father's side to an autoimmune disease. And it came out in 1990. And I was very sick for two years and, for a while, not able to walk. So this chronology of when I did these things is—if you match that with the chronology of when I got sick, I think what happened is I got better. And I got well enough to, like, not to go out and shoot at craft

shows but to go out to libraries and shoot out of books. So that was the extension of Some Art into More Art. So I was looking in books for things that were similar to the kinds of things that I was shooting by going around to museums and craft shows—in the decorative arts, mostly.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So what does Some Art and More Art consist of? How do you separate the two of them?

JUDY FISKIN: Well, I did them at different times and I keep them in different boxes and that's how I differentiate. [Laughs.] Some Art is all live stuff. You know, real things that—you know, like—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: The craft shows.

JUDY FISKIN: They were the craft shows and also but not just craft shows. And also the craft shows had hierarchies. So I shot them at crafts galleries, craft shows, county fair in the—what do they call those? They have these buildings that are just for commercial objects. I shot commercial objects that were, like, decorative arts at the county fair. But I also shot some live painters, some paintings that I—you know, and put that in there. And then you put it all together and it is all confused about what is what.

And More Art is the same kind of thing except these were all from books. They were all from books. So I was rephotographing but not with the same intent as the Pictures generations at all.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, of course, that was what I was going to ask [Fiskin laughs] in terms of its timing and so forth. And I think it got attention in part because it was not exactly—

JUDY FISKIN: But you know what—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: —a little bit later than the pictures generation but—

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, it was later—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: But by that time, the aesthetic was very much accepted—the idea of rephotographing.

JUDY FISKIN: I didn't talk about it. It was not part of the information that went out with the show.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: What?

JUDY FISKIN: That I had rephotographed it. You know, if I was talking to somebody one-on-one, I would say that. But I never said that for publication and I think if you read those reviews for More Art, you won't find anybody talking about that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: No, but I mean—Oh, okay.

JUDY FISKIN: So therefore, it wasn't taken that way, either. And I didn't talk about it because it wasn't meant that way and I knew if I threw that in the mix, people would start talking about that as if that—you know, and really, it was a matter of expediency. If I could have gone—I remember the last day that I was able to walk and photograph. And I got this—I'll show you later—this fabulous walking stick from a carving show that I went to. And then I couldn't for a long time after that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: How long was it—how long did your illness last?

JUDY FISKIN: I still have it but the bad part lasted about—the first bad part where I really couldn't

walk maybe lasted a few months. And then for a couple years, I could walk but I couldn't do much. I was in a lot of pain most of the time.

So I could go to a library nearby and take pictures out of books. I could do, like, an hour or two hours in the darkroom, which isn't enough, and I could never get beyond that two hours. It's like, it's not enough to be productive and it also made me really—it was exhausting to do two hours in the darkroom. And so I kept struggling with it after *More Art*, and then the work wasn't coming out, I think, partly because I just didn't have enough energy. And then I got the idea that I could do a video.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Mm-hmm, well, let's pause for a moment because I want to go back to *Some Art*, where you have the pictures of the crafts and the craft element and it's sort of pictures of needlepoint, I think, and painting by amateurs and things like that. And it does seem to me there's an aspect of your work that's about categorization. Is that correct?

JUDY FISKIN: Well, it's that aspect of—well, what do you mean by categorization?

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, that you're almost documenting these hierarchies even though you're not appending comments to them.

JUDY FISKIN: I'm not telling you which is which, but yeah, I really liked the idea of sampling all these different kinds of hierarchies, including, like, I think the highest of the bastard arts that I ever photographed was this piece of wedge wood in the Met in the basement. [Laughs.] You know, it had been relegated to the basement and it was a scene from the *Iliad* [Homer]. And it's very beautifully made but it's not in there with the high art.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Did you ever think of it as a—sort of as a rescue attempt? An attempt to bring these sort of lost art projects—

JUDY FISKIN: No, it's more like you have this ruthless feeling of, that's material for me. [They laugh.] Like, give me that; that will do what I need. [Drohojowksa-Philp laughs.] No, I didn't. Although I really liked looking at all that stuff. Some of going in that direction came from I was raised with stuff like this. My mother used to collect, like, in different categories and then she'd get rid of stuff and start over on something else. And I had some affection for all of it. And I think even the lowest stuff, it's like, the—and you see that in *50 Ways to Set the Table*. It's the effort that people put into making something beautiful, and then the failure to do it. There's something in all of that, that really moves me.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And also, I wanted to ask about the role of decorative arts and modernism and post-modernism, which kind of all come together at this point. I mean, just even photographing decorative arts, I think one of the reviewers talks about the risk of this show. And what they mean is exactly that; that you're documenting the forbidden aspect of art production, decorative arts.

JUDY FISKIN: I think it was really highly personal and I think I didn't care about the risk. I didn't even think of it as risk. I thought it was a good idea. And I'm going to go back to your previous question about—or, my previous answer about, like, having. It's like, you know—because this goes for the buildings, too, and I think maybe, like, the new topography people, this is what they weren't interested in. They weren't interested in taste. And I always was. And my mother was such a—was so invested in taste and then in class, but when I got older, I'd start noticing these things.

Like, well, I grew up in this house, it had a brick façade, and I think a Georgian—you know, Georgian touches—and then you looked down the side of the house and it was very asymmetrical.

The side of the house was white stucco with windows just flung—[laughs]—because the windows were put in with consideration from the interior. On the outside, they're thinking about the—on the façade, they're thinking about the exterior. So there'd be this very orderly, tasteful thing on the outside and this kind of blank thing with these randomly placed windows down the side.

And that really interested me, and it also seemed like a metaphor for that kind of—you know, if you're living a life that's so constrained by tastes, so it's sort of like what's on the exterior versus what's on the interior. I mean, if you take the side of the house as the interior. So it came out of that kind of thing, and that kind of noticing that kind of thing.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And it's a very LA experience of seeing a house like that, where they have perfect facades and then around the back, it's a completely different—

JUDY FISKIN: It's something else. [Laughs.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: It's like a stage set. It's stage design, which we find amusing in a perverse way.

JUDY FISKIN: That's right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So after you did More Art, which involved photographing out of books, and that's all you could do when you were sick, how did you come to the decision to pursue video? Is that a direct result of your illness?

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. I was trying not to think that I couldn't do this anymore but I was experiencing that I couldn't do it anymore. And I just woke up one morning. Jon had taught me to sing—it's an old Keely Smith thing—to sing, "I Don't Know Why I Love You Like I Do" backwards. And you do it backwards phrase by phrase. It isn't like you start at A and go to Z. You start at—you do A backwards and then you do B backwards.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: How do you do—you have to do it for me because I don't understand.

JUDY FISKIN: Okay, okay. Why know don't I, you love I, do I like. Wait. Why know don't I, you love I, do I like, why know don't I, do I but—[laughs]. So each phrase is sung backwards.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And why did he teach you to do that?

JUDY FISKIN: Because he liked it. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Oh, I thought this was a recovery tool or something. [Laughs.]

JUDY FISKIN: No, no, no, he just, you know, he likes music. I think maybe he was singing it and I was said, you've got to teach me that. Whatever it was, I woke up singing that.

And the other thing I didn't mention was that my father was dying when I got sick. It's probably part of why I got sick. So when I woke up singing that, I thought, you know, I could make, like, a two-minute video where I sing that and it's for my father and we could do a little bouncing ball thing and then put a picture of him up at the end. And it was really simple.

I didn't know anything about video. But the Long Beach Museum still had a video wing where they would help you with stuff. And so that's what I did. I went down there and then I got some more ideas and I did those and it was, like, a five-segment piece and it was all for my father. And I never showed it in public. But it's how I learned to do video and it's what told me I could do video.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: What year was this?

JUDY FISKIN: That was probably '94, maybe? Because I had about two really unproductive years where I was up and around but not that well, and not able to really do the photographs.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So doing your father's video started you in a new way. And what was the first video that you did that pertained to your own work?

JUDY FISKIN: Well, when I realized that I wanted to do video, I very slightly knew Peter Kirby, who does a lot of video with artists in LA. And I called him to ask him about equipment, what kind of camera should I get? And Peter, who is very opinionated, said—he said, you're the exception but mostly photographers can't do video because they won't move the camera. They're afraid to move the camera.

And it made me so mad because number one, it was true. I knew that I would really be afraid to move the camera. But number two, he's wrong. You can still do video if you don't move the camera. And so I opened a file in my computer that said, fuck you, Peter Kirby. That was the title of it. [They laugh.] And then I started writing ideas in there for ways—for scenes that involved keeping the camera still but having movement go on in front of the camera.

And when I was through with my father's thing, I went and looked at that, and there was part of a script there. And so then I did my—the first one I showed in public was called *Diary of a Mid-Life Crisis* [1997], that dealt with some of what was going on with me but it was a lot about not being able to move the camera, in humorous ways.

And so there's a Peter Kirby scene in that. [They laugh.] I mean, he's not in it but he's mentioned. I mean, I quote him—what he said—and I disprove him in the same scene. So that was how the next one got made. And that, I did show in public.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And where did you first show these?

JUDY FISKIN: MoCA did a weekend where they screened it in their auditorium for the weekend and then it culminated with, like, me being there and doing a Q&A with the audience. And I was thrilled because when I got the idea to do these videos, I also thought at the same time, well, my career is over, but I still want to be doing something. Nobody will ever look at these. And that turned out not to be the case.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And then did you continue making the videos from then on?

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, then I—the next thing I made was *My Getty Center* [1999], where I had gotten very peeved at that ad campaign they had where there were banners all over the city showing a little African-American child sort of gazing off in the distance and it said something like, "Imagine," and then "My Getty Center." And I thought, well, imagine if they had put it in a place that would have been convenient for a little African-American child to go. [They laugh.] That's what he's imagining!

And I started, again, with not much of an idea that I was really going to make a video—going up

there and doing the kind of anti-Getty advertising video. And then somewhere in the middle of that, I got the idea of—because I was also—it was going to be an El Nino year and people just get hysterical about that. And it's ridiculous; it's mostly just hype. And I got the idea of putting those together—doing the year when the Getty Center and El Nino came to Los Angeles at the same time.

And then I was having lunch with Lisa Lyons, who was working at the Getty, trying to work out some kind of contemporary art thing with them. And she asked me what I was doing, and I told her that. And it gave her the idea of doing a show where artists are invited to respond to the Getty as a whole or to something in the Getty or some part of the Getty. And so that was *Departures: 11 Artists at the Getty*, [February 9 - May 7, 2000] or *Respond to the Getty*, or something like that. I forget what it was called exactly, but it was called *Departures*. So that got shown at the Getty. [Laughs.] What did I do after that?

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And was it technically challenging for you to be making these videos after years of perfecting your craft as a photographer?

JUDY FISKIN: I decided because it was going to be in color that I wasn't going to worry about how it looked. Because it was going to be in color, which I had never worked in before and I don't know much about, and because it was at that time analog video—I was using a Hi8 analog video camera, very low quality—I just went, like, who cares, this is about something else. It's about narrative and it's about my cranky ideas about things. So I just didn't worry about it very much.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And when did you show the Getty piece? When was that, do you think?

JUDY FISKIN: I think that was, like—the first one was—*Diary of a Mid-Life Crisis*, was, like, '96, '97. And the Getty show was in 2000. So I probably started working on that in '98 or something like that.

And then I got invited to do a piece for LACMA Lab [*What We Think About When We Think About Ships*, 2001]. So that was about—and you know, we were asked to pick an object from LACMA that would be in our space, and then do something about that object. So I picked a really beautiful marine painting and I made a—and it was supposed to be something that adults and children would like. And I just was laughing, like, you don't want very much, do you? [They laugh.] Oh, and it was supposed to be interactive, as well. So it was just like, oh yeah. [They laugh.]

But I did this little thing about boats. And I know that children liked it because I walked in one day after it was up and there were these three little boys and it was in this darkened space with lots of different slits that you could look through at different TVs, all playing the same thing, but it was just so that people—it could be dark in there and people could be seeing it in different. So the slits were different heights, too, from children to adult.

And these little boys, about eight or 9 years old, were narrating it. So they had already seen it. And it came to the end where I have this Chinese junk that we shot off of Venice Pier that was pretty small in the frame to begin with, and then we did this video trick where that little frame got tinier and tinier and tinier. And then were going—in unison, they were saying, "And it gets smaller and smaller and smaller!" [Drohojowska-Philp laughs.] And that was, like, I loved that. [Laughs.]

And I also did an image there in that, that I was really proud of, which is that I had my assistant draw a very crude picture of, like, a fishing boat in glue, and then set it on fire. And so it was just—the picture was just an outline, so there's this flaming outline. And when the flames die down, then

there's, like, a charcoal drawing underneath because we did it on a piece of wood. And that was great. I never thought I had anything like that in me.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Was it part of the video?

JUDY FISKIN: Uh-huh, yeah. We did different things with toy boats and I had, like, a very condensed pirate movie in there, and most of it worked pretty well. I got a cake in the shape—well, a cake—it wasn't just in the shape of the Titanic; it was frosted like the Titanic—[they laugh]—and put some birthday candles in the smokestacks—or in the steam stacks, whatever they were—and put that on the escalator at LACMA and had it go up and out of sight.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: As part of your video?

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So this is around 2000, you said. So really, the video just took off for you because you're still not doing any photography at this point. You just haven't gone back—did you ever go back to photography?

JUDY FISKIN: I never did. I have an idea for something right now but I would have somebody else shoot it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Did the photography prove to be too taxing, even as time went on?

JUDY FISKIN: It would have been too taxing because what I can't do—I really can't stand on my feet for more than an hour. Like, in a museum or something, I have to go sit down after an hour. And to work in a darkroom for an hour, that's pathetic. You can't get anywhere doing that. And so I would try to extend it to two hours, and it wasn't enough. And to just do it for two hours, it just put me to bed every time.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, now, in the meantime, of course, photography completely changed technically, so that what used to involve darkrooms and craft and so forth now is fully digital and you can do a lot of it on your computer. How do you feel about that change in the technology?

JUDY FISKIN: You know, I don't know. Digital technology has gotten better so that the prints look better now. But at the beginning, I thought the prints were just dreadful. And I still think it's not the same. And you know, I just love film. And I'm sort of sad to see film going away.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, you ended up making a film called *The End of Photography*, in 2006. And tell me about that because I thought that was an extremely poignant little two-minute film.

JUDY FISKIN: Thank you. I thought so, too. [Laughs.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And I was interested that you used film instead of video to do it. So tell me about that.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, that was the first—you know, I didn't have an idea. What did I do after—oh, I did *50 Ways to Set the Table* after the thing I did for LACMA Lab.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: If you'd like, we could talk about that first and then we can talk—

JUDY FISKIN: Oh, we can go back to that. So I had done *50 Ways to Set the Table*, and then I didn't have an idea. And so I just had this feeling, like, I want to go out and shoot some Super 8 film. And I started buying Super 8 cameras on eBay for, like, \$9. And I knew I wanted a fairly degraded image but it turned out that the thing that gave me the best degraded image, the camera broke after two times every time.

So I got a slightly better camera and a less degraded image and just started going back to what I did when I was much younger and just going through neighborhoods and shooting landscaping and shooting apartment buildings and all my old stuff.

And I did that for, like, two years thinking—still without an idea—going like, this is terrible; and, why am I doing this shooting, it's never going to make a film—even though I would digitize it, put it into my computer and, like, put it on a timeline so that things made sense next to each other. So I was constructing this thing but because I had no ideas for the images, I just thought, this is futile.

And then I went to see an installation by an old student of mine, Luciano Perna. You know how that's spelled.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Luciano—

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, Perna, P-E-R-N-A. And it was an installation about photography. He's totally in love with photography. And it had these vitrines on tables in the middle of the room and it was all old photographic equipment. Reels and beakers and old cameras. And tears came to my eyes, and I called up Luciano and I said, I saw your show. It's all about the end of photography. And he said, yes. And then I got the idea. And it's why I credit him in the film because I got the idea from seeing his show.

And so the idea was—even though I transferred it to video, you can see that this was shot on film because Super 8 film really shows you that. And it's all these old kinds of images of the neighborhoods that I used to shoot. And the voiceover says, "What was lost," and then I just give a list of everything that you would use to make a photograph, starting with reels of film and beakers and water. But I went through it pretty much in the order that you would go through it to use film to make a photograph or a film.

And the other thing that was unsaid was, so film is disappearing, these neighborhoods are disappearing in Los Angeles, too. And some people got that. And some people didn't. So it was a sad little film. [Laughs.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: It was a sad little film, and you showed it at the Angles Gallery in Santa Monica. At least, that's where I saw it.

JUDY FISKIN: That's right.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And I was heartened that they would show it and show your work because by this time, your galleries have come and gone and come and gone, and now we have Angles.

JUDY FISKIN: I had 10 years with no gallery because when I stopped making photographs and started making video, Patty Faure really was unhappy with me, and didn't—she just wanted me to go back to shooting photographs. And I couldn't and I explained to her why but she—every time I

saw her, she would say that. And I finally decided, you know, this relationship is over—[they laugh]—if she doesn't want what I'm doing and I can't do what she wants.

And so that was part of also of my thinking, well, my career is over, I'm making these videos, you can't show those in galleries very much. But then I walked into Angles one day and started talking and when I walked out, I was signed up. I mean, I didn't go—we were just chatting. So now I have a place to show them because I showed—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: In what year did you start showing there?

JUDY FISKIN: Well, *50 Ways* was [2003]—so, 2000 was LACMA Lab and then *50 Ways* was, like, maybe 2003, 2004. And I think I started there in 2006, something like that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: No, 2006 you're already showing *The End Of Photography* there.

JUDY FISKIN: Oh, okay.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Because I have a review—Christopher Bedford wrote a review in 2007 of that—2006.

JUDY FISKIN: You know, I can go over this with you, when my—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: That's not such a big part of this.

JUDY FISKIN: It's easy to find it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: But the chronology, I want to keep sort of on the chronology.

JUDY FISKIN: But the chronology at least, I know which order I did things. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: We're going to pause here and change things and we're going to back to discussing *50 Ways to Set a Table*.

[END AAA_fiskin09_1616.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: This is Hunter Drohojowksa-Philp interviewing Judy Fiskin at the artist's home and studio in West Los Angeles, California, on November 22, 2009 for the archives of American art, Smithsonian Institution, disc number four.

Now, Judy, we were talking about *The End of Photography*, the two-minute-plus film that you made. And just before we wrap it up on that level, how was it received? I know I read a number of—

JUDY FISKIN: It was really, really well received, and it was shown at the MoMA Documentary Fortnight Festival, and in festivals all over the world. I was contacted by the Amsterdam International Documentary Festival, which is a really good venue for people like me. And the fact that they called me was really thrilling to me. So yeah, people liked it. It touched a nerve, you know, in a lot of people. I think there's a lot of people out there, especially in the art and film world, who are having these feelings.

And there are other artists doing work about it, like Zoë—what's her name? I'll get back to that. [Laughs.] What is her name? And there's a British artist who'd show a 16-millimeter film of the Kodak factory that made her film, that she was using, shutting down—Tacita Dean. I forget the other woman's name, but she made, like, she made a piece called *Analog*, and it was all these

Polaroids of mom-and-pop stores in Manhattan that were disappearing. Very similar to my idea.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, it is very poignant, and I think that poignancy is a quality that is in almost all of your work, to a certain extent. I mean, humor too, but certainly there's always a sort of poignancy about the objects you choose to photograph, the buildings you choose to photograph. Before we go forward, I need to jump back now to 2003, and talk about *50 Ways to Set the Table*. Because I think that maybe that is the video—that's the series that really, sort of, gave you a new position, in a way—in terms of this video career of yours.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, that also got a lot of attention. I had done a lot of still shooting at the LA County Fair. My family would go to the LA County Fair—I don't know if it was every year, but quite a lot—and it was before freeways. So it would take us two hours on Route 66 to get there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Because it's in Pomona.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah, because it's in Pomona, and there weren't any freeways out there, you know, in the '50s. And we'd stay there all day. I just loved it. Then, because I went to college near Pomona, in Claremont—next door to Pomona, at Pomona College—we would go there every year as college students. And I sort of just had a practice of going to the LA County Fair.

So when I started photographing, I went every year and photographed there, and I noticed this exhibit they had, every year—the tablescaping competition. And what I noticed about it the most was, there were these, like, lavishly landscaped tables, and then in front of every one there was a column—almost like a podium—where for each one, the judges' comments had been typed up and put on there and the judges were incredibly harsh.

So there was this contrast between these lovingly made tables—and they weren't just laid, because people made lots of objects to put on the tables—and then these harsh comments that everybody got, and it made me laugh every time and I felt like it was sort of summing up the life of the artist—[they laugh]—as well as going back to that thing about my mother enforcing taste in this very strong way.

But it never—it wouldn't have fit into my format of photography the way I was doing photographs. It just wouldn't have worked. So somehow I remembered it and got the idea. Maybe I went back to the county fair and saw it again and went like, now this is a film. And I was very lucky that the women that were judging that year had really strong personalities. One was kind of mean—[laughs]—and judgmental and the other was kind of funny and a little flaky, and they didn't like each other. [They laugh.] So I made a film where the—half-hour film where the first half shows people lovingly smoothing out all the wrinkles in their tablecloths and setting their tables and talking to us about it, and then in the second part, we miked each judge and we got the whole two hours of conversation that they had, and they were hilarious. You know, to photograph human behavior, to film human behavior—it was just thrilling to me, wasn't anything I ever thought I could do. But there was so much behavior going on. It was amazing and the key thing was they talked about these tables the way that curators, artists and critics and students and teachers talk about art, only they weren't talking about art. They were talking about these wildly divergent and kitschy table-settings.

So I had the experience of sitting with a curator. In the first 15 minutes, you don't know what's going to happen and I think she was maybe a little restless or bored. And then halfway through the second 15 minutes, she just sort of bolted out of her chair and said, that's what we sound like! [They laugh.] And that's what I like best about that film. But there's a lot of things I like about that film and it did really well. People really responded to it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: But you never, prior to this, had to deal with people?

JUDY FISKIN: No, never in my photographs.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And how did you approach them to convince them to participate in this film?

JUDY FISKIN: You know, I had learned this from—when I wanted to do military bases, I said to Hal Glicksman, I really want to shoot on military bases but I know they'll never let me in. And he said, you're so wrong. He said, these people have been sitting on these bases since World War II hoping that somebody would pay some attention to them. If you talk to them, tell them what you're going to do, they're going to want to do it. I had absolutely no trouble getting on any military base except one, and I think it was the Seal Beach weapons depot and that was because it was too high-security. But I went up and down the coast and got into any military base I wanted and that gave me the idea that people like attention and if you're interested in what they're doing, they like it.

So you don't go up and say, well, I want to do this film of you judging and I'm going to really make a lot of fun of you. [Laughs.] You just say, this really interests me and I want to—but I do have a few scruples so I did say to each of them beforehand, I'm going to cut this for humor, and they said, fine, and they were even saying, you know, we have such a bad fight every year that they had to call the guards in last—or they had to call somebody else in to break up our argument—not the guards because the guards are there, but it's going—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Really?

JUDY FISKIN: —to be great on film. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Did you give them a copy of it? Have they seen it?

JUDY FISKIN: I showed the—yeah, I showed it to both of them. One of them really liked it and the other one—although she was disappointed that I didn't have the whole two hours of the discussion. And the other one didn't like it but I just called and—and not only that, she had broken a lot of the judges' rules during the—I think she was performing for the camera, picking up the nametags which have the name on the inside hidden because they're not supposed to know, but she was sure she knew who it was so she picked it up and looked at it. She wasn't supposed to do that. They were moving—they were picking up plates and looking at the bottoms and stuff—they weren't supposed to do that and so they got removed, only—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: As judges?

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. But the one—and she was the older one and the more stern one, was the one who was upset about the movie, but she got bumped up from being a judge to being put on the board—[Drohojowksa-Philp laughs]—of the fair, so I think she came out okay. And the other one just felt like, of course, I know that what we're doing has some absurdity in it, and she took it well. But I felt bad that they were removed, actually—certainly wasn't my intent.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Now, tell me about this issue of taste. I mean, do you believe there is such a thing as good taste?

JUDY FISKIN: You know, I think we all, in our own little realms, have our—we sort of know what good taste is and we kind of go with it when it evolves or devolves or whatever. I think you sort of know what it is but I also think it's a matter of consensus and as such, it's very fluid, maybe over longer

and shorter periods of time, and what was once good taste, like Louis XIV, now has the decorative arts curator laughing at it. And so I hold both of those things at the same time—sort of, "I know what good taste is." But, you know, it's quicksand.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And how does that apply to the visual arts? Because you're also a teacher, so when you go to CalArts and you teach people how to make art, where does the role of taste come in to that conversation?

JUDY FISKIN: If you have biases or if I have biases, I try to tell my students, to remember to tell them, look, this is not my kind of work but I'll do my best trying to be objective about it. I'm not going to get real excited about it because I don't like this kind of thing in general. That's all you can do, is just expose your own biases and go from there.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: But do you discuss the role of taste with them?

JUDY FISKIN: In that way, yes,

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Because to me it seems as though it's something that's hardly ever really discussed in the fine art context, is the question of taste or the history of taste, for that matter.

JUDY FISKIN: I try—instead of doing that, because then there are these fads that go through the art world every few years, but when they come upon them and it's as if they're written on stone, and I try to make them aware, if you do work based on that right now, it's going to be—by the time you graduate, it's going to be gone. These things are cyclical and they come and go and you should be—your job is to find out what you want to do, not try to do what's in fashion right now. And then you sort of—then you go home thinking, maybe I told them the wrong thing. Maybe they'd get more attention if they were doing what's in fashion right now. [They laugh.]

But that's my basic message to them: What made you come here? What work did you like when you came here, before you found out what was important and not important? But on the other hand, they do sort of still have to fit in to certain parameters. I do sometimes actually teach taste and when I do, I tell them that's what I'm doing and say, this is just taste. I can tell you—and it's not just my taste: I can tell you if you add something to this now, or the thing that you want to add to this good piece now, it's in bad artistic taste. Don't do it and here's why.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And give me an example of what was bad artistic taste.
[Laughs.]

JUDY FISKIN: I'm trying to remember this kid, and he was so excited. It has to do sometimes with being too literal or point too hard at what you're doing, you know, like over-explaining in the piece what you're doing. Stuff like that. So you can say to them—this one kid is just a very inspired artist but he's really, really young and he makes these kinds of mistakes. So that I—

[Audio break.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: You're back on record and we're talking about your recent work being included—it was in the Museum of Contemporary Art collection and they recently reinstalled their permanent collection and as of the fall of 2009, they've—this is a great way of organizing the material—and they've put you in a gallery—your work in gallery, with John Baldessari, Richard Prince, Catherine, or Cathy, as we call her—Cathy Opie, Sophie Calle, Cindy Sherman and Al Ruppertsberg, which to me says you're squarely in the realm of conceptual photography.

JUDY FISKIN: The interesting thing about this is, what we were talking about just before you turned off the recorder, was the kind of vagaries of taste and this is something that happens all the time. Before this show, their last permanent collection show was called—I forget what it was called but it was California conceptualism and I got put in that show too and I'm happy—if that's how they perceive it, that's fine with me. Let's just say it sort of expands the meaning of the work but it's not how I think about the work.

It's not what I think conceptual art is. I think that—I also think that by now the boundaries of what conceptual art meant have been stretched very, very far. And I think that sometimes people confuse the fact that there are ideas in your work with conceptual art but the conceptual artists made it very clear where the idea was more important than the visual aspect and that's where—I don't think that's true in my work.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, it was more the visual—the ideas were more important than the execution—

JUDY FISKIN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: —in terms of their executing it, and to this day, Baldessari doesn't execute his own work and arguably, quite a few of—I mean, on the other hand, Cathy Opie is a master, master technician.

JUDY FISKIN: Right. I don't think she's a conceptual artist either.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, I don't think so either.

JUDY FISKIN: I think she's a photographer.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And perhaps more accurately, we're saying that the conceptual—that the idea that it's not formalist, it's idea-centered work, I think is probably why you're all together.

JUDY FISKIN: Yes, but my work is really highly crafted and if it didn't look right, it didn't—that was the first thing that would get a picture in my series, in a series I was making: It looked right. It was the kind of print I liked.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: What pictures are we talking about that are in the MoCA collection?

JUDY FISKIN: They, well, they've got 15 up. They've got five from the series Stucco, from 1973, five from Dingbat. God, what are the other five? Oh, I don't remember. [They laugh.] This is just because I'm old, not because I don't care. I do care but I've forgotten what the third—so it's selection up from three series, five of each and they have at least 20 and maybe 25 photographs. They have Some Art and More Art and maybe some others and they acquired all of these at the time of the show I had there in 1994.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: I'm pleased to hear that.

JUDY FISKIN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And just to talk about the videos: Are the videos now going into museum collections?

JUDY FISKIN: Some, yeah, like—*The End of Photography* went into maybe—I think we sold eight out of an edition of 10 and I think maybe five of them went into—five or six of them went into museums.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Are they DVDs?

JUDY FISKIN: Yes. Guaranteed to last 100 years.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: More than most photographs. [They laugh.] But I do think this interest in California conceptualism has become quite strong in the last 10 years, with the rise of visibility of some of the LA artists associated with that movement. Have you felt that a little bit in your own—the way your own work has been received?

JUDY FISKIN: Not at all, no. See, I'm not grouped with them, I'm not grouped with—I mean, I am, but not in that way of like at the founding of it, I certainly wasn't grouped with them and rightly so. New topographics, which I think I should have been grouped with at the beginning, I wasn't, so I'm not grouped with them. There are these resurgences of movements but they are movements and they're being treated as movements so no, the attention that my work is getting I think is outside of that. But I do think that somewhere along the line, and I think it was when the A.R.T. Press book [*Judy Fiskin*. William Bartman, ed. Los Angeles, 1988] was published as well as—that was one bump and another bump was when I had the first focus show at MoCA, that suddenly I sort of became a solid presence in LA art.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, I've always thought of you as a solid presence in LA art. [They laugh.]

JUDY FISKIN: I was a little bit—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: At least for a long time, anyway. At least 25 years.

JUDY FISKIN: I've been there, yeah, but something changed in the perception of my work. It got validated—put it that way. It got validated by the book and more validated by the show at MoCA.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: What's happening with your teaching? Are you still at CalArts?

JUDY FISKIN: I am. I'm just quarter-time now—I teach once half-a-day a week.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And do you enjoy teaching?

JUDY FISKIN: A lot, or I wouldn't still be doing it. Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Did you always enjoy teaching?

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: How has that been for you in terms of the development of your work? I mean, Baldessari is famous for saying that when he's teaching, he's actually thinking up ideas for his work and when he's working in his studio, he's thinking about teaching—[they laugh]—so I don't know if that's the same for you.

JUDY FISKIN: Not so much, no. But now it's hard for me to remember what that was like for me. When I started I was 32 and now it's a lot like sort of being able to—I feel more generous now and I feel more like it's about ushering these new artists into the world and it's very gratifying when you

can do that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Who are some of the students you think have done well under your—

JUDY FISKIN: Cathy. [Laughs.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Cathy Opie was your student?

JUDY FISKIN: Uh-huh. I was sort of friends with Jim Isermann when he was at CalArts. I didn't exactly teach him but the guy—I may have already said this in this tape—the men faculty members did not get him at all and it probably had some importance to him that some of the women were supportive of him.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: He's always said that.

JUDY FISKIN: Has he?

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Yeah, that the women teachers at CalArts really helped him a lot. Lari Pittman said the same thing.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. Well, they were gay and it was still kind of a new thing to be gay when they were at CalArts in the late '70s and it wasn't that kind of open an atmosphere. But even Mike Kelley still resents that the big guys weren't interested in what he was doing, but I was. Judy Pfaff was—she introduced him to Richard Armstrong who gave him a—had him do a performance, I think, in La Jolla.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So Cathy Opie, and have you had some other students come up more recently?

JUDY FISKIN: Who's the most—I'm just blanking on it. I know we have some. There's not a huge number. I mean, a lot of them go out and do art-related things or they show but they don't become stars.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, it's hard to become a star. [Laughs.]

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And especially now that it's so competitive.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Also, before I forget, I wanted to ask you another thing. I don't remember exactly when this happened, but your husband got, through the Freedom of Information Act, got the files, the FBI files on John Lennon released and then there was a movie made about this.

JUDY FISKIN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And so to what extent was he involved in the movie and did that have any impact on you making these videos, or was there any kind of—was the whole family involved in video and film at the same time?

JUDY FISKIN: Jon's written two books about John Lennon. The first one was a political biography that he started in 1980 and I don't remember quite when he finished it but he became known as an expert on John Lennon and then this FBI files thing was a—the ACLU—he got a big envelope of maybe hundreds of pages—I'm not sure how many—from John Lennon's FBI file and they were all blacked out. Practically almost all of them were blacked out, and he got the ACLU of Southern California involved in suing the FBI to release the real information and it took 14 years and so during that time, we've had dozens of film crews. They come in the house and I try to make them go shoot in his study so that I can go about my business. [They laugh.] But no, it didn't influence my videos at all.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, I didn't finish—just the idea of working and film at all, just the idea of—

JUDY FISKIN: No, it really was that just little thing where I woke up singing and realized I can do this and my unconscious mind did me a favor by just making my first idea something that would only be a minute long so that I felt that I could actually do it. And that's really how that happened. But I've always been a tremendous film buff and my first husband, I think I've already said, was a screenwriter—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Yes.

JUDY FISKIN: —and one of the ways he wooed me was he would go to the library and get a—check out a 16-mm projector, have a few people over. I remember one night we watched *Casablanca* [1942], which I'd never even heard of, and then Max Reinhardt's *Midsummer Night's Dream* [1935]—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Oh my goodness, he was doing this in your home?

JUDY FISKIN: Yes. Who wouldn't marry a guy like that?

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Yes. [They laugh.] Indeed.

JUDY FISKIN: And there was the Z Channel when we were in our 20s. I just got a total film education.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: I don't know what the Z Channel was.

JUDY FISKIN: Oh, Z Channel was one of the first cable channels and it was like a film buff channel. They'd play all of [Akira] Kurosawa's movies and I think probably we had a VCR. I think they existed then. If they did, I was just making tape after tape or staying home and watching this brilliant programming. There was even, last year, a documentary on the guy who started and ran Z Channel. It was like the Pasadena Museum. It was sort of like, in the early '70s, late '60s in LA, we weren't New York but we had these pockets of incredibly intense culture that, if you were into it, you just learned a massive amount. You were exposed to a lot.

So I loved films. With my first husband, if we were going to celebrate something, we'd go to three films in a day. That's what our idea of a good time was. [Drohojowksa-Philp laughs.] Come out, have dinner after the first two and go to another one after dinner.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So in a way, going into video wasn't really that foreign to you. You already had the visual education of how it should look—

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: —and the sense of timing and so forth.

JUDY FISKIN: And obviously some feel for narrative.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And was it hard to overcome the technical difficulties?

JUDY FISKIN: Well, as I said, I wasn't trying to make it technically perfect and Peter Kirby really—I would hand it over to him.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: But I mean just even getting it transferred from your camera onto the computer, editing it digitally on the computer—how did you learn all that?

JUDY FISKIN: I learned from when I was on analog. I learned to do analog editing from this student of mine, Mike Jarmon, who then became my—after he graduated, he became my assistant on these films for a while and he helped me. I mean, he showed it to me and then I just started doing it. It's kind of like you can do some of these at a shallow level and still get a lot done, you know—you don't need to have all the bells and whistles and I always had that kind of DIY thing, like, just teach me a little and that'll be enough.

And then Peter Kirby got me into doing digital video and set up my studio. I think he had a really good time buying all the stuff. And I got some lessons from him and a lesson from somebody from the place we bought it from and just was able to start doing it. If you know how to do a few things, you just can start doing it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, I think digital video now is so much easier, really, hence the success of YouTube.

JUDY FISKIN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Are your videos on YouTube?

JUDY FISKIN: No. No, because I'm selling them through a gallery. I put excerpts from them on my Web site but if people are going to spend X thousand dollars to buy one of these things, you can't have them so easily available. It's kind of like—it's the photography model. It's as if the photography model, well, you know, was the print model, except in prints, the plate wore out. In photography, you could make thousands of these things. But once you get in the gallery system, they want you to make them artificially scarce. So we're doing the same thing with the videos.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, artificial scarcity is along the same lines as taste. [They laugh.] It's a construct.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: It's a construct and it's an interesting construct that we are—we all seem to buy into if we're in the art world and I suppose people outside of the art world.

JUDY FISKIN: I do feel like, you know, dealers need money. They need money even just to keep the doors open. If that's what they need me to do—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Sure.

JUDY FISKIN: —that's fine with me. I mean, it's not exactly—I'd love to put them on YouTube. I'd

love to put them on my Web site but I'm not going to do it because—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: No. It's your art.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Somebody has to be able to make money at this.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: I wanted to ask one more question that we didn't really kind of go into so much, which is about—well, we did a little bit last time, but again, documentary photography or for that matter, documentary film now and documentary videos. I mean, do you admire that sort of distance?

JUDY FISKIN: But, see, documentaries, they're not that distant. Even Frederick Wiseman, he edits those things into a narrative that's his narrative. So the ones that appear the most distant like the things that you'll get on PBS or National Geographic or something, I find those the most boring. The ones that I love are Werner Herzog, above everybody, Frederick Wiseman, the Maysles—or now it's just one, Albert Maysle—those kinds of documentaries, where there's a real—and not to forget Agnès Varda—you know, they're personal and they have a lot of vitality because of that.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So it just—as you did with photography, so you've done with the video, where you really are drawn to the personal.

JUDY FISKIN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: The intensely personal vision.

JUDY FISKIN: Yes. Yeah, because not out of egotism, but because I just think it's what makes things quirky and individual and it's not that I'm not interested. I mean, I should—you know, I think the thing about—because I do like, for instance, Allan Sekula's documentaries and they are political, but they're political because it comes out of a personal interest. I think, you know, these staid TV ones are—they're trying very hard to be objective. It's kind of like, you can't really do that but as you get closer and closer to that, it just gets less interesting.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Now, speaking of the personal, here in LA we talked about some of your friends in New York. Who are your friends here in LA? Which artists are you friendly with here?

JUDY FISKIN: Well, I think I said last time CalArts was my art world so I'm friendly with Jo Ann Callis—she was already in the photo program when I started there. John Divola isn't around anymore but he was somebody I was friendly with. I don't socialize as much with artists because I didn't want my life to be all business and in New York, I only knew artists and I kind of got tired of that, and also because I grew up here, I had friends from graduate school when I was in art history and not art and I had—I met a lot of people when I was in—I had my best friend was in the film school at UCLA, I was friends with a psychoanalyst, I had friends from all different kinds of—of all different kinds of persuasions. [They laugh.] And certainly I know a lot of artists but I sort of did not want to construct that kind of social life for myself.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: I think sometimes artists feel it's very confining to always be with their peers.

JUDY FISKIN: I can't stand it. It's like overstimulation or something. It's like I only want this amount of X and that amount of Y, you know, and I don't want my life to be 100 percent art and I know there's a lot of artists where that is what their life is but I just couldn't bear it. I just didn't want it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what is the role of competition for you? It seems as though you've been very fortunate in that you've had a teaching position so you haven't, maybe, had to be as competitive about sales and so forth. But even for competing for attention or success—does that factor?

JUDY FISKIN: I was very bad at it for a long time and it was like a neurotic thing, and I grew up some and got better at it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: You mean being—you were competitive?

JUDY FISKIN: I was very competitive but I didn't handle it well. So, for instance, if somebody criticized my work, like a critic or something, it was like, check them off the list instead of go make friends with them, which is a much smarter thing to do—[they laugh]—and it took me decades to come around to some of that and to be more—

But it was all of my own making, this kind of prickliness, and so I was competitive but I wasn't efficiently competitive. I was very inefficiently competitive—[laughs], and now I'm better at it and I like where my career is now and if doing more would make me a brighter star, I'm not so sure I would do it because the more successful you are, the harder you have to work and now there's limits on how hard I can work but there's also limits on how hard I want to work. When I was younger, I worked very, very hard but it was my own volition. But I didn't work 24 hours a day and I didn't work on my career 24 hours a day. There're just limits to how much I was willing to do. So I like having a good life. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, so at a certain point, there's only—you probably know now that there's only so much you have to give in a day. There's not necessarily going to be that much more to give, just because you're in the dark room or in the studio I suppose, for any of us.

JUDY FISKIN: I'm making a new film now and I really do wish I could work more hours a day on it and I just can't. I sort of have to put like a—I could, just because I'm so deeply into it and it's so satisfying.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And what's it about?

JUDY FISKIN: I have two docent talks, two one-hour docent talks that different women did at a museum that I haven't decided whether I'm going to name the museum or not, but at the same museum, but they were talking about different work. And I've made a mash-up of them—that is, I've put them together and made them converse with each other and I've also made what they're saying highly abstract and I'm going to put images of art that I shot with Super 8 with the soundtrack that I'm making that don't correspond to what they're talking about. And it's very hard to describe what it is. I can see now what it's going to be. I wasn't quite sure when I started but I can see now what it's going to be and sometimes I think of it as an opera with arias about different things, so there's like a formalist aria and a what-do-you—and a details aria—"look at the details"—and a biographical aria and—

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: And do you know what it will be called?

JUDY FISKIN: I think it's going to be called Guided Tour. [They laugh.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: I wanted to ask one more thing that I think we touched on last time but since you mentioned it earlier, I thought we'd go back to it. Do you feel like the Pasadena Art Museum had a role in your development?

JUDY FISKIN: Oh, God, it was like my university.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Okay, so how often did you go there?

JUDY FISKIN: I went whenever there was anything new there. I went all the time and my memory of it is there was always something new there. [Laughs.]

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: Well, they have such an active photography department, as we discussed, I think.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. And my taste didn't coincide with that curator's taste but it didn't matter. I just went and soaked everything up. But what was more important to me were the shows that Walter Hopps did. I mean, that was very important just so I would get to know the field of photography. It was very important that that guy was—the photography curator was so active. But the things that really moved me were Walter Hopps' shows and I have never, never liked Joseph Cornell's shows since his show because his show was so magical—he turned out the lights and they had these built-in display cases from this old Chinese museum—well, I don't know what was there but it was a Chinese style—and so these objects were in there with just lowlights inside the cases with the lights turned out in the room. It was unbelievable.

He was just such a—I'm saying something everybody knows, but he was such a genius of installing art and everything's been disappointing ever since. [They laugh.] No, but it made you just love the work. You know, he did a—I'm not sure if this was his but there was an Eva Hesse show there before—they did stuff before anybody was doing it. They did a pop art show before any museum did a pop art show. This is all history and this is all well known.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: But how did it affect you?

JUDY FISKIN: My mind was being blown every month. I just was avid for it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: This is way before you knew you were going to be an artist?

JUDY FISKIN: Yes.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: So you were just intrigued?

JUDY FISKIN: Well, I was an art history major and there were several people at Pomona who were really interested in contemporary art: this guy Jim—not Jim Demetron, he didn't take us anywhere, but he obviously was interested and he introduced us to Walter Hopps. But Maurice Cope would take us into town to go see the shows and so I was—and then when I went on my junior year abroad in Paris, I was remembering where the Cartier Foundation is now, there was this beautiful building and it housed the American—it was like the American Club. That's the wrong name, but—the American Center.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: The American Center, you're right.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. And they had a library and it was in a beautiful room with lunette windows and my boyfriend and I would go up there every month and get the new *Artforum* out from the stacks

and read the *Artforum* in this beautiful library. [Laughs.] It's just like trying to ingest and understand all this work. So no, I never thought I would be an artist.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: But it was all there, kind of percolating away inside of you.

JUDY FISKIN: Yeah. I mean, I didn't even dare want to be an artist because I was so convinced I couldn't be an artist, but I was so interested in it.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: That's really quite moving. Is there anything else you'd like to add to this that I haven't asked you?

JUDY FISKIN: I don't think so. I don't think so, but it's—what was that Saturday Night Live thing, "Baseball has been berry good to me"? [They laugh.] That's how I feel about art. It's been very, very good to me.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: That's wonderful. Well, thank you very much for your time.

JUDY FISKIN: Thank you for doing this, really. I can see how much work you did.

HUNTER DROHOJOWKSA-PHILP: It's been a pleasure.

JUDY FISKIN: Oh, I hope so.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]