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**Oral history interview with Jose Chardiet, 2009
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Jose Chardiet on July 29, 2009. The interview took place in the artist's studio in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, and was conducted by Josephine Shea for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Jose Chardiet has reviewed the transcript. His corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. 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

JOSEPHINE SHEA: This is Josephine Shea interviewing Jose Chardiet at the artist's studio in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, on July the 29, 2009, for the Archives of American Art, and this is disc number one.

And let's start at the beginning, which is, when and where were you born?

JOSE CHARDIET: I was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1956.

MS. SHEA: And what day? Do you remember? [Laughs.]

MR. CHARDIET: No! What day of the week?

MS. SHEA: Of — no, what day of the year.

MR. CHARDIET: Oh, October 5, 1956.

MS. SHEA: Nineteen fifty-six.

And tell me about your childhood and family. How did your parents meet?

MR. CHARDIET: I'm not sure how they met. I'd have to call my older sister for that one. But they met in Cuba. They were both born there. And it was after — I know my father had — it was after he went through college, so — but I don't know the circumstances of how they met, actually.

MS. SHEA: And Chardiet is a rather French-sounding last name.

MR. CHARDIET: Right. Yeah. My father's ancestry is French. My mother's ancestry is Spanish. So her maiden name was Fernandez.

MS. SHEA: And did he still speak French?

MR. CHARDIET: No.

MS. SHEA: Did he grow up speaking French at all or —

MR. CHARDIET: No, no. I believe his father was born in France, my — so my great — my paternal great — my paternal grandfather was French and spoke French and Spanish, and English probably, too.

MS. SHEA: And you mentioned an older sister. Where are you in the family lineup?

MR. CHARDIET: I'm the youngest, which is probably why I don't have a lot of that information on my parents. And I have three older siblings and one younger half-sister.

MS. SHEA: And did you start going to school in Havana?

MR. CHARDIET: No. I was — I was four years old when we immigrated to the United States. And so I started — I started here; I started in the United States, in Connecticut, with kindergarten.

MS. SHEA: And was that kind of a traumatic relocation, or were you young and adaptable and —

MR. CHARDIET: I was young and adaptable but aware that we were going through all these changes. But I think as a little kid, it was a — it was a big adventure for me. So I wouldn't say it was traumatic.

MS. SHEA: And did you grow up speaking English, or did you have to learn English?

MR. CHARDIET: Had to learn English. But — I mean, I'm not certain about that, because I don't — I don't really — I remember not — that never being an issue. So maybe I was bilingual growing up — and a lot of people were in Cuba. So I might have grown up being bilingual.

MS. SHEA: And this immigration — was it by choice or was it because of the political realities in Cuba?

MR. CHARDIET: It was because of the political realities. Yeah, my father — we — so we came in 1960, and it was difficult for us to get out of the country at that point. I think — you know, a lot of people left earlier, but I think that my father — and both of my parents, really — kind of held out hope that things would turn around, and then when they realized that it wasn't going to happen, we moved here. And it was definitely because of the political situation. I mean, I — my father was not going to live in a country where he didn't have choices. And both of my parents were educated in the United States, so they finally, you know, moved here, but they basically had to leave everything behind. They left pretty much with the clothes on their backs.

And my — we left; the children left with my mother, with my maternal grandmother, and one of our nannies, who pretty much, you know, really helped raise the kids; I mean, was a really — and so there was quite a group of us that left. And then my father came later, a few months later, because we had to make it look like we were going on a vacation.

MS. SHEA: So it was — became a staycation.

MR. CHARDIET: It became a staycation. [Laughs.] Exactly. Yeah.

MS. SHEA: [Laughs.]

And so your mother had to choose the place to live and —

MR. CHARDIET: Well, we initially lived with my father's college roommate outside of New York. I

think it was in — I don't know which town, but in Westchester County. And we lived with them for a few months, and then my father — so he came here, and there's all these stories of him wearing out shoes looking for a job and, you know, walking around. But the job that he ended up getting was teaching at Yale.

And — now, he was trained as a lawyer. He had a law degree from — in Cuba, I think from the University of Havana, but he never practiced law. He immediately went into teaching. And he — so when he came to the United States, that was — that's — that was his job. His first job was teaching at Yale. So we settled in the New Haven area.

MS. SHEA: And he was teaching —

MR. CHARDIET: Latin American history —

MS. SHEA: Okay.

MR. CHARIDET: — which was really his forte. I mean, he — yeah, very knowledgeable; wrote about it.

MS. SHEA: And your mother, did — you said she went to school in the United States. Did she have a particular vocation or interest, and did she work at all?

MR. CHARDIET: She worked. She taught — I think it was teaching also, but she taught at a private school in New Haven called Foote School, which still exists, and it's a day — private day school. And I actually went there a little bit when she was teaching there.

But then she died when I was quite young. I was — how old are you — I was in third grade when my mother died. So it was not too long after we moved here. I think she died in 1965; we came here in 1960. So that would have been — that was like the traumatic thing that kind of happened to me early on, and that, I think, really impacted — *really* impacted my life and how things went after that.

My father married numerous times. I mean, I really think he was — you know, not — this is like such a cliché, but I mean, she really was — kind of kept the family together. I mean, she was really the rudder. You know, and I think without her, he really kind of fell apart. I mean, he kept on going and lived many years after that, but I think it really kind of sent my family into a bit of a tailspin.

MS. SHEA: You mentioned an older sister. Were your older siblings brothers, sisters?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, the oldest was my sister, Tessie. And then I have a brother Armando and a brother George, Jorge. And — but Jorge, that's a tough one for, you know, Anglos to kind of pronounce. You know, it becomes "hor-hay." So I think that — he was happy to have it go — be Anglicized to George. [Laughs.]

But I was actually called Joe for many years, really until I was in high school. It was Joey and Joe; it was — it was changed over. And I remember the day my mother said — I think it was before — yeah, before I started school — she said, you know, "We're going to Anglicize your name" — she was talking to my grandmother — "to Joe, to Joseph, just to make it easier on you." And I think it was probably not a bad idea, you know, growing up in that New England town. I mean, it was the kind of classic — I would have been the only Jose for sure, you know. [Laughs.] Anyhow, where was I going with that?

MS. SHEA: And so starting off with school — you said you went for a little bit to Foote, but most of

the time were you in public schools or —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, I was in public schools. And we lived in a town outside of New Haven called Woodbridge. And I went through my entire K through 12 in that town, in Woodbridge. And I still go back there pretty regularly, because I have a brother and my younger sister, Nicole, half-sister, that — [inaudible] sister — that live in New Haven, in the New Haven area. And I have friends 'til this day from growing up in Woodbridge that I visit. I was just there a couple of weeks ago. So I go back, you know. And it was a really nice place to grow up. I mean, it was — you know, just growing up in kind of in the country, very rural, beautiful woods all around.

And we were one of — we were the only Cuban family there. And then year — a number of years later, I think when I was in junior high school, another Cuban family moved to town, and they were our best friends. [Laughs.] My father was really close with the father or whatever of that family, the parents. And they had children also. They had three — two boys and a girl that were about — kind of coincided with us, with the Chardiet kids. So anyhow, it was kind of funny. That's a whole other story. [Laughs.]

MS. SHEA: And tell me about school. Did you gravitate to art classes at all —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah.

MS. SHEA: — or what were your favorite classes in school?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, definitely the art classes. But I was a jock, so I kind of — and my sport was swimming. I grew up swimming and being a competitive swimmer from the time I was pretty young, on and off, and then it really — really became serious about it in high school, because I think I just saw it as a way of, like, having this connection socially. And also, it was — so I — so even though my interests were really in art and in the art classes, you know, it wasn't maybe so cool to be an artist, and I think I always saw an artist of being — as being somebody, you know, wearing a beret and being, you know, very eccentric. And I didn't see myself fitting that role so — yet I gravitated towards the art classes. And a lot of my friends were connected to the arts in one way or another. And — yeah.

MS. SHEA: For swimming, did you do individual things, or did you do team relays? I'm always interested in the individual sport pursuits and the team sport pursuits.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah.

MS. SHEA: Did you do them both, or did you specialize in one or —

MR. CHARDIET: I specialized more in the — well, swimming is kind of a combination of the two, at least it is in high school, you know, and when you're in — it's a team sport, because on the one hand you're competing individually when you're out there; you know, it's you against the other people that are in the event. But there's also kind of a — they keep a score, a team score.

But I think that I was definitely much more into, I think, individual sports, because I was also into cycling and competed in cycling as well up until a few years ago. I did Masters — well, actually Masters swimming and cycling.

And so I think I liked kind of the more esoteric, you know, kind of — like, cycling was great because it was kind of unusual, but it was definitely an individual sport. And, you know, the training is — in both of those sports are somewhat solitary, in swimming because you're in the water, and even if people

are next to you, in the lane next to you, there's an isolating kind of aspect of the water; and in cycling, you're definitely alone and kind of in your thoughts, you know? It allows you — it's very — they're both kind of somewhat meditative activities. I think that that's why I enjoyed them. And I thought about that, you know, and the kind of — the connection between the two, and I think that it is that aspect of kind of — you know, the rest of the world. And I think that happens when you're in athletics, you know, kind of get blocked out in kind of the task at hand, not unlike glassmaking.

MS. SHEA: I was going to say —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah.

MS. SHEA: — and I would think you would see a similarity there, you know, when you're sketching or studying or actually working with that pursuit.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, definitely.

MS. SHEA: So in a way it was a good training, it sounds like.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. And — you know, and also, I mean, the liquid — and I mean, not to get too ridiculous about it, but there is that aspect to it. I mean, definitely, you know, there's something about the liquid that I like working with. But I have other interests as far as making things — I mean, the focus has definitely been glass, but I enjoy drawing and working with — you know, I enjoy other material.

MS. SHEA: Do you — do you remember anything about your art classes? Were they focused on drawing, or did you do ceramic — little ceramic projects or —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, I did in high school I would say drawing but also sculpture, not very much ceramics in high school. So it was kind of traditional in that sense. I remember making a really huge — [laughs] — my brothers and I joke about this — I remember in high school making this huge shark, life-size shark, out of papier-mâché — you know, chicken wire, papier-mâché — and then painting it. And it was just like this long-term project that I worked on, you know. Anyhow —

MS. SHEA: And did you have the same art teacher through a lot of this?

MR. CHARDIET: I had one good one and one that wasn't so good. And this one guy, Mr. Freeman, was a really great art teacher. He's African American, which was kind of unusual in that kind of lily-white, you know, New England town, and really into jazz and just — he kind of turned me on to a lot of things, and he was a really very sensitive guy, really — he was great. He was great for me at the time. I really needed somebody like him.

And then the other teacher wasn't so great. He just was too wrapped up in himself, I think, and — but anyway. So Mr. Freeman, I think, was somebody who — I can't imagine he's still alive. He'd be very old at this point. But he was a big influence on me early on, took me under his wing, I think.

MS. SHEA: And was art going on at all in your household? Were either of your parents interested in either visual arts or other forms of art?

MR. CHARDIET: Not really. They didn't — they didn't make anything. So it's kind of interesting that I got into it.

I — now, I was always encouraged. And I remember drawing back to kindergarten and it being

something that I was good at and being encouraged. Even — I can remember it that far back; I can remember it back to kindergarten. And I remember drawing at home a lot as a kid and it always being something that I enjoyed doing and that I was encouraged to do by my family. And so my father, I think, definitely encouraged me to draw.

But they were not artists. Yeah, my father was a professor and my mother was a teacher. So it really came from friends and from — and from the teachers that I had at school.

MS. SHEA: Did you, either as part of school or family things, go to art museums at all?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, because growing up through — again, that would have been through school. I don't remember doing it as a family. But because I grew up outside of New Haven, we would go to the Yale Art Gallery and things like that. And then — but I would say where it really kind of exploded and I really became, you know, serious about going to museums and whatnot was definitely in undergraduate school. But again, I started — in undergraduate school, I kind of went to swim. I was swimming on the swim team in college.

MS. SHEA: So you weren't using that — I think I read that you got a scholarship to go to the school that you ended up attending, which was —

MR. CHARDIET: Well, I went to — I went to Southern Connecticut State University. And I went there — they didn't have swimming scholarships, so I went there and I had — I had kind of like what they called a work-study scholarship, which they would arrange — like the coaches of the swim team would arrange for you, which you pretty much got paid to go there, but — and they gave you some job which wasn't very taxing, usually related to, you know, something to do with athletics.

And so — my first two years there, I was swimming. I swam in college for my first two years and was really serious about it. But I was also taking a lot of art classes. And — but again, I just didn't really see it as — you know, I kind of resisted it. I remember when I first went in undergraduate school [laughs], I took economics classes thinking, "Oh, well, that will be — that — I'll make money." And that was like — and I got into the most abstract — I remember I took this, like, really abstract economics class. And all I did was draw for the — for the professor the whole — and he loved it. You know, he's like, "This is great!" You know? And I remember acing the class. And people are looking at me like, "What is going on here," you know? [Laughs.] And I mean, he was the most out there — and I know that, like, math and economics, when you take it to a certain level, it gets really — you can really bring kind of the creative process into it.

And — but — and then I tried language. And finally I realized what I really enjoyed was — were my art classes and what I was really excelling at. So I finally just kind of gave in to it. And it was like coming home. I mean, I really loved it. And once I really kind of gave over to that, it was fine.

And then I end up getting so involved with the classes that I stopped swimming. I remember at the beginning of my junior year I met with the coaches and I said — you know, I set up a meeting and I met in their office and I said, you know, "I'm not coming back to swim." It was a big deal. It was a big decision for me. It was hard kind of confronting them. But they understood. They knew that I — what was happening with me. I had discovered glass.

MS. SHEA: So how did you — I'm still kind of curious how you chose this college in Connecticut.

MR. CHARDIET: Oh, because my father taught there.

MS. SHEA: Oh, okay.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah.

MS. SHEA: Southern Connecticut State University.

MR. CHARDIET: That's right. My father — he had left Yale —

MS. SHEA: Okay.

MR. CHARDIET: — and I'm not exactly sure why he left Yale. I think — because he was really involved there politically, it might have been because he wasn't publishing or what. You know, I don't know. But he left and he went to Southern Connecticut, and he became — you know, he kind of moved through the ranks there really quickly, became full professor, blah, blah, blah, tenured.

And so when I was in high school I was — it was kind of a rough time for my family at that time. My father had — my mother had long since passed away, my father had been married numerous times. So, I mean, I don't — I'm not trying to put, you know, everything on my relationship with my father. But I think I was really struggling at the time and didn't really know what I wanted to do.

And so he was the one that suggested and said, "You should go to Southern." He said, "You know, you can go there for free," because he was a professor there, so I didn't have to pay tuition anyways, you know. So I didn't have — I didn't really need, like, a swimming scholarship or whatever. I could just do this work-study thing, and that paid all my expenses outside of tuition. And — it's all coming back to me now.

So he suggested that I go there, and I did. And it was — and I could — for the first couple of years I lived at home and I commuted there, which was maybe 15, 20 minutes away from where we lived. And so in hindsight it really worked out well, because it took a lot of pressure off of me. I was doing something that I was — that I really knew, which was swimming and competing on that level. And at the same time I was taking these art classes and kind of easing my way into the art program there, and taking all the foundation classes that you do kind of in your freshman and sophomore year.

And so that's why I went to Southern. Now looking back on it, Southern was a great place for me to go: small school, really some great faculty there — some great professors. A lot of them came out of Yale and, you know, wanted to stay in New Haven so got teaching jobs there. Great art department.

MS. SHEA: Tell me about the art department there.

MR. CHARDIET: It was small but really great faculty. And incredibly, they had a small glass studio there, which is really unusual for such a small state university. And it was started by a fellow named Peter Pellettieri, who was — yeah, my — he — I had actually — I was taking a, I believe, it was a 3D design class with him. And he had started this small glass studio there. And he had hired, I think in the late '60s — had to be — yeah, it was late '60s — had hired Mark Peiser to come up and build the studio.

And so Peter Pellettieri, Mark Peiser, and a guy named Keith Hatcher — who taught printmaking there, he taught lithography at Southern Connecticut — built the glass studio. Keith Hatcher — so the way Peter Pellettieri and Mark Peiser met was through Keith Hatcher, because he also taught at Penland [School of Crafts]; he taught printmaking, he taught lithography at Penland. And so he had met — he knew Peiser from his — from going to Penland.

And so he put them together, and they got — they somehow raised the money, which probably

wasn't a lot, through Southern — you know, through the university to bring Peiser up for — I think they built the studio in, like, a few weeks. I think Peiser basically gave them a list of what they needed, all the raw materials, the different bricks and refractory and how much metal and angle iron and all that, and the three of them built the studio together, I think [laughs], in a couple of weeks.

And it was in a shed, in a metal shed, that was connected by this little, you know, metal hallway, and it had a dirt floor. I mean, it sounds — this is like the Abraham Lincoln glass blowing story — [they laugh] — you know, right? And — but it — there were three little furnaces and three little annealing ovens, really rudimentary stuff. And they built three benches in a really tiny space. I mean, you would never build that much equipment in that size space today. But —

MS. SHEA: And would Mark Peiser come back and visit at all?

MR. CHARDIET: I think he taught them.

MS. SHEA: Okay.

MR. CHARDIET: He — I think — they lit up, they melted glass, he kind of gave a few demos —

MS. SHEA: So like the Johnny Appleseed of the glass studio. [Laughs.]

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. And there was a lot of that in those days, you know. I think you probably hear that. I think that there were, you know, Johnny Appleseeds like Fritz Dreisbach, who went around and gave demos. Now, Peter Pellettieri — another connection, small world — had studied at the University of Wisconsin. He had gone to graduate school there in sculpture. And — or, was it undergraduate or graduate? I'm not sure. But he had taken some courses with Harvey [Littleton]. And so he was there early on. Peter was a sculpture student, and he'd — you know, and he really, I think — he was a natural. He really took to glass blowing.

I don't — you know, he never really took it — I think he was very traditional in his kind of — he looked at glass as something that you could make craft out of. You know, beautiful vases, his —

MS. SHEA: Make functional types of pieces or —

MR. CHARDIET: Well, functional or beautiful vases. I think his work was really influenced by Maurice Marinot, the French painter who used to work in the old French glass factories. And this was in the early 1900s. But Corning [Museum of Glass] has his pieces, and they're kind of beautifully — you know, very simply shaped kind of classical things. And sometimes they're really — they're usually very thick, and sometimes they're deeply acid-etched. And he's also influenced Michael Glancy's work a lot. The kind of — you know, who'd deeply sandblast his pieces. I mean, I know that Michael credits him as being an influence on his work.

So Peter started this studio. And I have to say, you know, I was just looking at this photo of — this show announcement with a photo of one of his pieces that's in my drawing room at home, which is one of our spare bedrooms upstairs in our house. And I was thinking, you know, have this little photo and it's a — kind of a beautiful photograph — I'm sure he took himself — black and white of this, not a glass piece but of a plaster piece that was probably cast and then sanded, very much a plant form, abstracted plant form.

And I'm thinking — and I thought to myself, "He was such an influence on my work and continues to be." Yeah, he was an incredible guy. And I think that he took me to museums, he was a guy that had an amazing eye for form, and he as a young guy — as a boy, would go through — he grew up in

Hartford, Connecticut — would go through junkyards looking and collecting stuff and find some incredible objects.

And so early on he developed this eye for kind of — for antiques and for form. And in addition to being an artist, he was also an incredible antique — I don't know what you would call him — collector. But he would just scour the countryside — he'd be — there's countless stories of him driving along through Connecticut, seeing something on somebody's lawn, turning around and going back. And it was, like, a lawn ornament, and it turned out — one in particular — turned out to be this medieval limestone — [laughs] — lion that he bought for, like, \$25, knocked on their door, and sold for thousands of dollars.

And he would — he would scout and buy and sell through this gallery — I think it's still in existence — in Manhattan called Blumka, which is one of those, you know, you ring the buzzer and they let you in kind of place; I mean, just really high-end, museum-quality things. And so he had that whole part — and he continued to do that until he died. He was — and so he *really* turned me on to kind of antiquities, you know.

And his house was like a museum. He lived in a seventeenth-century house — at least eighteenth-century house — in the northwestern part, I think, in Litchfield or somewhere like that in Connecticut — out in the country. And going there was like walking into a museum. It was — you know, anyways. Blah, blah, blah.

MS. SHEA: And would you be going down to New York?

MR. CHARDIET: Yes.

MS. SHEA: Did you go to the Wadsworth Atheneum [Hartford, CT]? Tell me about the kind of museum visits that you made.

MR. CHARDIET: Yes. All — went to the Wadsworth Atheneum with him, went into New York, went to the Metropolitan with Peter. I would drive in with him; he'd say, "Jose, I'm going into, you know, Manhattan, you want to drive in with me?" And we would drive in to the city. And so that was really an eye-opener, you know, for me. And so I think that Peter was really an important figure.

MS. SHEA: Did you go up to The Cloisters in the — [inaudible] — you know —

MR. CHARDIET: Went to The Cloisters — yup, went to The Cloisters with him. Yes. And so he brought me to all these places — it was incredible. [Telephone rings.]

MS. SHEA: Did you — how about Rhode Island School of [Design] — did you make it to this art museum —

MR. CHARDIET: No —

MS. SHEA: — or this was a little bit off the track?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, especially — it's funny because Providence is off the track if you're from New Haven. I don't know what's that's about. [Laughs.] I think that —

MS. SHEA: They only look — [laughs] — you know, toward New York.

MR. CHARDIET: Towards New York. I think you do. I think if you're in New Haven — I think New

Haven really, at least for me, it was all about New York. Like, Boston — I didn't know Boston at all. Why would I go into Boston? I mean, that was the look — that was the viewpoint growing up there. Some people would argue about that, for sure, I would think, but I didn't know any.

And Providence was always, when I was growing up — I mean, you know, Providence has gone through some real changes, huge changes. And it was really kind of in the dumps when I was growing up. And now I think it's flipped a bit. I think New Haven has really been suffering, although they're kind of lifting themselves up, but, you know, we — Providence was always like this pit down the road, you know, that would never go to.

But I did go there when I was I was in — I did go to RISD [Rhode Island School of Design], and [Dale] Chihuly was here.

MS. SHEA: I was wondering if that would —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah.

MS. SHEA: — if that would connect up with the glass story.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, yeah. And so I would — we did come here one time. I don't know if I came with Peter. I kind of doubt it. I probably came on my own. But I remember one time Dale had his team there, and we — and I came and watched them blow — but didn't have much of a connection beyond that with RISD.

MS. SHEA: It was kind of like a field — a once field trip type of thing?

MR. CHARDIET: Right. Yeah, but on my own; I remember going there on my own or with somebody else, because we knew that he was blowing and — yeah. But it wasn't something that I had a big connection with — Providence — certainly not the museum here. It wasn't until much later that I really became interested this town and in moving here, and then moving here. Yeah.

MS. SHEA: Tell me about your fellow students. Was anyone else interested in this glass path?

MR. CHARDIET: Well, fellow students going back how far —

MS. SHEA: At Connecticut State University.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, yeah. There were other people that are still working with glass that went through there. Yeah, a surprising number of people went through that little studio. And that's all because of Peter, I think, because I think he really brought a seriousness to it, to just — to art in general that I think stuck with a lot of people. And there's other — Bill, this fellow who lives in Vermont, Bill LeQuier, who was out in it for quite a while and showing a bit and then out for a number of years raising kids and who's now exhibiting again.

But there are — there are people who have come out of that little program. And I think — I think what happened — I'm trying to think how many of those people have really continued on with it. I know that they — that they have. There's a — Chuck Savoie is someone who's in Wisconsin making art — very talented guy. Yeah, so there were other people who really, really got into it. And there was a great energy in that little studio.

But it was only — Peter was only interested in it to a point, in glass. So beyond that point — you had — it was kind of up to you to do it. And I was really fortunate to — I'm kind of rambling, but — is

that okay?

MS. SHEA: That's what you're supposed to do.

MR. CHARDIET: Okay, I'm supposed to ramble? [They laugh.] I think that what — I became really friendly with Keith Hatcher — I mentioned that Keith taught lithography. And the litho studio was right next to the glass studio. So the students and faculty were really close. And I spent a lot of time hanging out in the litho studio. Never took a printmaking class there.

But — and I ended up — Keith's wife, Flo Hatcher, also taught there as an adjunct at Southern Connecticut. And she taught at a place called the Creative Arts Workshop, which was a place you could take art classes at in New Haven — it still exists. And I became friendly with her, and I started dating their daughter and — which — [laughs] — yeah, brought me into this great family of artists. And there've been other things like that for me. Even though I wasn't necessarily getting it at home, I mean, the Hatchers became like my surrogate family. I basically lived with them.

MS. SHEA: Your art family.

MR. CHARDIET: They were my art family. And for them it was, like, their life was art. I mean, you walked into that world, every aspect of their light — life was — I mean, their home was filled with art, they made art all the time, they taught art. You know, during the summers, during their summer vacations from the university they went down to Penland, and they had a little tin-roof cabin in the mountains there outside of Penland and they lived there all summer. And they would usually teach a class, each of them, at — you know, at Penland; knew everybody down there.

So Flo arranged for me to go to Penland one summer. And that was the real eye-opener. You know, when I went to Penland on a — on a work-study scholarship, I scrubbed pots in the kitchen, which was fantastic. I recommend that to all students, you know [laughs]. However you can get there, go. And so she helped me photograph my work. Flo basically, really — without her, you know, I never would have continued — well, I don't know, who knows. She really definitely altered my course, that's for sure.

And so she's — we photographed my pieces, I remember, out in the back of their house. You know, and she got me the work-study scholarship there. And I went and I studied with Jack Schmidt, who's in Toledo now. And those three weeks down in Penland really changed everything for me because I was so excited after that. I was so fired up about the possibilities. I mean, I really didn't know about the glass world at large until I went down there. You know, I just knew about the local little thing at Southern Connecticut, and I figured that was it.

And then I came back from Penland really so enthused about what the possibilities were. So that inspired me to apply to graduate school. But, you know, in some ways I really wasn't prepared for graduate school because it was somewhat — you know, I — in some ways. I mean, I had a great foundation from Southern Connecticut, but didn't have a lot of the glassmaking skills that maybe my contemporaries had coming out of other schools at the time.

But I made up for lost time really quickly, because those kind of skills you can learn. You know, but I think what — the kind of stuff that I got from Peter was stuff that I use 'til this day. Then in a lot of ways, kind of — I was further along, you know, than other students in my kind of knowledge of art history and things like that — really good art history department at Southern Connecticut. I mean, really at the time — for example, there was an incredible expert on Louis Comfort Tiffany, Robert Koch, that wrote all these books on Tiffany. And — but not just, you know —

MS. SHEA: And did you take art history classes as well? Was that a requirement for —

MR. CHARDIET: Lots of requirements there, yes. I mean, you had to take a lot of art history. I mean, so my whole way through Southern Connecticut, I was taking art history classes. And that was great. So I really had an advantage in that regard, and that really has served me well over the years. And I think, you know, coming out of grad school, it really helped me because I was able to kind of, I think, at the time make work that kind of separated me from, you know, other people coming out of school at the time.

[END DISC 1.]

MS. SHEA: Did you have a student — did you show at all as an undergraduate?

MR. CHARDIET: No.

MS. SHEA: No? Was there — there was a —

MR. CHARDIET: Well, as an undergraduate, I — yeah, I —

MS. SHEA: A senior show, or —

MR. CHARDIET: Right, yeah, senior shows, and I showed once — I remember there was a — this is kind of interesting — there was a crafts fair at the New Haven Armory. There used to be a yearly crafts fair there, and they had a little section where students could exhibit their work, kind of in the lobby, in the — you know, before the exhibition hall. And this is so funny, because it's so small-time now, but to me at the time, it — you know, my fellow students, it was like this big deal, you know.

And so I put these little, you know, vases that I had been making, which were very sculptural, which was kind of unusual at the time. I didn't really think much of that. I just was doing what I enjoyed making. And I remember that one of the faculty at Southern Connecticut wanted to trade for one of the — my pieces, and that was, like, such a compliment to me. I remember I was just so kind of reeling from that. And so I traded the piece, and — you know, it's funny, you get these little encouragements along the way.

So, yes, I really didn't exhibit there. And Henry [Halem] didn't believe in it. [Laughs.] He really — he really discouraged students from exhibiting while in school. Well, he — I want to take that back. He encouraged you to exhibit, but not in commercial galleries. He really frowned upon that. And I understand why. You know, I think that it's — you shouldn't be doing that as a student, I don't think. That can come later.

MS. SHEA: And then how did you choose? Was that the only — to go on and study with Henry, was that the only possibility that you looked at, or — when you thinking about graduate school, tell me what you were considering.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, well — no, actually, I looked at other schools as well and applied to other schools. I mean, I applied to RISD. I applied — Dale was still — no, actually — yeah, Dale was still there. I applied to Illinois State with Joel Myers. I applied to the University of Wisconsin. Harvey was no longer there at that — at that time. This guy Willard, David Willard, was there, whose work was, you know, not at all what you would think of glass. I mean, it was — it was wall — it was on the wall. It was two-dimensional. And I was interested by that.

And — but I had seen — the show had — right when I was applying to graduate schools or right

before, maybe the year before, the original "New Glass" show that Corning put on, which now happens kind of every year — well, the original show was actually a catalog and a — an exhibit that was at Corning and then traveled to the — to the Renwick and to — I don't know where else; I think Houston or something. I'm not — it traveled around the country. And I saw it — oh, it was also at the Metropolitan, I believe. And that's where I think I saw it. I saw it there, I saw it at the Met, and I saw it at — could it have been at the Met or was it — I can't remember now. But it was in New York. [Laughs.]

MS. SHEA: Maybe the Cooper-Hewitt, that —

MR. CHARDIET: Maybe, or even at the American Craft Museum.

MS. SHEA: Right.

MR. CHARDIET: It might have been at the American Craft Museum.

MS. SHEA: Because if it showed at the Renwick, that would make sense.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, Metropolitan — [inaudible]. But I remember I saw it in New York, and then I saw it at the Renwick. And —

MS. SHEA: How did you even see it at the Renwick?

MS. SHEA: Because my — I had — my older brother Armando was living in D.C., in Georgetown, and he was working — he was working there in D.C. as — in development fundraising, which he still does today. And so he lived there, on a few different occasions, in Washington. And I was visiting him; I went there to visit him. And I knew that the show was there, so we went to see the show. And, in fact, I got this — I remember there were these beautiful wooden billboards out on the fence in front of the Renwick. And I got one of them — my brother got — was able to get one for me later. I wish I still had it. It was a great poster.

And I went there, and I remember that — when I went to see it at the Renwick, that's when I really — I was by myself, I believe, or maybe with my brother, but I really got to look at the show. And I saw Henry's work there, and not just Henry Halem's work but his graduate student at the time, Tom Armbruster. And I thought that their work was some of the most interesting work in the show. And it was completely sculptu — well, Henry's was on the wall — again, you know, it was two-dimensional work; and Tom Armbruster's was an installation. I mean, I'm — this was, like, back, you know, when installation in glass — you know, it's like — his work was plate glass, it was some kind of mold-blown — I think he blew into sand, and then it was sand, like a white silica sand on the floor. And these pieces are in the catalog, which I have at home. But — and so that's a kind of — and I think — I think David Willard's work was in there. So that's kind of what I used to — well, you know, these people are teaching; I could see their work. And so I basically applied with — at schools whose faculty or students' work I liked or admired.

MS. SHEA: And did Peter Pellettieri guide you at all in the process?

MR. CHARDIET: A little bit, but not that much. It was more the Hatchers. I would say Flo, you know, Hatcher, really guided me, because she knew of a lot of these people.

MS. SHEA: She knew —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah.

MS. SHEA: — what was happening, where —

MR. CHARDIET: Right. And through her connection in Penland — I mean, I think — I know that Joel Myers had taught at Penland. Henry had taught at Penland by that time numerous times. So she definitely knew of both of those people's work.

I didn't get into RISD. I didn't get in with Joel Myers. I was devastated, because I really — at that time, Joel was my first choice. I really — I even — I mean, I was working — you know, I was going to school. I was no longer swimming. I was — I was going to school full time and working on weekends and nights and — at a nightclub in New Haven, which is still in existence, seeing great music, live music. And — I mean, Tom Waits, people like that played there. The list goes on. It was — it's a great place called Toad's Place. And I saved my money, and I flew out — the only place I went to visit — I think I went to visit RISD too, because I could drive there. That's probably why I went there that time, was to go look at the place and meet Dale.

But I flew out to Normal, Illinois — Bloomington-Normal, and, you know, visited for a few days, stayed with the graduate students, did all this, and was — and then didn't get in. I was devastated. But I got into [University of] Wisconsin and Kent State with Henry. And so then I had to decide between those two. And I decided to go and study with Henry. And I'm really glad I did. [Laughs.] I mean, it — you know, it's funny because really it ended up being, I think, the best choice for me. It's funny how these things work out. You know, it's — and maybe I would have made the most out of whatever situation I was — I was in, but there were a lot of things that — kind of at play at Kent that were really timely for me — people that Henry brought in for workshops, things like that. And I got to work with a lot of these people.

So that's how I ended up at Kent State. I don't know if that was the question.

MS. SHEA: And — yes, it was. And financially, did they offer graduate things?

MR. CHARDIET: Yep. And that was always a — you know, a big consideration for me. I mean, I didn't have any money.

MS. SHEA: Because I didn't know if you were working hard at the nightclub to save money for RISD. [Laughs.]

MR. CHARDIET: Not for RISD. I mean, RISD — you know, that was kind of laughable because I was naïve about that. You know, they've never offered great scholarships. And when you really look at who goes to RISD, they're usually pretty well-to-do students. And that's whatever it is, you know — not entirely, but I think that they offer a partial scholarship for graduate students at best. You know, I think at that time they were offering to give you a partial scholarship for one of your two years. And so that — you know, I mean, I could have taken out loans, but — and I probably would have found a way to go there if I had gotten in, I think.

But I got a scholarship with Henry. And that was — yeah, I had an assistantship, and I also had funding at Wisconsin, but I really kind of felt — I never — I hadn't met Henry in person, but I spoke with him on the phone, and I really liked him from the get-go. I mean, I really liked his personality. Henry is, like, no bullshit, you know. He's just kind of — he's kind of — you know, if there's one thing Henry is, is really honest. And he doesn't — he kind of lets you know where you stand. And some people can't handle that, you know, with him. I mean, I — a lot of my fellow students didn't like that about him — not a lot. You know, most of — most people really liked it. And — but there were a few students that — you know, that didn't — they were wimps. [Laughs.]

MS. SHEA: [Laughs.]

MR. CHARDIET: But — and I — and I got that through the phone loud and clear from Henry, you know. I liked him. I mean, I came from, you know, a Cuban family, where people are really emotional. You know, you knew where you stood with my father, let me tell you. And so I related to that. And I think Henry kind of has this, you know, this New York kind of Jewish, you know, really intense emotion. And we had the same thing coming out of — you know, coming out of Cuba, I think. And if you're — if you're Cuban and Jewish — which there were a lot of Cuban Jews, and I know a lot of them — it's a double whammy, you know. But that's a lot of emotion.

But — no, but anyways, the — you know, I got a — and also what I liked about Henry's program was, is that the assistantship was a teaching assistantship. There was the possibility of that, which I was really interested in. And —

MS. SHEA: Is that because your father — your parents were teachers, or —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. I —

MS. SHEA: — what interested you with it?

MR. CHARDIET: I think that I had —

MS. SHEA: You kind of saw that as a track or a —

MR. CHARDIET: Not so much a track, but I was interested in it. I realized that I enjoyed teaching glass, you know, in particular. It's such a kind of mystifying material to work with, and I knew the excitement that I had first learning it, that I knew that I would — and I — at Southern Connecticut, there was a position — there were no graduate students. There wasn't a graduate program in glass. So there was a — the position of studio assistant or lab assistant, which was a part-time, paid position — really prestigious. And I had that, you know, for a couple of years. And in that, part of it was, you helped with the teaching. And I really enjoyed it. I think I really enjoyed that.

And so, when he kind of threw that out as a possibility — the catch was that my first year — because I kind of had applied a little late, something like that, or I had accepted late or — at Kent State. My first-year assistantship had to be in metals, another weird kind of fate thing that happened there. [Laughs.] And the first semester was with a guy, George Van Dynwick [ph]. I have no idea if he's alive or working with metal. But he was doing plating, and he was doing anodizing of aluminum and things like that, kind of chemical treatment of metal.

And so I had this assistantship with him. I knew nothing about metals at the time. So it was a little bit intimidating to go there and be around students that knew a lot more than I did and have the graduate assistantship. But I guess he hadn't filled his graduate assistantship, so in order not to lose it, they gave it to me.

And so — and that was — it actually went really well. And then we went home for winter break. I think I came back east, and he never came back after the Christmas break. He just, like, quit. You know, he was, like, a full-time faculty and had only been there a few years. I don't know if he couldn't — he was from the Northeast, and I don't know if he couldn't handle being in the Midwest, but he never came back. I never found out why he left. It was a big mystery to me, but they, in short order, hired Bruce Metcalf to teach. I don't know if you're familiar with Bruce.

MS. SHEA: I —

MR. CHARDIET: But — in fact, he's got an ad in the current *American Craft* magazine for his work. And so here comes in Bruce Metcalf. He was just out of grad school. He was kind of very much a cutting-edge kind of metals person who, you know, didn't work with a lot of metals. Right? [Laughs.] I mean, his stuff was all plastic and wood and little — you know, small sculpture — really out-there stuff. And — but really very serious about teaching, very well versed in kind of the history of the crafts. I know that he writes about the crafts a lot still.

And — but he was, like, what's — he was stuck with me for that spring semester, and he's, like, "What's this guy doing here?" So he's, like, "This guy can't do anything with metals." And I mean, he couldn't wait for my assistantship to be over. But, at the same time, in spite of that, we actually got along well. And I learned a lot when I was there from him and from the — from the other grad students that were there in enameling, because they actually had an enameling program.

And so that was crazy, right? I mean, it — my first year, my — and so he had me, you know, doing things like cleaning the toilets in the metals studio. You know, he had to find anything for me to do. He figured, "Well, you know, Jose can handle that." So I finally said, "You know, I draw the line at cleaning the bathrooms here for you." You know, it's like — it just seemed like so — but that ended, and I — the following year, my second year there, I started teaching glass, beginning glass. And that was — I loved it. And it was really good for me. So I — basically I never had to leave glass at that point, but Kent was a great situation for me.

MS. SHEA: Did you live near campus? Tell me about the whole move to the Midwest.

MR. CHARDIET: Oh, my gosh, it was very traumatic. [Laughs.] Yeah, it was — I mean, it really was — well, Kent State is a little town, you know — but it was actually at the time — I don't know what it's like now. It was really this — because it's kind of isolated, even though it's — you know, it's not that far from Cleveland, just down the road from Akron — beautiful Akron at that time. But Akron had a good museum, still does. And yeah, it was hard. I ended up rooming — I rented a house with another grad student who was from the Northeast, from Boston. He now lives in Boston. And — Bernie D'Onofrio is his name. And it was a real eye-opener for me. I think that — but I was really ready to hunker down and just work on glass all the time.

MS. SHEA: It could have been anywhere?

MR. CHARDIET: It could have been anywhere. I was just like a vacuum cleaner, you know. And Henry knew that. I think he just — he knew it instinctually. And I think he has a — he can sense that. And so he just kept on feeding me, pointing me in the right direction. And I learned a lot from Henry but from the other faculty there too. The sculpture faculty were fantastic. So there was Bruce Metcalf in metals, there was John Gill and Andrea Gill in ceramics — and they left there shortly after I left to go to Alfred, and they've been there ever since.

But they were there, so there was — and Brinsley — the sculptor — British sculptor Brinsley Tyrrell, who is retired now — still making work. And I loved his work. And he — I worked with him a lot. He was really influential on me — and the — you know, fiber — they had a fiber — still have a fiber program. Really, this crafts division was incredibly strong. And it just so happened that I, you know, fell into this.

And they even had films — you know, I don't know — I don't know if they still have film. But they had a film program, really good film program there. And so every — I forgot which night it was, they had different films that you could go as a student and faculty to see. And these really obscure — it was like — you know, it was like — I mean, things at the time, you know, *Eraserhead* and stuff like that.

And so it was — Kent was — but it was really much a Midwest small college town — great music coming through the town. So it was a great social scene there in kind of — within the art department. And it was a lot of fun. I loved it. I really enjoyed it and got to be, you know, good friends with Henry. And I think — I know that he provided opportunities and scholarships for me, made sure that I was, you know, covered financially. He knew that I didn't have — I had no money, you know. And so I was living off of that, and also I took out small student loans just for my spending money so I wouldn't have to work when I was there. I would — most of the summers, I came home and worked in the New Haven area.

MS. SHEA: So how long were you in graduate school?

MR. CHARDIET: Three years — it was a three-year program at the time.

MS. SHEA: That's bananas.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, so it was a long time. Luckily for me, because my first year was really kind of getting up to speed with all these different techniques, which were — you know, I was becoming aware of studying with Henry. And then really that last year — that was really the first two years. And that last year, I really got to kind of work on my thesis. So I needed that time.

MS. SHEA: And tell me about your thesis.

MR. CHARDIET: It was a combination of wood and glass and a little bit of painting and — so it was kind of all this stuff rolled into one [laughs], everything that I was learning. But I really — looking back on those pieces, they weren't bad, you know; a lot of color in them but in a kind of painterly way. In fact, I was enameling on some of the pieces, which I — I'm still — I started doing a few months ago again, kind of working with glass enamels. And that's just — you're painting on glass. You know, you fire it on and — but I think I really like painting. I like painting on the glass, you know. I like painting on kind of three-dimensional form. But they were very sculptural but definitely kind of, you know, tied in to, kind of vessel tradition, vessel-making. You know, they were vessels, as there are now in my work. That hasn't changed that much. I mean, I'd like to say my work has really changed. It actually has changed a lot since graduate school, but I think a lot of the seeds are — you know, were started then or earlier.

MS. SHEA: And did you show the work as a senior show?

MR. CHARDIET: There was a — you actually had a thesis exhibition.

MS. SHEA: Exhibition.

MR. CHARDIET: You had to do a written thesis, you know, get it bound and all this stuff. And there was a committee that you got together. You know, you asked different faculty, could be people from outside. You had to have one person from outside the art department. So it was, I think, three people from within the art department and one from outside. And so they met, and, you know, you met, and critiqued — there was this big critique. And they either, you know, signed off on it or not. And then you had to do the written part of it as well. And once that was approved, yeah, you got your M.F.A., your sheepskin.

So — yeah, so — and then the exhibit was in the art department; they had a gallery space. So you had to kind of set all that up and book it.

MS. SHEA: Was that the first time you'd really kind of showed a large body of work?

MR. CHARDIET: Yep. Yep. We had — we would do, you know, student exhibitions; like, we had one up in Cleveland one time, and we had one actually in D.C. at a glass gallery in Bethesda [MD] — not in D.C. but in Bethesda. And — which I don't think is in existence anymore.

But yeah, that was the first time I had this big body of work and kind of — so there was this really unified body of work that — I was going to say "a theme," but, I don't know — and really a lot of things that kind of reoccur in my work, yeah, 'til today. So —

MS. SHEA: It sounds to me as though you were always kind of drafting yourself toward teaching. Is that —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, that's safe to say, maybe not, you know, always kind of consciously. But — yeah, but I ended up becoming a professor. I ended up teaching for almost 10 years, a semester short of 10 years.

MS. SHEA: And was that the next step, or did you take a break?

MR. CHARDIET: I took a break, yeah. I — when I left Illinois — this is kind of a funny story.

MS. SHEA: Was it Ohio, when you were at —

MR. CHARDIET: I'm sorry, yeah. I'm sorry. [Laughs.] Illinois, Ohio — no — yeah, I'm sorry. When I left — it's all becoming a blur — when I left Ohio, yeah. And now, I didn't leave immediately. I stayed in a — I actually, you know, got my M.F.A., I finished grad school, and then I went to the Creative Glass Center of America in a place called Wheaton Village in New Jersey, in south Jersey.

MS. SHEA: In the summer?

MR. CHARDIET: Yes. Well, actually no —

MS. SHEA: Or no? Now it's summer.

MR. CHARDIET: Now it's like they do this big summer thing. They just had it a few weeks ago, a couple weeks ago. They do it every two years. They have a big kind of get-together there. But they have these fellowships that used to be five months. Now I think they're maybe three months. You could apply, submit a — you know, resume portfolio and apply for these fellowships. And when I went, it was at the very beginning of this program. And the fellowship is — you work in a — in a recreation of a nineteenth-century glass factory. And they bought a house down the road that you stay at. It's got — I think it has — you know, you could — I think they can room five people there.

So you live communally, you share the kitchen, and then you walk literally, like, maybe a quarter of a mile to the glass factory to work. And so what could be better coming right out of school — out of grad school — but to have five months — and they give you a small stipend and basically all the glass you can eat. You know, it's like — they have — it was amazing. It's changed a bit over the years, because this was in the early '80s. And as I said, it — this was the second session that they ever had. So — and so they were still kind of figuring it out. But it was incredible.

So I went there for five months, and I had applied for an Ohio Arts Council grant, which I got. So after that five months, I came back for a year to — I had to work — you had to take it in Ohio. You had to be in Ohio to get the money. So I had worked out a deal with Henry where I would use the studio at Kent State in exchange for helping him out. And he gave me a small space to work in, very small. I give him a lot of grief about it until this day. I mean, it really was not — he was very generous

to let me stay there, though.

But — so I worked there, and I had this grant. And I was really living from hand to mouth. I mean, I had no money. When I was at Wheaton at the Creative Glass Center of America, the stipend was like, you know, a few hundred dollars, maybe \$300 a month. And that's what I was living off of. But I didn't have to pay rent. And I would sell an occasional piece, very occasional. And — but then I went — I went back to Kent for a year, lived off of probably a 3[,000 dollar] or \$5,000 grant for a year, and — but made the work that really kind of got my career going at that point was during that year.

You know, I was working really hard. I mean, I had — I caught pneumonia, you know, from really not taking care of myself, just working really hard and not eating well or whatever and was hospitalized for a couple of weeks from it. I was pretty sick. But I made this work [laughs] by the end of the time there that I was able to use to photograph and — with Henry's help. He helped — he photographed the work for me. The two of us did it. And I got into, you know, some of the kind of leading glass galleries at that time. I — you know, I got into the Heller Gallery in New York and then into Habatat [Galleries] and — but I still felt that I really couldn't survive. But the notion of surviving from the sale of my work was so foreign and really was kind of a new thing at the time. I mean, there were very few people that were really doing that from their kind of, you know, quote, unquote, artwork —

MS. SHEA: And you're right out of graduate school.

MR. CHARDIET: And right out of graduate school. There were people making a living from production glass and doing the ACC [American Craft Council] crafts fairs and stuff like that, but not from kind of doing, you know, small sculpture or whatever, and selling that and making a livelihood.

So that just didn't seem, like, feasible for me. And even, like, getting a production studio, because I had no money, seemed, you know, so daunting. [Laughs.] So I kind of put my name out there for different things and different jobs.

And some of them that came along were the technician position at RISD and — which I'm so glad I didn't get. I actually got it, and then — Bruce Chao was now at RISD. This was, like, at the beginning of his time there. And he gave me the position. You know, I came out, interviewed for it, stuff like — actually, I didn't come out here. I actually met him at a — he was doing a workshop at Ohio State. So I drove down from Kent, met with him. He basically gave me the job, and then he — I was making plans to move out East — and so I think that Providence, there was this draw, you know? Maybe this is fulfilling moving out here. God, this is all, this is all — I'm thinking about these things now, in the course of this interview.

But he ended up giving the job to somebody else. And I was, like, oh my gosh. I had been making — it was like my future was mapped out for me for the foreseeable future, for a year let's say, you know, with this technician job. He gave it to somebody else and he said, "But, you know, a friend of mine is looking for an assistant in Providence; he needs a studio assistant. His name is Howard Ben Tré. So you should give him a call; this is his number." I'm like, "Thanks a lot." So I did. I called Howard. He was having an opening soon at Habatat in Michigan. So I drove to his opening, met with him.

But this coincided with making these table pieces that I started doing, which the galleries were all of a sudden kind of interested in. But I was clueless about it. I had no idea that they were really that interested in them. You know, I had some at Heller, I had — Ferd [Ferdinand Hampson, Habatat Galleries] had had a couple. And they immediately sold them all, you know, the pieces that I sent them.

And so I went up there, I interviewed with Howard. He gave me the job. And when I was there Ferd Hampson pulled me aside and said, "You know, I know you're interviewing with Howard but, you know, maybe you should consider, like, starting your own studio because we love your work." And I'm like — and I said, "Ferd, I don't have any money. I really — I don't see — I'm in debt from school. You know, how am I going to do this?" And he said, "Well, how much would it cost for you to set up a studio?" I had no idea. And I said something like, "Oh, I don't know, probably \$10,000." And he's like, "Well, you know, we could do that. You know, maybe I could loan you the money in a — you know, we could work out an agreement where you keep work coming to me and in exchange we pay it off slowly." And I thought, "Let me think about that."

So I went back — am I going on too long about this? Okay. So he's —

MS. SHEA: Not at all.

MR. CHARDIET: Okay. He said — so I — so I went back to Kent. I said, "I have to think about this." And I went back to Kent. And I thought about it. And I don't know what it was, but I didn't agree to do that. I mean, I thought it was a generous offer, but somehow being kind of, you know, tied to the gallery in that way really scared me at the time. And maybe I was — that was probably wise, you know, on one level. Maybe I should have gone for it on another. I was maybe foolish. But it just seemed — it was overwhelming for me. I just couldn't figure out how that was going to work out.

And so I ended up taking the job with Howard. I drove first to New Haven, kind of got my stuff together there. I think I spent the summer there, and it was going to start in the fall. And then I loaded up everything — I had an old Volvo, a '64 Volvo — loaded all my worldly possessions — my futon was strapped to the roof. [Laughs.] I didn't have a lot of worldly possessions. And I drove to — well, who does when they're coming out of school?

And I drove to Providence. Now this was back in, you know, the early '80s. And — well, like '84 this would have been? And drove here — his studio was where it is now, same studio. I think he rented it then, though; he didn't own it. And I drove in there, and I met with Howard. I kind of spent a little bit of time — he didn't give me that much time. Didn't want to help me, like — well, which is understandable — you know, find a place. And as I was looking around for places to live in Providence I was, like, "I can't — what am I doing?"

And I realized what kind of work I was going to be doing for him. And I know this is getting recorded — recorded, so I have to be careful what I say here. [Laughs.] But, you know, I mean —

MS. SHEA: It wouldn't have left you much time, I wouldn't think, for your own work?

MR. CHARDIET: Right. Right.

MS. SHEA: I think it would have just completely sucked you into —

MR. CHARDIET: Oh it would have — it would have completely sucked me into that. And I see it; it happens. You know, it happens with my assistants, you know? That's the — you know, Howard wasn't being any different than, you know, most artists are that have studio assistants, especially in glass. You know, it's —

MS. SHEA: And then, I would also think you'd kind of been there and done that. Being a student teaching assistant at Kent State, you'd —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah.

MS. SHEA: — there wouldn't be that much for you to learn. I'm guessing at this point in your career you're thinking about learning and exploring and doing your own work —

MR. CHARDIET: Exactly.

MS. SHEA: — and to have — what is it that you need to make happen so that that can happen.

MR. CHARDIET: So that that can happen, exactly. But at first it was like, I just — I think I was so not in that mindset of that being a reality for me that I just couldn't quite get my mind around how I was going to do that and make that happen. So all this stuff was kind of happening pretty quickly at one time, and also the realization that — I started thinking — it really started dawning on me that I could — this could maybe happen for me. You know, I could get a studio — and the galleries were encouraging me. They're, like, "Listen," I mean, you know —

MS. SHEA: Hearing that from Ferd must have meant a lot.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. It meant a lot. I mean, Ferd — hearing that from Ferd really, I think — I think that planted the seed. And it's — and it's — it's interesting how people, you know, kind of play a role in how your professional life and life in general works out. I mean, I know that there have been people along the way that were really integral [ph] — integral?

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

MR. CHARDIET: In — but really pivotal, you know, in the way my life and career have kind of played out 'til this point. But — so yeah. So I think he planted that seed. And when I was here, what I hadn't realized was that I had changed already. But I wasn't acknowledging it, I'm really good at that, you know. And so I get here, and here I am with everything loaded in my car. And I remember it being parked outside of Howard's studio, and I hadn't even taken the futon off the roof, you know. And I said, you know, I think I told him — "I don't think I can do this."

And he's like, you know, "I've planned my year" — you know, he really like —

MS. SHEA: He laid down a little bit of a guilt trip?

MR. CHARDIET: Oh, he laid major doses of guilt on me. He's, like, "You can't do this to me," you know, in that voice of his, you know? "I've counted — I'm counting on you!" And I'm like — I said, "You know, I am so sorry. You know, but I just — I don't think I can do this. It would not be a good match. I mean, you don't want me to coming to work here for you." And he's like, "Well, go, you know," — or I said, "You know, I need to go back to New Haven and really think about this. Just give me — give me 24 hours to think about this."

So I got back in the car. I mean, I didn't spend a lot of time here. I don't think I ever even really looked at anything. You know, I can't remember it. But I don't think I even looked at apartments or anything. I might have looked at the paper. I drove back to New Haven, and I was, like, there's no way I want to go work for him. I think when I got here and sort of saw the situation, realized what I — what I was going to be doing — the kind of work I was going to be doing for him — it was a lot of just, you know, grunt work.

MS. SHEA: You'd have physical — schlepping and —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, physical schlepping, and at that time probably, you know — I think he was doing all of his casting at a factory in Brooklyn at the time or something like that. And I'd be ladling a

lot of that glass, and I wasn't into doing that for anybody but myself, you know? I was ready to do grunt work for me.

MS. SHEA: For you.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, for me. And I just hadn't realized — it hadn't caught up with me that I was ready to do that for myself, you know, and that that was viable. So I called him up. And he was really pissed. You know, he was really — I mean, he's probably forgotten about this or he would say that. But he was mad for a long time. And, you know, he was really good at kind of laying out how this was going to benefit me — [laughs]. You know, "Oh, you know, you get an opportunity to work for a successful mid-career artist and see how that works," and, you know, stuff like —

MS. SHEA: And connections, which — yeah.

MR. CHARDIET: Which is all true, because he was so connected, you know, and is. You know, I mean, I think — but I think at that point he was really much more working — I think — I mean, I know that he does more — is more interested in doing commission work now. But at the time he was really doing a lot of, you know, more kind of gallery stuff and showing at Charles Cowles [Gallery, New York City] and stuff like that.

So I just decided that I was going to try to do it myself. And I — so I went for — I ended up staying about seven years, I think, in New Haven. I ended up — so I ended up going back there. I told him that I wasn't going to do it. Now, I was staying for free; I was living at the Hatchers' house, Keith and Flo Hatcher. I had, you know, was no longer dating their daughter Lisa. And they were in Penland for the summer. And they gave me the keys to their house and, you know, said that I could stay there for free.

So I was staying for free, so I knew I had that for the duration of the summer and even until they came back and — luckily for me. And but — and then I started thinking about, well, how can I, you know, finance myself? And I still didn't want to do the Ferd thing. So I looked into, you know, different grants and stuff like that. I went through the city of New Haven. I was just going up, you know, all — going down all these avenues and — which were really coming up empty.

And I was at my brother George's — who's the one who's right above me — we're really close — I was at his bachelor party; he was getting married. And it was at a restaurant outside of New Haven. And I was — as I — when I got there, I was walking through the restaurant with some friends, and I saw this woman that I had gone to high school with and started talking to her, asked her what she was doing. And she said, "Oh, I work in banking." And I'm, like, "Really?" I said, "Well, you know, I've been — I'm trying to get a loan, and I'm just — nobody wants to give me a loan, you know, for my studio." And she's, like, "Why don't you come see me tomorrow at my office." And so I — [laughs] — can you believe it? I mean, this is on my way into my brother's bachelor party. And I was like, "Okay. You know, I will," not really thinking much of it.

And I went in, like, the next day. I called her up, went in there, made an appointment; she brought me in to see her superior at the bank. You know, the short of it is, like, within a week I had the loan for my studio. And I remember Flo Hatcher — and she would — they had come back from Penland. And so she was kind of — I was living with them, and she was — they were really supportive. And Flo was like, "You can do it!" You know — [laughs] — I mean, she's that kind of — Flo is like 6 [feet] 1 [inch]; she's really tall, and this, like, incredible presence, you know, personality. I mean, she's all about "you can do it," you know, kind of energy, which has been great, and was great at that time. And I remember — so I got this check. I mean, I couldn't believe it; I actually had this check.

And she went and copied it and had it blown up to, like, this big, because she knew, you know, what that meant. I mean that — and it was like — I mean, I literally started a studio for, like, you know, oh my gosh, I think that check was 13 of all — I don't know why this figure — but it was like \$13,000 or \$12,000. And then I added to it. I sold, like, some pieces and was able to add, you know, to buy more equipment.

So I built this studio in the old A.C. Gilbert toy factory in New Haven, which is — they're the ones that built Erector Sets, the toys Erector Sets; that's what — that was, like, their claim to fame, which was a big one. And they had moved to Texas or something like that, and so they left this huge factory vacant. And it was bought by these guys out of Bridgeport, Connecticut, that I always thought were a little shady, and — but they were, like, one of the first ones I remember taking these old kind of mill buildings like this, factory buildings, and turning them into artist studios and small business spaces, you know, exactly what they did here many years later.

And so it was called Erector Square, you know, this complex. And had a — set up a great little studio there for very little money, and kind of got things going and worked there. And so I did — I did that for — yeah, six or seven years I worked there. Yeah, and it was great. [Laughs.]

MS. SHEA: And when you were in the studio, were you mostly working on work to sell in galleries, or were you working on work to kind of develop what you — the path that you wanted to go, or was it some kind of combination of the two or — tell me how that worked.

MR. CHARDIET: Combination of the two. I did, you know, kind of a production line of vases that kind of subsidized the studio. So I would spend a certain number of days of the week working on that stuff. But even that work was — it was not like — they were really one-of-a-kind pieces, but — so it was quasi-production. But I would still — I would do the ACC shows and I'd make, you know, whatever many pieces, and I would take orders on them. And I would tell people, "Well, you know, I can pretty much get the same colors and stuff on these, but they're —"

MS. SHEA: Each one is handmade.

MR. CHARDIET: " — each one is handmade, you know." So — and I was doing some of the things that I'm — that I've resurrected now, like doing these copper wire things, although they were much cruder there — then, than they are now, the drawings. So I really kind of figured out those pieces through that production line. And I did the ACC shows, like — I did at that time, I think I did, it was — it was West Springfield at the time; it's no longer, but that was, like, one of the big shows.

Rhinebeck, the show, had evolved into this — which was in New York — had evolved into West Springfield, Massachusetts. And I did that I think once or twice. And I did Baltimore, this big show that they still do. I did that once.

MS. SHEA: Was that in the convention center?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, yeah. And it was huge. You know, it was so big. I did that one time. I think it was like — I think I only did those shows maybe my first two years, and then I realized that it had — it kind of was counterproductive for me that I was — my sculptures were selling — you know, I was dealing, I think, with Habatat and Heller and maybe one other gallery.

And Ferd especially was selling, like, every piece I made at the time. This was, like, at the — when it was really, the glass thing was — gallery scene was really exploding as far as commercially. There were — there were collectors' groups — well, there weren't even collectors' groups at the time. But

collectors were forming and becoming really active, and people were building up these collections. It was a — it was a feeding frenzy. And I kind of came in the tail end of that. And, you know, you could sell out shows at that time. What a concept.

And those were the days. [They laugh.] And my prices were a lot lower, but still, yeah. It was incredible. You know, it was, like, those were heady days. [They laugh.] But — and so, you know, the galleries were really figuring out how to market work and catalogs and stuff like that.

So — yeah, so I did the production for two years and then found that I didn't have to do it. So I just started concentrating on the sculptures and kind of developing my ideas that way. And then this, you know, position became available at the University of Illinois. And I wasn't really actively looking for teaching jobs, because there weren't really any at the time. They were all taken.

That has really changed, because when I came out of graduate school, the teaching jobs were really coveted. I mean, everybody — and there just weren't that many new programs coming along. There were a few, but — so whenever a teaching position would open up, everybody and their brother and sister would apply for it. So they were very competitive. And then one day I was — I was at a show at Habatat in Florida, and I was showing with Bill Carlson — William Carlson and Steve Edwards.

And I was staying with my brother on Key Biscayne. He lived down there — Armando, he moved around a lot. You tend to in development. [Laughs]. And we were walking down the beach in Key Biscayne, and I see these two guys walking towards us that were very sunburned, and it was Bill Carlson and Steve Weinberg. And we ended up stopping at a — you know, a tiki bar there that one of the hotels had on the beach, and we had a beer.

And at one point, you know, Bill turned to me and said, "Would you be interested in teaching at all?" And I said, "Sure, you know, "I'd be interested in it." And he said, "Because we might be, you know, kind of making this position — creating a position at the University of Illinois." And he's like, "You know, you're Hispanic. We might be able to get some kind of funding, you know, for you through minority kind of —

MS. SHEA: Hiring — diversifying faculty?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, diversifying faculty. "And so, you know, it really might be worth your while to leave the Northeast and come to the middle of the cornfields if you're interested in teaching, because we could — we could give you this position there that" — because the thought of, like, going to a university and starting, you know, as a — not a — starting as a — yeah, visiting —

MS. SHEA: Working your way up the academic food chain?

MR. CHARDIET: — as a visiting professor — right, the food chain of academia, you know, it's a tough row to hoe [laughs] — or it can be, you know? And I just — and I had seen my father go through it. He had actually had a — he was really good at it. So he kind of made his way through pretty easily. And I think because he was leaving Yale to go to Southern, they kind of — I think, they might have promoted him. He came in with — I don't know if he came in at, like, an associate level or what. But that's what ended up happening to me.

I told Bill, like, when they approached me — he said, "Well, listen, keep it open because I'm going to be contacting you after we get back." So sure enough he called me, and he said, "You know, I want to put you in contact with my — you know, the director of the art school." And he called me up, Ted

Zernich, at the time — great guy, like a real supporter of the crafts areas and just — of the studio areas, you know, which now anymore it just seems like, I don't know if it's like that still but, it was a real — when I left teaching, you know, in 2000, I mean, it was all about graphic design and industrial design, they were getting all the funding. And anything having to do with a computer, you were in, you know. But tons of funding for technical stuff, computer-related — you know, you could get — fund anything.

And anyways, so Ted Zernich called me up, and he said, "Listen, we have — do we have a sweet deal for you," you know. "You can come in as associate professor," which is unheard of, and I was pretty young at the time to do that, you know. And it's unheard of in, I think, art — it's pretty uncommon. "And, you know, you're going to come in with tenure, associate with a graduate — a paid graduate assistant." Yeah, I'm like, I've died and gone to heaven — [they laugh] — you know? "Oh, and you have to teach, though." [They laugh.] That was the down — no, it wasn't a downside. It was after a while, but it was actually great.

So I went out there and it — that was a real shocker, because Illinois — you know, University of Illinois is really —

MS. SHEA: It's down south —

MR. CHARDIET: It's downstate, as they say. So it's not southern Illinois, it's central. There is Carbondale, which is, you know, University of Southern Illinois, I believe. That's way down there. But Champaign-Urbana is central Illinois. It's about three hours from Chicago. So that's not bad, you know. But still, that's a bit of a schlep and — but, you know, you're — it's surrounded by corn and soybean fields. It's kind of a little oasis — it's like an island. I mean, I really kind of relate it to being an island, and kind of no trees until you get to the towns, you know, Champaign-Urbana.

And I moved out there, and I was married at that time. And within two years I was divorced, you know, living out there by myself. And it was really hard for me. But I stayed out there. I mean, I was kind of, I was enjoying teaching at that time. I was still doing my work and really — I mean, it was like I had two full time jobs, which was hard. But what else did I have to do, you know? And so I taught and did all the, you know, committee stuff and helped run the — at least it was a two-person program — which was good — in glass. And so we shared, you know, a lot of the responsibility.

But it was — it was good. I mean, it was — it was — for a time it was a good experience. You know, and I could — I wrote grants, I got grant money, and stuff like that initially. But it was really exhausting. And after, you know, nine years — actually, really after eight years, I was ready to at least try going back into the studio full time. But in the interim, in that time, I had become, you know, full professor. I had gone for a promotion, gotten that.

And within two years of having become full professor, I left. You know, I basically took a leave for a year and moved out here and started — you know, I built the studio really quickly, at least that part of it. And about half — and then I extended that leave to a second year, because I knew — I knew I wasn't coming back, but I didn't want to break that tie until —

MS. SHEA: Until you were absolutely sure [inaudible] —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. And at that — and during that time, September eleventh happened. So I was in here working one day, and the woman who used to be across the hall knocked on the door and she's, like — her name was Nancy — she's, like, "Jose, have you been listening to the news?" And we hadn't at the time. We always had — used to have NPR on here at that time. I was, like, "No."

She said, "You've got to come over." And she had a small little black and white TV in her space. "You've got to come in here and see this."

So I had two assistants at the time. We all three went in there, and we were, like, you know, like everybody else, in shock, you know?

MS. SHEA: Well, it sounds like that might be a good place to take break. And when we come back, maybe we can talk a little bit more about the academic world —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah.

MS. SHEA: — and then move back here to the studio.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. Okay. Wow.

[END DISC 2.]

MS. SHEA: This is Josephine Shea, interviewing Jose Chardiet at the artist's studio in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, on July the 29, 2009, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, and this is disc number two.

I thought we could begin by going back to Illinois and talking about your experiences as a teacher.

MR. CHARDIET: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SHEA: What was that like? You —

MR. CHARDIET: It was — it was hard shifting gears from being in the studio full time and then going into teaching, because when I was working in the studio, you know, it was totally — not selfish, but I was definitely just involved in my own work, really thinking about my career, and then all of a sudden going from that to thinking about other people's artwork and really trying to help them find their voice was difficult.

But I enjoyed it at first and really for quite a while. I — when I first went there, I taught foundation drawing, glass, and graduate sculpture. And I really enjoyed teaching drawing, and I did that for a quite a few years. And that was really one of my favorite classes. I enjoyed teaching glass, but after a while it was just nice to have the change and — yeah. So, I liked drawing. I've always enjoyed drawing. And I was teaching foundation, so it was with freshman students, which was always kind of a kick. They're so young and kind of — you know, they're starting off on this new adventure, and I got a lot of energy from that.

But it was — but you know — but it was a real drain on me. And the longer I was there — and you hear this a lot — you know, the more I kind of got involved with committee work and things like that. So I found that there were more and more demands on my time. And I knew at that point that really, as far as my career in teaching, it was really going to probably be more and more administrative kind of work. And I knew that it was going to pull me away from the studio the longer I stayed there. So towards the end it was hard. I was really struggling with teaching.

MS. SHEA: And you'd had quite a few teachers. Do you feel that you had a — any particular kind of philosophy of teaching? Or what was your approach when you, for example, are teaching freshman classes?

MR. CHARDIET: Well, yeah, it's different, because I — what I would always — what I would always tell people about, you know, what I looked at when I was applying to schools and what I looked for in professors, which was that I always really wanted to have respect for their work. I felt like that — it just made perfect sense to me that you don't want to study with somebody whose work you don't like.

That seemed to have kind of shifted from the time I was in school to the time I started teaching. And I think that, you know, that academia seems to be at some — I think that it changes all the time. And I think when I was in school, you almost looked at it as an apprenticeship. You know, I think that that's what I — that's how I looked at it as.

I felt like I wanted to be around people whose work I really admired. And I knew that really kind of learning about art — I mean, other than, like, art history and stuff like that, but the actual making and kind of understanding how people — what they think about when they're making art — was going to come to me by being around these people, watching them work, helping them do their work, doing my work, getting feedback from them on my work.

And by the time I got into teaching, it seemed like all — that the majority of the students wanted it really spelled out for them, as if you could almost learn it in a book or whatever, how to make art. And I found that really frustrating. I mean, I think that that's when I chose the — and now I think it's different from undergraduate to graduate school. I mean, and especially with a medium like glass where there's so much — so many technical aspects to it — I mean, you have to learn that stuff. But — I think I'm losing my train of thought.

MS. SHEA: You were saying that you thought you saw a shift in students' approach.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, and I think that — yeah, I think that students — I mean, I really feel that's the way you really learn. But I don't think that a lot of students saw it that way. And I think I got really bored with teaching the technical aspects of glassmaking, because that's all you can — it seems like you spend 90 percent of your time dealing with the technical stuff and then a much smaller percentage of the time dealing with the kind of conceptual issues that, you know, students might have, or even just design issues.

MS. SHEA: And you had teaching assistants?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, yeah. I think — I think — I did have teaching assistantships, so it should have been easier for me. [Laughs.] I just never really figured out how to use them properly, I think. Yeah, I mean, I think that the assistants that I had — and until the end, really, I used to help me with my work. So they weren't helping with it. I was doing, like, all the teaching, and I would have them helping me with my work. And that really allowed me to keep — you know, it allowed me to keep on making my work and exhibiting it, because I never really lost much of a stride in that. Maybe a little bit. But I really kept up a pretty busy exhibition schedule. So I felt like I had to use those assistants to help me make my work.

So the teaching load was really on me. That shifted in the last couple of years where I started using my teaching assistant to really help me with my classes. But — and you know, you can — and many faculty have figured out how to make academia really work for them, and glass people have too. And I think it requires you to make a certain type of work, I think, that you can hand off a lot of it. And that's what I've seen people do. You know, they hand off a lot of their artwork to assistants and then handle the teaching and administrative aspects of working at a university. They take care of that, and their assistants help make their work.

And I wasn't willing to do that, because for me I get so much enjoyment out of the making — the actual hands-on making of the work, that — and not so much that I — only that I get enjoyment, because it's not all enjoyable, but I learn a lot. I get a lot of ideas in the making of it. So I couldn't give that up. I felt like, "No, that's why I do this." You know, it's because it really loosens up whatever avenues up there in my brain that produce new ideas and kind of keep you thinking about your work.

MS. SHEA: You mentioned that you maintained a pretty busy exhibition schedule. One of the questions is basically having to do with dealers, talking about — I think, another part of the question is the market. How have you seen that changed during the course of your career?

MR. CHARDIET: How has the market changed? Boy, right now it's in a really tough place, you know, in 2009. But it's changed quite a bit and most of it for the good. I mean, I think that the sales have become more difficult to kind of come by. You really have to work harder at selling your work right now. And this is above and beyond the economy that we're in. As I said earlier, I think, when I first got into, you know, exhibiting my work in commercial galleries — so that would have been in the mid-'80s — sales — work was selling like crazy, and it was not uncommon to sell out shows, and that's pretty uncommon now.

I mean, I think that that's what happened. And I think people — you know, I've heard people comment that, "Well, it was going to happen eventually," and I think we all knew that, that it — that pace kind of couldn't continue on with glass galleries. Just — I think — I think that they still sell probably more than any of the other crafts galleries for sure, I would think. I don't know — maybe metals is right up there — but jewelry.

But I think that it's changed. I — as I said, you have to work at it. The galleries have to work at it more. I mean, I really try to kind of, you know, get myself aligned with galleries that really work for me. I think that's pretty important — you know, that promote my work and —

MS. SHEA: And are you still with the same galleries that you started out with? Like, are you at Habatat and —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, yeah. In some cases — I don't show with Heller anymore. I show with Scott Jacobson — it's now called — it used to be Leo Kaplan Modern and just recently changed their names and moved. They're still in Manhattan, but it's now the Scott Jacobson Gallery. I've been with him for quite a while, since the early '90s. And I've been with Ferd since the very beginning.

So yeah, I stick with galleries as much as I can. And then there's usually — I show with Habatat in Florida as well. I show with — I'm trying to think of the other galleries — yeah, the Marx-Saunders [Gallery, Chicago, IL]. It's now going to be the Ken Saunders Gallery. There's all these changes in the galleries lately, and I think that's because of the economy.

But — so those are kind of my main galleries, I would say — Marx-Saunders, Leo Kaplan in New York, Habatat in Michigan, Habatat in Florida. And then I'll show with a few other galleries too. I mean, I show — I mean, I had a show this past year in Houston, and I show a little bit with Imago out in California. Yeah. So I — kind of the main ones, the ones that I'm really committed to in having one-person show — shows with, I've kind of been with for years. Yeah.

MS. SHEA: And — this is somewhat related — tell me, do you do much commission work?

MR. CHARDIET: No. [Laughs.] I mean —

MS. SHEA: And I'm guessing there's a reason for that, or not?

MR. CHARDIET: It's not that I wouldn't like to, and — I think I'm going my — by my post-lunch, you know, low. No, and in fact I've started a series that was really kind of aimed at that. I was really interested in making work that kind of, you know, tied into the architecture a little bit more, because I felt like I had been doing these smaller pieces, these — I call them *LITTLE BUILDINGS* [a series? Ed.]. They're like prisms or buildings or a combination of the two. But they're very architectural small pieces.

And I thought, "I kind of bring up architecture in my work all time. I think it'd be kind of interesting to have my work really relate to the architecture more." So I came up with these pieces that I call *Light Totems*. And they're these tiles that I would cast, and they would go in a — either fit into the wall and be lit from the back. So I started looking into LED lighting and — I still am — and kind of that technology, which is really changing rapidly right now, the whole technology in LED lighting. They actually make sheets that light up, these flexible sheets. Yeah, they're really cool.

And so I've looked into those and to lighting them. But I've made two, just as kind of — to kind of get people interested in them. And then I'm kind of working out right now — I'm trying to do — I was — I have a client that is building a huge yacht, and they're thinking about having two of these panels installed in the boat. I'm not sure that that's going to happen. It's been kind of on again, off again. But I'm really interested in that, and I'm going to pursue it, I mean, in those kinds of commissions. So —

MS. SHEA: And what about public commissions? Public art, GSA [General Services Administration], cities —

MR. CHARDIET: I haven't — yes, I would love to do it. And I think I just need to start kind of pursuing it more. It's hard because —

MS. SHEA: I was going to say I think it's time-consuming to fill out all those forms and —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. Yeah. And you have to go for these public, you know, funds. And, you know, they advertise these commissions and open it up to people. And I have, you know, colleagues that are — that do that all the time and that go for those things. But again, I think it can pull you away — it's almost like I need to get that one to kind of get the ball rolling, but I also needed the type of work that would allow me to do that kind of — kind of work and — technically, that would allow me to do it technically.

And so I think that these *Light Totems* lend themselves to that. I mean, I could see them being huge. They could cover an entire wall, and they're really graphic. And I think they relate to my other work. And they combine metal and glass and paint, really. I'm using these transparent porcelain enamels on the back of the tiles. The tiles are about an inch and a half, two inches thick. And they vary, and they're about — right now, they're, the ones that I've made, are about eight by eight inches square. But this commission that was going to be in the boat was — they were much larger.

MS. SHEA: And tell me about your working process. I saw a sketchbook over there. Is that really how things begin for you?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. Yeah, I mean, they start — I just keep simple sketchbooks and jot down ideas and — they don't always start with drawing. I mean, I would say that a lot of times they don't begin with a drawing at all. It's an idea that I have in my head, and then I start — I kind of decide —

I'll start jotting down colors that I want to use, and I look at books and things for inspirations as far as colors. And so I have a pretty good library of books that I kind of — are my go-to books.

And like right now I'm looking at a book on Havana, Cuba, that's kind of a lot of photographs of Old Havana and kind of the deterioration of it, really, which is — which in its own way is really beautiful. It's probably not so beautiful if you're living in building that's, you know, leaking, and it's — but — and that's totally peeling and falling apart, but artistically it's — I think it's beautiful. And certainly the colors are gorgeous that I see in Cuba.

MS. SHEA: In this article, it mentions an exhibition that it was actually at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

MR. CHARDIET: Right.

MS. SHEA: I was curious. Were you there because of a Habatat show? I was curious why you were in Detroit looking at art.

MR. CHARDIET: Oh, yeah.

MS. SHEA: It was artists in the twentieth century and African —

MR. CHARDIET: Right, right. I was there — I'm trying to think why — I went there for — I think for the exhibit I went up there. And I might have been up there — you know what? I probably was there with other students. And we might have gone there for one of Henry's shows, because he was showing with Habatat at that point. And I think a bunch of us went to this exhibit. And —

MS. SHEA: "'Primitivism'" in 20th Century Art[: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern]"?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. And they had — they came up — came out with this — these two books, these two volumes from that, which I have. And — but the exhibit was incredible. I mean, it really blew me away. At the time I'd — well, I'd never really looked at African art that way. You know, I mean, I was in — just coming out of school. I mean, I had looked at it, but I had never seen so much of it, I think, at that point. And — but also seeing it juxtaposed with all this twentieth-century artwork and seeing the influence of African art on so many artists, and Oceanic art — it wasn't just African art. I think it might have been, like, Eskimo — Eskimo? Intuit [ph], I guess. Right? Inuit.

But — and — yeah, and I think I was just really influenced by that and went back to the studio in Ohio, at that point, and the series evolved really quickly after having seen that work — these table pieces, which I really became known for at that time. And they really were just this — I look at them as this tableau that — it just allowed me — it gave me a format, almost, to explore these different things and colors and texture and combining forms in a very kind of Morandi, you know, kind of way, I think, maybe, in hindsight, although I had never seen Giorgio Morandi's work at that time.

MS. SHEA: And they are the — they are — I was kind of curious about — to get into the technical things, those are primarily — are they pretty much a combination of cast and —

MR. CHARDIET: And blown.

MS. SHEA: — and blown?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, they're a combination of cast and blown pieces, but they don't — you know, they're not permanently, they kind of — the blown pieces just kind of —

MS. SHEA: Oh, meld into the —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. They kind of sit, and you can take them off. They're not permanently mounted to the bases. But there are indentations that accommodate these forms that stick into the tables. Yeah. And yeah, those pieces came directly out of seeing that exhibit. So that museum is — [laughs] — was important for me at that time. Go figure. You never know where you're going to get inspiration.

MS. SHEA: And do you feel like you can do everything you want to do with technique? Do you feel that it limits you? Do you feel like —

MR. CHARDIET: I feel that — do you — do I feel that technique limits can —

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

MR. CHARDIET: I think it can definitely limit you. I think that I — yeah, I feel as though I have all the technical knowledge that I could need for a couple of lifetimes probably, you know. You can always learn more. You know, I could always, if I wanted to, become a more proficient glassblower. But that's not going to necessarily — and I know that that's not necessarily going to make me — allow me to make better work.

And that's what I really see with a lot of the current, you know, generation of kind of younger people coming into glass now. They're such an incredible — I mean, they're so kind of really committed to becoming incredible technicians that I think it really stymies their growth creatively. I don't see — you know, there are definitely exceptions to the rule. There are people out there that are young people that are making interesting work.

But a real shift from my generation and even, like, maybe the next generation after me, to kind of the people coming up now is that there's — the young people coming up in glass now are so caught up in Venetian glassblowing, in this kind of pursuit of the — you know, the perfect kind of wineglass or cup, you know, as the Italians kind of call them. And that's certainly relevant, and I think it's fine, but I just wish more people were really kind of pushing it creatively, artistically.

MS. SHEA: It's kind of interesting that it seems maybe slightly cyclical —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah.

MS. SHEA: — because, you know, at the beginning there was this big search for technique.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. But even that back then, though — but you know — and maybe it's just nothing changes, you know, or "the more things change" — because I think that even at the very beginning you had Harvey Littleton saying, "Technique is cheap," you know, and things like that, and really pushing that.

And I think — but again, that was out of the university system. And I think you still are getting that out of the universities, you know. You'll still — I mean, at Illinois, where I was, you know, Bill and I were much more interested in really having the students kind of explore their work creatively — you know, glass work — and really pushing that end of it, rather than the technical aspects of it.

I think that ultimately the perfect — and some people have — some programs have figured this out — that the perfect program for glass would be having, you know, the maybe graduate students teaching the — all the technical stuff or junior faculty, and then having one or two faculty members

that were senior faculty that would really work on the, you know, more the ideas, more. That's a tough balancing act in glass. [Laughs.]

MS. SHEA: But it interests me that you continue to use this combination of metal, because I'm looking at —

MR. CHARDIET: Mm-hmm.

MS. SHEA: Do you call those sketches in metal? Is it — or drawings?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, I call them drawings, sketches.

MS. SHEA: Mm-hmm. And then you also talked about painting and continuing the combination again with glass, I think.

MR. CHARDIET: Right. You know, it's funny because I'm really — in some ways, nothing has changed in my work as far — a lot has changed as far as, I think, visually. But you know, I'm still kind of — early on, I found this combination of materials that I really liked and that I wanted to explore. And I just have kind of kept at that.

It's — I've had forays into, you know, other things. And my work has changed a lot over the years, I think, in some ways. I mean, it's funny, because right now, as we speak, I've kind of gone back to this really early series with these blown pieces. And those are really a throwback to earlier works in the series that I felt like I hadn't really explored as much as I wanted to. So it was timely that I went back to that now.

And I'm enjoying it, because the pieces are a lot quicker. I spend, you know, a couple of days on a piece rather than a couple of months working on a piece, because my work had gotten really — I was using a lot of — there was a lot of process in it. And I felt like it was — I wasn't enjoying it. It was taking a lot of the joy out of it, all this process. And these are much more immediate, the pieces that I'm working on now.

MS. SHEA: You mentioned, I think, Marsha Miro's writing about your work.

MR. CHARDIET: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SHEA: Is there — are there writers, either artists or critics, that you especially enjoy reading, either about your work or about other people's work?

MR. CHARDIET: Boy — none of which are going to come to mind. I mean, I really like James Yood from Chicago — I think he teaches at Northwestern — not just because he wrote a really nice article about my work. [Laughs.] But — and Marsha wrote something early on that I — yeah, that I really thought was really insightful. And I really felt like she was kind of getting what I was after, you know, in my work.

And there are people — I mean, a lot of the stuff you see written about glass is in *Glass* magazine now, which I think they — I think they do a pretty decent job.

MS. SHEA: Do you read other periodicals? *Craft*?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. I mean, I read — I'll look at *American Craft*. But — I still have a subscription to that magazine, and I feel that I have to because — I don't feel that I have to, but I feel that I want to.

But I — but you know, I look at *Art in America* and *Artforum*. I have subscriptions to those. So I — you know, I look at a lot of stuff. I read a lot of stuff. I can't really — it's funny, because I'm not really up on the writers that much, you know, the actual writers.

But — and for those magazines, I really — I'm much more visual. I'm really forcing myself to read more, you know. And I do read the articles and whatnot, but even, like — and I don't know what it is with me about that. I have — I have a difficult — I can read, and I, you know, can read pretty quickly, but I have a hard time doing it. I find that I have to reread things a lot to really get it to kind of — to absorb it.

So I tend to be much more visual, you know. And if I see something that I'm — that I'm interested in or that visually attracts me, then I'll — and there's an article on a particular artist, then I'll read it, you know. And I do love reading about other artists, you know. I get a real kick out of that. But —

MS. SHEA: And then *Craft* is kind of a kickoff point for — are you involved at all or were you more, perhaps, when you teaching, with American Craft Council or Glass Art Society [GAS] or —

MR. CHARDIET: I've not done a lot of those. I mean, I was on the board of Haystack, the Haystack School of Craft [Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, ME], and I enjoyed that for a while. But I have found — like I haven't gotten involved with GAS, other than going to the conferences on occasion. I mean, I don't go to every single one. I've really kind of stayed away from that sort of thing, and I think it was my experience with teaching. I was, like, really, the last thing I want to do is be on a committee.

And I don't have the personality for it. I know it, you know, like, I think one thing that I realized after being in teaching — and you had asked me if I was kind of following that teaching route because my parents were teachers — I think — you know, going back to that question, I think so. I think I was, to a certain extent. It was something that I knew and — but I think it took me a while, but I realized that I really wasn't cut out for it. I mean, I think I'm selfish, you know, and I think you can't be — you can't be selfish if you're — to be a teacher. It's, like, that's the opposite of selfishness, you know. It really takes a special person to be a teacher. My sister is a teacher, a great teacher, my older sister.

I don't have patience — I have patience, but not for that sort of thing, not for sitting in committees and listening to people who love to just listen to themselves talk. That I don't have patience for, you know. And so I really struggled with that. And I don't have — you know, I don't have the patience for students that aren't really interested. And that's the way I kind of felt, and maybe it's because I had been at it for a while, but I really — I really felt like the students — and there were a lot of exceptions to this rule. I had some great students that I still keep in contact with today.

But I think that I really felt like, "Oh, my gosh, they're not really interested in what I have to say." And I felt that way in '99, 2000. I felt like — you know, I was beginning to feel like a dinosaur and I wasn't very old, and so I thought, "Time to move on," you know. And I think it's really changed for me, though, and like now, you know, I'd be much more willing to share what I know, I think, with people than I —

MS. SHEA: This is kind of a subset of the same question: Did you teach at Haystack at all or —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, I've taught there a few times.

MS. SHEA: Oh, and did you ever go out to —

MR. CHARDIET: I've taught at Pilchuck [Glass School], and I've taught at Penland. Of those kinds of schools, I haven't — you know, I — yeah. I guess there's — Corning has a school now. I haven't taught there. But yeah, I've taught at those three and really enjoyed it, actually. And I'm closest to Haystack and I think — and I love Haystack. I think it's a great place and — because I think it's not just glass. It's one of the reasons that I like it but also, I think, because of the director of the school, who's — Stu Kestenbaum, Stuart Kestenbaum, who's a poet and just a really interesting guy and, I think, really guides that school really well.

I think those places are great. And I've actually taken — I took a class at Haystack a few years ago, as a paying student, which was the first time I'd ever done that. And it was so much fun. I loved it. I gained so much out of it in a couple of weeks. Those schools are really great places to go, you know. [Laughs.]

MS. SHEA: Because I think people who are going there really are committed.

MR. CHARDIET: Yes.

MS. SHEA: And it kind of deals with what you were talking about before and the kind of more traditional academic setting.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah.

MS. SHEA: Maybe you don't have that same kind of, I guess, passion maybe —

MR. CHARDIET: Right.

MS. SHEA: Short-lived —

MR. CHARDIET: Right.

MS. SHEA: — if it's two or three weeks or whatever, but —

MR. CHARDIET: It's over two or three weeks as, you know, as the teacher you're able to keep, yeah, that level of passion and excitement going at a really high level. And then you know that it's going to be over after that time. [Laughs.]

It's different at the universities. Universities serve different kinds of purposes. I think that they're — thank God for universities. I mean, otherwise I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing, you know, I don't think.

MS. SHEA: That is one of the questions here, and it's maybe a — it's a pretty big-picture question, and you kind of talked a little bit about it, but what do you see as the place of universities in the American craft movement and maybe specifically for artists working in glass?

MR. CHARDIET: I think — yeah, I think that they're really important. Yeah, I really feel that it's important. I think for me, as a — going through — I mean, as I said, universities have opened up these doors for me. I mean, I've learned so much. I think that, for one thing, it gave me — when I was in graduate school, it gave me a place to really have the time to develop my ideas without any kind of pressure.

And being around kind of like-minded people, you know — I mean, I worry that we're losing a lot of programs or a number of programs. Illinois, where I taught, is no longer in existence.

MS. SHEA: And is that because of the cost of running kilns and materials, or why do you think that is happening?

MR. CHARDIET: I think that's part of it, but I think it's also just where the numbers were. I think that students were really signing up for the classes where there was, you know, more of a chance of getting a job when you graduated. And I think that that's something that kind of changed, you know, from the time that I was younger, because — and again, I agree that it's cyclical, that I think — I could see it changing back soon, because I think a lot of things are tied in together. I think kind of, you know — politics and the kind of — the general feeling of the population.

I mean, I think when I was coming up in school — it was in the '70s, you know, so kind of the end of — you know, Vietnam was over at that point, and this kind of hippie culture was still around, and a real interest in the crafts and kind of going back to the land and an interest in that, and so I think that making things with your hands was something that was really attractive at that time.

And I think that that's going to — it's going to shift back to that. I mean, I think there's going to be a backlash, and there probably already is, against our computer — computerized world and really the kind of loss of humanity, you know, that has happened because of it.

And I'm reading a good book now. It's kind of difficult for me to read. It's one where I've been rereading a lot of it, so it's going to take me a long time, but it's called *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry into the Value of Work*, by Matthew B. Crawford.]. I don't know if you've heard about that book. It's in — it's getting some reviews now.

And it talks about, you know, making things with your hands. It's a guy who graduated from the University of Chicago graduate school and immediately got a job, full time thing, at a think tank in D.C., you know, a really prestigious think tank. And after five months — [laughs] — he quit and started a motorcycle shop — repair shop. And that's what it's about. It's how he felt like, you know, he just really — he had worked with his hands when he was younger. You know, he had — he kind of has an interesting background. He talks about it. But — so now he works on these old motorcycles and stuff.

And he talks about working with his hands and traces the history of it and kind of like how it's looked at and — it's a good book. There's so much information in it, though. He's obviously a genius, this guy, it's amazing. [Laughs.] But it's got a great cover with this beautiful old BMW on the cover of the book.

But anyways, I think that that's — that that's what — you know, I was talking about how I felt there might be a backlash to all, you know, the computer world. Anyways, yeah, I think that it could happen.

And I think the place — I think that universities have always been places where you could do these things. You know, you could work with something as ridiculous as glass, and it was a great situation for that. And they could afford to do it at these universities, and so they did.

And I mean, I really hope that some of these universities start kind of — and this is something that this fellow talks about, more in relation to shop class, like, you know, shop classes in high schools and stuff that — but I think that the reason that the glass program is gone at Illinois, that — it's partially financial, partially political there. But — and it definitely has — it has to do with the numbers of students that, you know, were going into other areas other than the studio areas. I mean, all the studio areas were kind of suffering at that time. You know, painting, and ceramics, and sculpture,

and the ones that had waiting lists, were overflowing, were industrial design and graphic design. I mean, yeah, you couldn't get in. And they couldn't build enough banks of PCs or whatever, Apples, you know, workstations at those places. I mean, it was like, you know — when I left teaching I didn't even have — know how to email, I didn't own a computer, and they were like really frustrated with me. Now it's — that's really changed —

MS. SHEA: That —

MR. CHARDIET: — for me.

[END DISC 3.]

MS. SHEA: How — that is one of the questions — how would you say technology has impacted your work, or the sale of your work?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah — oh, really — well, it —

MS. SHEA: You don't seem to have a Web presence.

MR. CHARDIET: No! Boy! Oh, wow! Hold on a second. Is it S-I-G-H-T or S-T —

MS. SHEA: S-I-T-E, I think. [Laughs.]

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah — [laughs] — depending on which way you look at it. You know, you're right. And I haven't done that, which is crazy.

MS. SHEA: I wondered if it was a conscious decision.

MR. CHARDIET: It has been a conscious decision, not because of any, you know, kind of principles that I have or anything like that. I mean, it's been a conscious decision in the sense that — of not having a Web site in that I felt like, dammit, I do enough. [They laugh.] You know? And I felt like — for me — I don't feel this way anymore, but I felt like, shouldn't that be the job of the galleries; shouldn't people — you know, because if you punch in my name, it does take you to the galleries that — I think, anyways; it used to — that I show in. And they have Web sites. So I kind of felt like it was redundant. And also — but then I realized that, hey, you need that presence, you know, so people can go look at your work, and maybe not buy it from you, but then you have links to the — to the galleries.

So that's something that we're actually working on now, and that's Jill's job. [Laughs.] No — and my wife Jill and I had — that's something that we've been working on, and we're actually working with somebody who's designing one, a friend of mine — one of my childhood friends from Connecticut. But he went to — he graduated from — he went to graduate school in graphic design at Yale, so — [laughs] — not that that makes you a great designer, but it doesn't hurt.

Yeah, I mean, I think that technology I use a lot now, and especially with these light pieces, with the *Light Totem* pieces. And I've really been kind of — I draw them out but, for example, when I was sending the proposal for this commission, the one on the yacht, I pretty much — I did probably two-thirds of it on the computer, or my assistant did. And then I did the rest by hand, you know, with watercolor and whatnot; and I actually was really excited and am excited about that, because I could see doing editions of prints that way.

Yeah, and I — and in fact, you know, I recently got the drawings back from that and I'm getting them

framed right now, because I want to have them at home and possibly — but I'm thinking that in future exhibits showing those things along with the work and —

MS. SHEA: I wondered if you had done that with drawings or —

MR. CHARDIET: No. No, because I've always done — I've never done really finished drawings before doing the glass work. I've always done just quick sketches in my sketchbook. I mean, I use it as almost like a notepad. And so I've never done those, you know, although you could take out certain pages and put them up, but I think I may start doing that now, because I'm really getting interested in kind of the painting on the glass, and it's very easy to make the leap to just painting, you know, or drawing, and really doing more finished drawings. And I would like to do that in this coming year.

MS. SHEA: A supply question, a materials question. Tell me about what kind of materials you're typically ordering and where they're coming from. And are you still able to get all of the kinds of materials that you're used to getting, or is that changing?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, I'm still able to get — surprisingly, still able to get pretty much all of the material that I — that I've ever used. I mean, I — I mean, the list of things that I order here is crazy. I really get a lot of — go through a lot of different material; you know, the batch for the glass, which I get from North Carolina and buy it by the ton; all the different glass color —

MS. SHEA: That's what I'm seeing there.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, yeah, that's just a small part of it, but, yeah. But I — and these are for the vessels that I'm — that I'm doing now, so you can see they're pretty colorful, but —

MS. SHEA: And the copper.

MR. CHARDIET: Right. Copper I order from a jewelry supply place. I mail order it and get different gauge wire. It's funny, because a lot of the — really, I mean, glass technology — I mean, the furnaces are becoming much more efficient. And that technology is really changing, because it's getting so expensive. You can imagine the fuel cost here. I use natural gas. So really, right now, I think the way — outside of the computerization of studios in glass — any kind of studios — any kind of studio, I would say the second biggest change would be the technology in the furnaces, which are becoming more and more efficient and more and more and more expensive, because they're not just these simple boxes — you know, insulated boxes with a burner going in; they're — you know, they're more sophisticated than that. I still have a gas-fired furnace, but a lot of people are switching to electric furnaces, and those are becoming really efficient.

But glass is, you know, a very — still really a costly material to work with. You've got to be crazy to do it, if you look at it in a practical sort of way from the outside. And people are always shocked at what my bills are. But on the other hand, it's just so much fun to do, you know, that it makes it — it makes it all worth it for me, I think — at least, so far it has. But, yeah, it's a challenge running a glass studio.

But I agree with you. I think that I need to have more of a Web presence. And I know that now. There's no — I'm — you know, I'm behind on that, but — and I feel that right now more than ever you need to have your own Web site, you know? I mean, I feel like you can't just rely on the galleries. And really, people — more and more people are buying off the Web, even from the galleries.

MS. SHEA: I was going — I — it seemed probably you're doing a lot of your buying — maybe that's not — from the Internet.

MR. CHARDIET: Oh, yeah. Yep, everything.

MS. SHEA: [Inaudible.]

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, and we have, you know, a PC in the office, and we really — one of the things that we really need here is a much bigger office. I mean, it's ridiculous; it's this little closet. But as you can see, the rest of the space is pretty well taken up, you know.

MS. SHEA: Do you feel your studio's big enough?

MR. CHARDIET: No. [Laughs.]

MS. SHEA: Do you feel it's the right size?

MR. CHARDIET: No. You kind of — you end up taking over — right now, I'm at a point where I've taken over all the space, you know, and so now I end up having to — if I'm bringing something in, I have to eliminate something else, you know? If I'm bringing something new or a new piece of equipment, whatever, it's really difficult to find space for anything. I mean, I would like an office that was at least twice the size of what we have; maybe three times the size would be nice, you know.

I mean, but I think my move from here would probably be — I've thought that would maybe be buying my own building, and right now I'm not ready to do that. But I could see it happening down the road. I'd love to buy an old kind of commercial building and just gut it, you know. But down the road, I'm going to have to take over more space. If they ever leave, I'll just keep on moving that way.

MS. SHEA: Your neighbors next door? [Laughs.]

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. Well, that's what I — you know, I did: I moved this way when this, you know, became available. And I had the opportunity to take over more space, and didn't do it. But I'm glad I didn't now, but —

MS. SHEA: I — for me, these two questions are kind of related. And one is, is there an element of play either in your process or finished piece? And then also, is there any political or social commentary in your work? So it's the play and this — and the serious question.

MR. CHARDIET: Okay. Is there any play or — what was the other part of that, or —

MS. SHEA: Or political or social commentary.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, I think — I think the play part, there is. You know, I think that I have a — you know, a pretty light-hearted approach to my work. You know, politically, I would — I wouldn't say that there was any political content to it. Socially, yeah, but I think that — I think that one of the kind of constants that's one of the constant themes in my work has been, I think, kind of family, really. And I think that that's — it just seems to kind of wind its way in a pretty abstract sort of way, sometimes more literally, into my work, and so kind of the — but that may be, you know, kind of pushing it, I think, even.

I see that there. It's not something that I really delve into too much, because I think my work is not literal. I mean, it's really kind of more suggestive of things, and I — but I think the kind of grouping of elements together — I mean, I see them oftentimes as very figurative and kind of tie in to different family members, or whatever. And I think so — because they're kind of still lifes, and yet they're figurative. And I think that that really has to do with, I mean, the importance of family to me and, I

think, because of kind of what my family went through, you know. And I think, you know, there's — I mean, I'm somebody that was born in another country who I've never seen, haven't been able to go back to. And, I mean, I see that in my work, I think, you know, the kind of longing for something or — but I don't know. That may be a stretch.

MS. SHEA: You've said you weren't — you haven't been able to go back to Cuba. Have you traveled much elsewhere?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, I mean, I've traveled in Europe on a few occasions — three. And I guess I've been there for pretty, you know, extended periods. I mean, I've been to the Czech Republic on a couple of occasions. I've been to — yeah, been to France and I've been to Italy and Germany. Yeah, I've been around — Japan.

MS. SHEA: I was going to say, did you go to Japan at all?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah.

MS. SHEA: Were you focused on kind of your work or seeing other people's works? Or what were you kind of looking at?

MR. CHARDIET: When I went to Japan, I was — I went there — I taught there for a couple of weeks. So it was a little bit of both. I was, you know, teaching students and working on my own work, also; had a studio there, a really beautiful studio. And that was — I really enjoyed that. I really enjoyed Japan. And I think that I really relate to a lot of the things that they make there. You know, it's like they have such a history of craftsmanship and —

MS. SHEA: And honoring that as well.

MR. CHARDIET: Right. Right.

MS. SHEA: Valuing it.

MR. CHARDIET: Valuing it, exactly. So that incredible sense of history there and —

MS. SHEA: And meticulousness —

MR. CHARDIET: Right.

MS. SHEA: — I think you would also —

MR. CHARDIET: Yes. I know, I know. It's true, I'm somewhat meticulous, you know? Some people would say very meticulous. [They laugh.] I'm not actually that bad, you know. It's funny, I don't think — I think that you need to talk to my wife about that one. She'll be here, right? I'm not, like, really over the top; I'm not anal-retentive or anything; I'm not — it may appear that way, but I'm not that bad, you know?

MS. SHEA: I'm guessing that you are the way that you need to be —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah.

MS. SHEA: — for the functioning of the studio and your work.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. Yeah. I need to be somewhat meticulous as far as — right, for the studio to

function properly; otherwise, I'd be so overwhelmed by junk. I mean, I already am. I look at this, and there's just so much visual debris in here that it's overwhelming. And if I don't at least try to keep that a little bit tidy, it'll just come crashing down on me and suffocate me, you know? [Laughs.]

And plus, you know, I do so many different things here. I mean, I have the hot glass area. I have — you know, I do plating over here sometimes. I have vats over here for copper plating, polishing in back of me. You know, I do, like, mixing of sand for casting in that cement mixer, right in front of which I have a table where I do airbrushing and have the fumes go out that fan.

And so it's just like — I'm always — my studio is really flexible. I can do anything here, you know; certainly anything with glass, but I can also weld, I can do woodworking, and I do all that stuff.

But getting back — yeah, you know, my work — it's funny because there was — my colleague Bill Carlson used to always say, you know, "There's like a narrative in your work." And I would say, "There really isn't," you know. I mean, I think that there would be — there's more apt to be — I think that the pieces that I'm working on now, these larger blown pieces, vessels, with the drawings on the surface, would lend themselves to that probably more than anything I've done, you know, just because you're — with drawing, it's much easier to kind of get these ideas across. But so far no, you know, it hasn't happened. But I could see it.

MS. SHEA: Have awards or commissions — I don't mean commissions — any particular awards stand out in your career?

MR. CHARDIET: Oh, my gosh. Well, you know, not so much — I mean, I have — I've — I really haven't gone for a lot of grants since I left teaching. And I probably should now that I'm — you know, have been here and working on my own. I mean, I haven't even applied for a Rhode Island Arts Council grant, which I'd probably be a really good candidate for. But no, you know, things that I have done, kind of commercial — doesn't really tie into that, but I meant to mention this earlier. I did a commercial. I did a — Infiniti commercial — did you know that? Did you — did you see it?

MS. SHEA: I think I did read about that, but I don't think I saw it.

MR. CHARDIET: Oh, my gosh. I should give you — I should give you a copy of it. Yeah. Yeah, that's right. There was an article in the *Providence Journal*.

MS. SHEA: On the Internet.

MR. CHARDIET: On the Internet, yep. I did an Infiniti car commercial, which was a lot of fun, but that's not a, you know, grant or a fellowship or anything like that. But, I mean, I had this — years ago I had a Cintas grant; I had, you know, the Ohio Arts Council grant. But I haven't really gone for grants. And I think — I've just really focused on making the work that I want to make and exhibiting it. And I've kind of always hoped that other things would kind of take care of themselves. They don't ever usually, you know. But I think it's been for me such a — that's such a task, you know, that there has — I haven't taken a lot of time to write — you know, to apply for grants, none of which are coming to mind right now. Maybe Jill would remember these things better than I would. But —

MS. SHEA: One of the other questions is — and we've kind of talked a lot about it — but if there are things that you'd like to add is, where do you get ideas for your work, and have your sources of inspiration changed over the years?

MR. CHARDIET: No, they haven't really changed. You know, I still look at different cultures from around the world for my inspiration, but, I mean, really trying to make that my own. I mean, I think

that I use that as a starting point. And I use whatever I can to kind of get the juices flowing for making things, for creating things, you know?

And I let it really kind of unfold in a really kind of, you know, subliminal sort of way in that — you know, like, I'll look at African art or I'll look at paintings from the Renaissance or — I mean, I should grab some of the books that I have — even contemporary stuff or definitely twentieth-century painting. And then I'll use that as a starting point and then kind of go from there. And my goal is to just really make it my own and really bring myself into it as much as I can and come up with something that's somewhat original, you know? [Laughs.]

So that — but I would say that I still — I just — I'm always on the lookout for different books and — you know, that relate to my history, whether they're on Cuba or something else, because there's so many forms that I'm really intrigued with. And I'm looking at nature a lot. And was looking at the drawings from the — is it the Blaschkas that the flowers, the glass flowers?

MS. SHEA: In the — at Harvard? Yeah.

MR. CHARDIET: They're at Harvard? And I've never even seen those, and I live 45 minutes away from there. I mean, I've seen the ones at Corning, which are just — they don't have that many of them there. But they have some real beauties at Corning. I was just there not too long ago. But I got a beautiful book of their drawings, which are — they look like my sketchbook. You know, they have a very similar — whoever it was, I think one of his — one of the sons did a lot of the field drawings on plants. And, you know, there are a lot of plants that are kind of cropping up, and plant-like forms, you know, that — in the drawings.

And so I still go to books for a lot of my inspiration on things. Museums and books and — but it really could be anything, you know. But it's funny because it started — it starts out early, you know, I think, in your career. And then there's this — at least with me — there's been this kind of continuum, you know, and it just kind of keeps on evolving and changing over time. And, I mean, I've been really loving being in my studio for the last — since I left teaching.

I haven't regretted that at all, you know. I could — I couldn't see myself going back. I could see doing a summer program, possibly, but I haven't even pursued that. I'm just totally into being in the studio working, you know, and living in Providence. I'm pretty — [they laugh] — I know, it's funny. I feel like I've really found, at least for now, the perfect place for me. I never thought that that would happen. You know, I never thought that I'd really find a place that I really felt so much at home in.

MS. SHEA: What would be kind of a typical workday, if there is one? Do you get a cup of coffee, come into the studio —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah.

MS. SHEA: Do you just start out by sketching or is — do you usually have the night before — have you made a plan, "Okay, I'm going to work on X, whether it's — "

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. I usually I say I'm going to be here by nine [o'clock], but a lot of times it's 9:30. Kyle [Cusson] gets here at 9. And — because what I find is that I end up — I'm doing stuff at home, though. Jill and I are — you know, we get up pretty early, actually, at home. And I mean, she gets up at, what, 6:30 and takes the dogs for a three-mile walk. They're in great shape. And then I'll either continue sleeping — but lately, I've been — I've been waking up and reading, you know, in bed.

And then — well, we have coffee and a light breakfast, and we usually, you know, the blue — the

yellow pads come out and we start taking down notes of what's going to happen that day. Like, I'll write down what I want to accomplish. And I just make lists. And Jill will make a list, and we'll work on it together, kind of like what do we need to get done, what's Kyle going to be doing, you know, what are we going to be doing. And Jill's stuff really involves, you know, dealing with the galleries, and so she is on the phone a lot.

And then I come in, and really I'm free to kind of come in most of the time and just be producing, making work. And I don't get enough time to sit down and sketch. And it's almost like — I still really struggle with allowing that — allowing myself to do that. And it's almost like I feel guilty if I'm not actually working on the actual pieces.

MS. SHEA: Blowing, casting, annealing —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. And — yeah. And that's okay, except that I think that you really need the time — I am allowing a lot more time to reflect on the work that I'm doing. And that's been really helpful. And even doing pieces for myself, which you would think I'd be doing anyways. And — but really consciously doing them for myself. Like, what do I really want to live with, you know? And that's really led me to — back to these vessels. You know, I mean, I get so much joy out of making them that — because as I said earlier, I had gone down this road where I was doing work that was just so technically laden.

You know, they — it was the glass, and then it was, like, polished and was cast and polished and blown and copper-plated, and then I would send them out to be silver- or gold-plated; and I was working with metals, people that were fabricating — well, kind of like that piece on the wall there that's the VITRINE SERIES I call them, for lack of a better — where they have this vitrine that goes over them and they're on a — they're on table. And it was all, like, beautifully crafted, and you know, the tables were made by a woodworker who used to be in town here. And they're amazing. And they took forever. They were like my Fabergé egg, you know? [They laugh.]

And I finally just stopped doing those recently. You know — I mean, I wouldn't make very many of them a year, maybe a couple of them a year for a number of — maybe four years. But — and so it's been really refreshing to come back to something like glass, and dealing — and getting the — putting the imagery on the surface of it, you know. I think you saw — there's one that's got, like, a mask on it over there, and I love that. What I do is I sandblast them after they're enameled to kind of take away some of the enamel. And they really, to me, look like old signs that have really — or old frescoes or whatever, that are really kind of decaying, you know, or in disrepair.

MS. SHEA: One of the questions I often ask — and it's actually not on this list — is advice for maybe students that are starting out in the art world.

MR. CHARDIET: Mm-hmm. [Acknowledgement.] Long pause.

MS. SHEA: I was going to say, is that the toughest question? [Laughs.]

MR. CHARDIET: No. No, no, no, no. It's not the toughest question. That's a good one. It's a good one. So that are starting out professionally or just heading into the art world — the craft world?

MS. SHEA: Just trying — maybe even deciding if they want to go in that direction.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. I still feel like you've got to go work with the people that you most admire. I think that's — those are the — that's who you want to work with, you know, initially when you're a student. I can't imagine — I don't care how much things change, I still think you have to do that. And

if you're not with that person, you're at the wrong place. You're wasting your time, I think.

You know, I think that what has served me well was that I — when I started kind of going into it, especially professionally, I didn't have any huge expectations of becoming a success or anything like that. I think I just wanted to be able to keep on making my work. That's all I really wanted to do, you know, initially was, I knew I had to keep on making my work. And that really drove me, you know, to just keep on working and producing work and selling it because I knew — you know, it's true; it's always, like, the next piece is always the one you're really — you know, I'm never totally satisfied with my pieces. I'm pretty happy with some, but I always feel like the next one [laughs] is going — you hear that, and it's true.

I was reading, you know, this painter that I have a book — I can't think of his name now — but he does these silly paintings. He's got to be getting up there in age. But he does, like, cakes and stuff like that, and ice cream cones. And they're just these luscious paintings, I'd love to have one; they're so beautiful. And most of them are small.

But — and he said that. You know, and a lot of people say that. And it's really true. I think you have to feel like you're — the next thing you do — and not that you live in a world of never being happy with the work you're making [they laugh], because I do feel like I am, you know, and I do feel like that a lot — I really do like a lot of the work that I — you know, not a lot, but some of the work that I make. But I think that that — it's — you know, it is a long road. And I think that it's — I think if you could just kind of keep on plugging away at it — you know, it's all the clichés, Josephine, you know. Right?

MS. SHEA: [Laughs.]

MR. CHARDIET: I mean, if you want to be more specific, you can — what do you think?

MS. SHEA: Oh, I think I have another larger question for you, which is — there's a question here about how do you kind of view American —

MR. CHARDIET: Oh, I saw that.

MS. SHEA: — glass or craft, if you want to think a little more big-picture, on an international scale? And do you see this field — and I assume they mean the American field — moving in any particular direction?

MR. CHARDIET: I think I remember seeing that —

MS. SHEA: And one of the options is, "or not" — [laughs] — that they aren't moving in any particular option — in any particular direction that you see.

MR. CHARDIET: So, like, how do I view American — the glass movement —

MS. SHEA: In contrast or comparison to other international, and I assume they're mostly thinking about either Japanese or European — and Asian, I should broaden that, Asian or European.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. Yeah. I think I see myself, you know, more being influenced by — so this is in how it relates to me, obviously, I guess — not by glass. I mean, I see myself as being — you know, as looking at other things more so. But I think that I definitely come out of the tradition of kind of American glass, you know, and very much out of that really kind of sense of exploration that was so prevalent, I think, in the '70s and even the '80s.

And I think it really started changing in the '90s. And now it's — that was just — everything was new back then — not just to me, but I mean to everybody, even the people that were older than me and in it longer. It was all so much about sharing ideas and experimenting. And that's one of the things that I really find so unique about American glass, is that there is much more of that exchanging of ideas, you know. I see myself really out of that tradition. I see myself really coming out of the whole, you know, Harvey Littleton, Dominick Labino, and then Henry and Joel Myers and Dale. I mean, I definitely — those were the people that I really looked at, you know.

But I think that myself — that to me personally, I think that there were a lot of — there were Europeans that were really influential to me early on too, at least when I was in graduate school. You know, by then I had been to — I went to Pilchuck and studied with Bertil Vallien — I actually was his TA twice — and really kind of became — you know, knew about Venetian glassblowing and Lino [Tagliapietra] early on before he became kind of this phenomenon [laughs] that he's become for better and for worse.

But, you know, I think I see myself being influenced by both the American glass movement and kind of the European or the — definitely European more than Japanese for me, but — and feel a part of that, yes, for sure, which is why I go to the GAS conference and whatnot. It's just to kind of keep in touch with that, I think, because I feel much more — you know, more removed than I was when I was teaching. You know, when you're teaching, you're so involved in all that stuff. And now I really have to make an effort to — and I do — to go to these things and be a part of it. But —

MS. SHEA: You mentioned earlier, I think, before we were recording, that you still keep very much in touch with Henry, and that he occasionally visits and —

MR. CHARDIET: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah. Yeah, he's coming this fall. Yeah, and — you know, as I said, we've traveled — well, we've been to the Czech Republic twice together, which was an — especially the first time — was a really interesting trip. Yeah, you know, I feel a really close bond with Henry for sure. We're good friends. He's influenced me a lot, continues to. And he's kind of like my go-to person whenever I have a question — a question about something. I'll always pick up the phone and —

MS. SHEA: The Henry help line?

MR. CHARDIET: [They laugh.] Oh, yeah, the Henry help line. I think a lot of people go to Henry for that, you know, also. He's an unbelievable storehouse of information. And he — you know, he — I kid him — you know, I say — I always tell Henry, "You write the book, Henry," because he's got this book called *Glass Notes* that he does, which is a — kind of a technical book on all things glass that he sells.

And he's retired now, so in his retirement, you know, this kind of subsidizes his income. And he's still making artwork and, you know, he keeps busy playing golf and — but yeah. It's great having that relationship with your professor, you know, that I've been able to — we've been able to maintain that over the years. And I feel like — I think it's been really — I hope it's been good — as good for him as it has been for me. I know that we — I think I get a lot out of it from him, look forward to our visits.

I saw him — I went to a — there was an opening at the Corning Museum of Glass for this collection out of Chicago, the Heineman Collection, they donated — these people donated — these people donated this collection, really impressive collection. And we — Henry — I went with Jill, and we met Henry there and hung out for a few days. But — yes.

MS. SHEA: In terms of the studio, is about — one assistant about ideal for you?

MR. CHARDIET: Well, for a long time I had two. And I felt that I had to — that I really needed two. But it's been about a year and half now I've just had Kyle, the one assistant. And that's working out really well. You know, right now I'm really happy with one assistant. When I had two, I always felt like I was fighting to stay ahead of them. [Laughs.] I felt like I was working a lot harder in order to provide work for my assistants to do, you know? And so I feel, like, enough of that, you know, already. [They laugh.]

And, you know, I think Kyle and I get along well. And I don't want to speak for him, but I feel like we have a nice rapport. And I'm really happy — it hasn't always been this way. I've had other periods in — even in — for sure in this studio, that — in Providence — that — where I wasn't really happy because of the assistants that I had. I mean, I dreaded coming into my own studio. And at one point, like, I sat down with Jill and we were, like, "What's the matter with this picture, you know?" And so I've really sworn that I would never do that again, I would never feel so dependent on an assistant that I, you know — [laughs] — that I wouldn't make a change if I needed to.

And I felt — I felt — in the past, I have felt so dependent on my assistants that I stuck with assistants that were not a good fit for me. And I was miserable; it was terrible. And that's completely gone now. I mean, I, you know, love coming into the studio. We're really productive, we get stuff done. I mean, I very often feel at the end of the day like that was a good day, you know. Not always, you know. [Laughs.]

I mean, there is — it's like any other job I think. Well — but I get a — I really am in a good place as far as the studio now. And I kind of — I'm kind of feeling that one assistant is the way to go, if you have the right — if you have one good assistant. One good assistant is a lot better than two mediocre assistants that are unhappy, you know? [Laughs.]

Oh my gosh, I could tell you stories that would curl your hair. But most people that have worked in studios and had assistants — I know, because I know one of the wonderful things about Providence is that there are so many artists here that I can compare notes, pick up the phone and call my friend Dan or whoever. And you know, it's really good having that, having people that immediately know what you're talking about as far as maintaining a studio. So —

MS. SHEA: Do you do — you say you don't always give yourself the time to sketch. Do you typically sketch in your studio or at home or as you're driving — I mean —

MR. CHARDIET: No, no, no. Actually, driving is a great time to —

MS. SHEA: Mentally sketch, I hope — [laughs].

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, mentally sketch, yeah. Absolutely.

MS. SHEA: Not texting. [Laughs.]

MR. CHARDIET: No, no. No, and in fact, I really try not to even pick up the cellphone when I'm in the car, because I just find that — anymore — I'm not really good at that kind of multitasking. It may be a sign of age. But I know because — what — we moved into this house, and I set up this drawing room, and I thought I'd be up there all the time, and I'd made plans to — "I'm going to devote one day a week to being up there drawing," and — hasn't worked out that way.

But I do go there — I have a lot of books in my drawing room, and I — and I do sketch up there. But

most of the sketching happens here. Yeah, I find that I like working in here. And I could see, you know — I think part of it is that, if I could set up a room — I mean, I'm finding excuses. I just tend to draw here more for whatever reason.

At home, it's, like, I don't think of that kind of work. It's almost like I want to keep them a little bit separately. And I've been in situations before where — in Illinois — where I had a studio in back of the house. I thought that would be ideal; you know, you can go in your slippers to go work after dinner. That's not necessarily — [laughs] — a good thing. I found out the hard way; I spent all this money on, you know, setting up this studio in back of the house. And it didn't have furnaces; it had everything else, because I was still teaching, so I used the university furnaces.

But I like a little bit of separation. You know, when I leave here, it's nice to be able to close the door. And for the most part, my studio stays here — not entirely — not entirely, because Jill and I work together. And so we can't help sometimes but talk about —

MS. SHEA: And I was curious — you said that she pretty much handles the business aspect. As you look at the process of your work and what it takes to get things to galleries, what percentage of time do you feel is spent on kind of the business end of things?

MR. CHARDIET: Oh, my gosh, an amazing amount of time. And the longer I've been in it, the more I — well, I find I spend a lot more time now that I'm full time, you know, for the last — since 2000, I find that I really have to spend a lot more time now on it. I'm not quite sure why that is — [laughs]. So I'm really happy that Jill is doing a lot of it.

I still do it, because I feel like I want to be still in touch with the galleries. So, I mean, Jill does the lion's share of communicating with galleries, but there are still times that I call and touch base. And I think the galleries like that, you know? They want to have contact with me as well as with Jill.

But my gosh, percentage-wise, I would say it could easily be 60 percent working on the stuff, 40 percent —

MS. SHEA: That is — that is high, because I was going to guess 10 [percent] or 15 percent. But no, you —

MR. CHARDIET: Maybe I'm being — maybe I'm exaggerating. But you know —

MS. SHEA: It takes —

MR. CHARDIET: Twenty percent to 40 percent of —

MS. SHEA: I think that's good for people to be aware of, you know?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah.

MS. SHEA: It's not this creative moment —

MR. CHARDIET: Right.

MS. SHEA: There's a whole —

MR. CHARDIET: And there is the creative moment as well. But I think that one of — when I — when I was working by myself, which was, you know, most of my life — I mean, I always had assistants, but

they never did any of the office stuff.

I would, you know, allow time to be in the — in the office. And just, I would allocate this time — "Okay, I'm going to spend the next two days in the office because I have to take care of all the stuff that's on this list," you know? And in a way, it's good because it kind of gets you away from your work, because it's really easy in a studio to just be kind of spinning your wheels a bit. It kind of pulls you away from the making of things for a while. It's not all bad to — and it's also good to be in touch with the galleries; you get a sense — which is why I keep on communicating with them and don't totally hand it over to Jill, because I feel it is good to be in touch with the galleries and kind of know really from them, you know, what they're feeling about different — the way things are going, you know, why things aren't selling, or why they are.

And so I want them to be honest with me about it; I mean, not tell me what to make or what not to make, but, you know, kind of, to be pretty candid about what people are reacting to or not, because I just — I mean, I can't live in a — in a vacuum. I want feedback on it. And it's a slippery slope, you know. You don't want to pander to the galleries or to collectors, but at the same time, you can't be naïve about what sells and what doesn't. And I don't — and I think any artist that says that they're not — they don't pay attention to that is lying, you know, at least anybody that's making — that's selling their work or trying to —

MS. SHEA: To survive, or —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah.

MS. SHEA: If you have the luxury of not worrying about that, maybe you can be —

MR. CHARDIET: Right.

MS. SHEA: But realistically —

MR. CHARDIET: Right. And a lot of artists — I mean, not a lot — but there are artists that — you know, that write grants and live off of grants, and are really good at that, and don't have to sell their work. And —

MS. SHEA: And the other avenue is teaching —

MR. CHARDIET: Right.

MS. SHEA: Some people, if they are pretty much supporting themselves through teaching, they are not so dependent on the gallery system.

MR. CHARDIET: Right. Right. Yeah. Yeah. You know, and those people — you know — boy, having been in teaching for a while, you see all kinds of people, you know, and you see people that kind of do a little bit of both. I mean, I can think of some painters that I — that were at Illinois with me who, you know, would occasionally sell work and really lived off of their salaries.

You know, there were some people, some academics that really only made work maybe once a year for the faculty show. That, I kind of thought, was the most — [laughs] — pathetic and kind of sad, you know, in a way — but really, more pathetic than anything else. It's, like, "Come on, you know?" It's, like — "Yeah, there's really a passion behind this, you know?"

MS. SHEA: [Laughs.]

MR. CHARDIET: But actually, Illinois had a pretty good — I mean, there were, really, there were some talented — [laughs] — people there. And really, they were serious about their work, but — quite a few, actually.

But — yeah. So you see that as a — as a way of doing it, less so, I think, because there's — you know, in glass, anyways, because there are less positions. And interestingly, when positions become available now, they're not getting the number of applicants or really qualified applicants for these jobs. And I'm not quite sure why that is. I think that people feel like they can make their living in their studio, so why go into teaching?

I mean, I think teaching was really thought of at one point as, you know, the — what's it called, you know, the —

MS. SHEA: Gives you the stamp of authenticity, or —

MR. CHARDIET: Well, authenticity, yeah, but also, like, you know, you were set. You didn't have to worry about it. It was like, you were on easy street.

MS. SHEA: It's not —

MR. CHARDIET: Well, not if you want to be a good teacher, you know? I mean, I think it's a lot of work.

MS. SHEA: One of the questions I think we've kind of talked about is the qualities of your working environment. We've talked about how you have a lot of things going on here, so it's important that things have an underlying organized structure. I'm guessing you enjoy this wonderful industrial space with the high ceilings —

MR. CHARDIET: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. SHEA: — and you have nice filtered light through the blocks. You said this space used to be a — was it candy?

MR. CHARDIET: No, this building was a — it was a lace —

MS. SHEA: Ah, part of the textile —

MR. CHARDIET: — mill. Yeah, it was a textile mill. And so the building that we're in now was part of it and where most of the manufacturing happened. And there was a conveyor belt that went right across the street, right outside my space, just the north wall, and went to the building across the street, which was also part of it.

But this actually — I like it because I — it's — it is industrial. You know, you're in town. And that was really important to me. I didn't want to be outside in the country and isolated.

MS. SHEA: You've had enough of the cornfields?

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, I've had enough. I wanted — I was going the other way, baby, you know? [Laughs.]

MS. SHEA: [Laughs.]

MR. CHARDIET: No disrespect; I don't mean, you, baby, I mean, generally — [they laugh]. You know,

and I have — like across the street, there's Nicole Chesney, who works with glass but really is a painter. She's kind of painting on mirrors, and she shows with Heller, and there's paint — you know, there's all kinds of artists in this building.

I don't necessarily see them all the time. I wouldn't say we have a huge, you know, interchange, but I'm fine with that. I come here to kind of — it's my studio, and —

MS. SHEA: You talked quite a bit about academics, but — and I don't know if this is a question that's less applicable now. But they wonder if you have any thoughts on the differences between a university-trained artist and someone who learned their craft outside of academia.

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah, I mean, I think — [laughs] — generally, you're more — you know, much more kind of — you've been opened up to a much bigger kind of world through the university, I think. And that — I've seen that through people. And most of the people that I see here are university-trained. I mean, I don't know of that many — I know that they're out there, but I think that they end up kind of staying in more the production kind of mode of glassmaking than in the art gallery end of it.

So I really think that you're just exposed to so much at the university. I think it's just a huge advantage. I mean, especially if you come out of a liberal arts background the way I do, where — and I think that that was important for me. I mean, I didn't go to an art school any step of the way. I went to a liberal arts undergraduate school and graduate school, so I had to take all these other electives. I think that that's really great. You know — for me, it was really key. You know, and I think that in some ways, when you come out of a school like RISD — RISD may be an exception in some ways.

But I think — I think still, you don't get the same kind of scope.

MS. SHEA: So it sounds like that's another one of your pieces of advice, perhaps — is —

MR. CHARDIET: Yeah. Yeah, don't be — you know — I mean, don't be afraid to go to a liberal arts school for your art training. I mean, I think that — you know, I think that a lot of people can really look at all these electives as a negative thing. And I probably did — [laughs] — when I was there. I was like, "Oh, my gosh; I just want to be in the studio making things."

Well, thank goodness I wasn't, you know, because I was — I was opened up to so many different things, from different language courses to — I remember an ethnomusicology course that I took in graduate school, these incredible dance classes — you know, and I'm a terrible dancer. But I took these African dance classes, and — oh, it just went on and on. And I think I probably had a lot more than my fair share of art history classes, but there was an expert at Kent on Frank Lloyd Wright, which was really great. So, you know, I think that that would be a good piece of advice, actually.

And they're usually a lot less expensive — [they laugh] — than art schools. You know? So people, I think, automatically think, "Oh, it's a state, you know, school; it's not going to be that good." Well, they get an awful lot of really good faculty at those state schools, you know?

MS. SHEA: Well, that's terrific. It seems like that might be a good place to end unless there's something else you wanted to add along the way.

MR. CHARDIET: No. I think that that's a good place to end.

MS. SHEA: Well, great. Thank you so much for sharing your time and your studio.

MR. CHARDIET: Thank you. Thank you, Josephine. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]