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Oral history interview with Robert Weingarten, 2009 October 20-22

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Robert Weingarten on October 20-22, 2009. The interview took place in Malibu, CA, and was conducted by Shannon Perich for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Robert Weingarten reviewed the transcript in 2019. 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

SHANNON PERICH: All right. This is Shannon Perich interviewing Robert Weingarten in his studio in Malibu, California on October 20th, 2009 on behalf of Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is disc number one.

Bob, thank you so much for letting me talk with you today. I'm excited to be here and ask you these questions, some of them again, and some of them for the first time.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: A great pleasure.

SHANNON PERICH: Can you tell me about where you grew up?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I grew up in Brooklyn, New York, in what you would refer to as the inner city.

SHANNON PERICH: In New York proper? You said Brooklyn.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Brooklyn, New York.

SHANNON PERICH: In Brooklyn, New York. So it's—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: A suburb of New York, one of the boroughs of New York.

SHANNON PERICH: Right. And what did your parents do?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: My mother was a housewife, and my father worked in a garment center factory.

SHANNON PERICH: And what did he do there?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: He was a sewer; he worked at a sewing machine.

SHANNON PERICH: Were they native New Yorkers?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No, no, neither one of them weren't even native Americans. My father came from Poland. He was born in a city right outside of Krakow, closest to Krakow, Poland. He came here as a teenager. My mother was also born in Europe, I'm not exactly sure what city, and then went to Canada, grew up in Canada, and then came here as a young woman.

SHANNON PERICH: What was her maiden name?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Her maiden name was [Ida] Lewis.

SHANNON PERICH: Lewis? It doesn't sound very Polish. [They laugh.] And how did they meet?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I really don't know.

SHANNON PERICH: Did you father come by himself or did he come with his family?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: He was one of seven. He had six brothers and sisters, and they came over in groups. His father came first and left the mother there with all the kids, originally. Then two of the girls came with the grandmother. And then another group. And then he was the oldest male of the family. There was a female older than him, but he was the oldest male. And then he and his brother came over last. They went from Poland to Austria to live with some relative in Austria for a while when the father was in the U.S., and then they cameby ship to the U.S.

SHANNON PERICH: And was—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Ellis Island and so on.

SHANNON PERICH: Was Weingarten the name they brought with them from—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, as far as I know.

SHANNON PERICH: And where did you go to school?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I went to public school. Going to the beginning?

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Public school, P.S. 156 which is in Brooklyn, New York. And then I went to George W. Wingate High School. In between, there was the Somers Junior High School. In those days, you went seven, eight, nine to the junior high school and then to high school. I went to Wingate High School. And then I went to CCNY [City College of New York] to Baruch [College] where I did a BBA, a bachelor of business administration.

And then I entered a program at NYU on a Ph.D. in economics, which I did not complete. I didn't do the thesis.

SHANNON PERICH: Everything, your ABD, all but dissertation. [They laugh.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: You got it.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. And what was your introduction to photography?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: My introduction to photography was like most people's in those days, a box camera, a Kodak box camera, which I fooled around with a bit, and it fascinated me. And from that, I went to—I saved up to get a 35-mm camera. I'll never forget this, because I saved up to get a 35 mm camera, because I really wanted the real deal, right? And there was a company in New York called Peerless that was a retailer, a camera retailer, right? And they would have these specials on Saturday morning.

And I remember, I saved up something like $18 to buy—

SHANNON PERICH: Wow, that's a lot of money.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yeah, it was a special. And I saved. I worked after school and all that, and I saved $18. And I got, at the wee hours, I got there in a long line, and I ended up at the last, because it was a basically bait-and-switch deal. They'd sell a few of those, and then people would be in the store, and they'd sell everything else. But I got the last of the specials on the 35 mm camera. And I got to that, and then an uncle bought me a camera called Soligor. I don't think I've ever even seen the name since. It was—

SHANNON PERICH: How do you spell it?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: S-O-L-I-G-O-R—Soligor.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And it was a twin lens reflex camera, looked like a Rolex. It was like a poor man's Rolex. [Laughs.]

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh, Roloflex you mean.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Roloflex. I meant Roloflex, a poor man's Roloflex, right? And that was so I had the twin lens, and I had the 35 mm.

SHANNON PERICH: And that's when you were still in high school?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No, this was before high school.

SHANNON PERICH: Oh.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. This was probably in junior high. This was in junior high. And then I did a darkroom. We lived in a three-story walk-up apartment in a tenement. And it had one bathroom. And I made the bathroom into a convertible darkroom.

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And the way I did that was, I had plywood, I had gotten a sheet of plywood that would go over the bathtub, right, and I'd put my trays on that. I had an enlarger with no fan to cool it—[laughs]—so I had to use it quick and be done, because that was that.

Actually, it's very funny, because I remembered from that very poor background, I remembered enlargers as being phenomenally expensive, because they were to me in those days. And then many, many years later, decades later, I was building a darkroom on my property out here in California, and I needed to get an enlarger. And I went into Bel Air Camera [Los Angeles, CA], and I was shocked to see how not really expensive enlargers are. [They laugh.]

SHANNON PERICH: It's all about perception.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yeah. I used to think of enlargers the way people think of Rolls Royces. So anyway, so I had that. And then I'd have the black shade behind the regular shade to pull down and the safety light. And that was my convertible darkroom. And I used that for years.

SHANNON PERICH: How did your parents feel about it?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Just wanted to make sure that I left the bathroom okay when I was finished using it. [They laugh.] That was about as much attention as they paid to it. And my room was full of photographic magazines. I had a little bookshelf in the room, which was just loaded with photography information and photographic magazines.

SHANNON PERICH: So did they—they weren't—it sounds to me like they weren't—they didn't dissuade you from it. They let you just do whatever you wanted to do, but they didn't necessarily have a specific "go, Bob, go" kind of support.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No, no. They promoted other things in my life. I played the violin, they got me violin lessons. They were positive in that. I also was a tennis player and played competitive tennis, and they didn't pay much attention to that, either. [They laugh.] It was just the violin they paid a lot of attention to, and my academics they paid a lot of attention to. But the photography, tennis, that was just something I did. They didn't pay much attention to it at all.

When I got into high school, I went to a high school called George W. Wingate High School, and it had been a model school that was specially built and designed and had every major thing, which was amazing for me because it was just a bus ride from where I lived. And I'd go on that bus, and when I got out the other end at the school, it was a whole different world, because that was a school with a campus, a high school with a campus, right in the middle of Brooklyn, New York. And it was amazing.

And one of the things it had was a phenomenal darkroom and photographic equipment. So I became photo editor of the newspaper so that I could get a key to the darkroom and the use of the photo equipment. So from there on through my high school years, I had photo equipment and a darkroom that I could use at the school, which was fabulous, because that was really good equipment.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. Do you see—you played violin for a long time. Still do?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. Occasionally.

SHANNON PERICH: Occasionally.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: You wouldn't want to listen to me now. [They laugh.]

SHANNON PERICH: But music is an important part of your life—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: —we know from other activities. And do you see that there's, for you, personally, is there a relationship between music, the violin-playing, and the production of photography, your production of photography?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I'm going to give you a yes and no, all right? The yes is that music is, in the end, about a composition that's satisfying, that somehow through that composition it satisfies itself, it has a form and a structure that is satisfying. And whether you know why or don't know why is less important than the fact that it works for you, right? If you know why, maybe it works deeper, works at a different level or whatever, but it has to work even if you don't know why. Just listening to the music, it has to work. Then if I tell you about Bach and the complexities of a composition and all that you may be more informed and so on.

And that's true also with art and photography, right? Photographic art and other forms of art—that the composition in the end has to work for you, you the viewer. And hopefully, if you know more about it, it informs you, and it may be a deeper experience, and so on and so forth. But without any knowledge, it should work.

So in that sense, I find just the compositional aspect of life, that music and photography relate in that way.

In the way it doesn't relate for me is that because I'm not a composer, because I learned performance music, I'm a violinist, there's not a huge amount of creativity in that, so much as understanding the music we're playing and technically being able to do it and emotionally being in tune to it and having what we would call musicality, right?

That for me is different than what I do in photography, because in photography I'm the composer, right? So it's a different—for me, that's the creative aspect of the art rather than the performance aspect, which is my relationship to music.

If I were a composer, I might feel differently about how they interrelate more closely.

SHANNON PERICH: You mentioned that you went to school for business. And you spent a lot of years in the world of finance. Why did you not pursue photography after high school when you were building such credibility for yourself and experience and all of that? And then at what point did you decide that you did want to pursue it full time?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, the story I've told many, many times, and it took place about midway through my high school career. I went for an annual physical, and the M.D. happened to be a family friend. And as I was sitting there, he was sort of interested in me and what I was going to do and what my future would be. And I had very good grades in school. I was top of the class.

And he said, "Bob, what are you going to pursue? You know, what college are you planning on going? What discipline are you interested in? What do you want to do?" And blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And I said, "Well, there are two things that are really important to me. One is, I really hate being poor. We're poor, and I really hate being poor. And the other is, I'm passionate about photography, and I want to be a photographer." And he said, "Bob, I'm afraid you're going to have to choose." [They laugh.]

And that's what—that really was—that was a turning point, it really was. Because I left there, and I really thought about it. And I really thought—

[Telephone rings.]

SHANNON PERICH: Go ahead.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Okay. I really thought about it. And I thought about how I wanted to pursue not being poor, and that I'd best pursue that before I pursue my photographic interest and passion. And so I decided to study finance and move in that direction.

Now, all that time, while I was studying finance, while I was involved in the business world, while I was building corporate enterprises, I was involved in my photography, but I was involved in it avocationally. I had a darkroom. I always had good equipment, because then I could afford it. [Laughs.] And I would pursue it on my own.

SHANNON PERICH: What kind of subject matter did you choose?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Landscape, and almost exclusively landscape, and there was a reason for that. The reason is that, as I told you, I was brought up in the inner city in New York. I went to college and graduate school in New York. I went to Wall Street originally to start my business career, and I was always surrounded by the urban environment and lots of people and lots of movement going on and lots of noise and whatever else goes with it, right?

And my serenity was to move out of that environment into a totally different, unrelated environment which was the landscape. And if you go back, just keep going back and back and back through my work before it ever was at the level where I would sign a photograph, but going all the way back, you'll find that the landscapes don't have any people in them. It was never about the people in the landscape until I did the Amish.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It was always about the landscape, and it was to be away from the people, to be in a serene environment, and to do that.

Now, the interesting thing about that is that, on the one hand, I wanted that, right? On the other hand, I think, because of my background and the way I grew up and where I lived and what made me comfortable and uncomfortable, while the landscape made me serene, vast land without the hand of man made me uncomfortable also, so that my landscapes are usually touched by the hand of man, but you don't see people in them. So it's plowed fields, rather than the raw landscape.

And a good example of that would be my Scottish landscapes. I mean, in Scotland, you can go and find very raw landscape never touched by the hand of man. There are other parts that are farmed, that are generally touched by the hand of man. One hundred percent of my Scottish landscapes are the latter, touched by the hand of man.

SHANNON PERICH: When did you come to that conclusion? Did you—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I think I've always known it. I realize when I go to areas that are vast areas like mountain ranges, whatever, vast areas without anything that man's been involved with, what a lot of landscape photographers would love—you know, they'd say, "This is great, this is untouched, this is pure, this is great"—I find a sense of discomfort. It's too overwhelming for me. It's too vast for me. It doesn't embrace me. And so I'm more comfortable in Tuscany—[They laugh]—in Provence, you know, in places like that than I am in a vast wilderness. I'm not comfortable there.

SHANNON PERICH: "Serene" is the word that I had used in preparing for the interview and thinking about your landscapes. So it's good to know that—[laughs]—at least I'm on target with—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: That is the prime thing.

SHANNON PERICH: And "quiet" is the other word that I had used.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: And so I think it does make sense. It absolutely makes sense the way that you've described —

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It's interesting that you use the word "quiet" because the very first book that I did of landscapes, that was published at the Center for Photographic Art [CA], in conjunction with an exhibition there, I had suggested to the curator that he use the word "quietscapes," which he didn't like. So he used "earthscapes." So the name of the book is *Earthscapes* [Center for Photographic Art: 1999] But really, "quietscape" really was what it was about—serenity and quiet.

SHANNON PERICH: It will be interesting when you see the "New Topographics" show [George Eastman House, Rochester, NY]. I got a preview of it with Edward yesterday. And we had a dialogue about this question of, like, it's reason gone awry, or the sense that Western ownership gone bad, in most of these. And the relationship of the human to the landscape. And there are very few people also in these landscapes, so I'm eager to hear what your experience of these photographs will be.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, yes, interestingly, you know, I've seen a lot of work over the years, and it's very popular work, and it's sometimes noted work that describes the destruction of man in the landscape. You know, man encroaching on the pureness of the landscape and destroying it and all that.

And mine reads 100 percent the opposite of that vision of man and the landscape. Mine is, how beautifully enhanced that landscape is. But we're talking about—

SHANNON PERICH: But there's coexistence.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —rural kind of landscape. We're talking about farming. We're talking about things like that. We're not talking about people building buildings in the middle of the landscape. But I seek, I search out those places, those scenes, those areas where I think that man enhances the landscape, right? But that's just the opposite of what you usually find in landscape photography that deals with man and the landscape. They usually make it a negative commentary; I'm making a positive one.

SHANNON PERICH: Coexistence.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. Well, you mentioned seeking out those landscapes. How do you go about—certainly, I don't imagine that most people even driving by the places that you've driven by, can see them in the same way that you have seen them. I always think about, you know, Ansel Adams jumping out on October 31, 1940 for *Moonrise*. "There it is! I've seen it!" I mean, do you have that kind of experience when you see some of these

landscapes?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, absolutely, but it's a very—the landscape, the whole approach to landscapes is a very deliberate approach that I have. It starts with me just looking through a million books of pictures. And sometimes, I'll spot landscape in the tiniest little thing.

For example, I was looking through a book that had—it couldn't have been more than an inch-and-a-half by an inch-and-a-half photo that was taken in the Palouse Region of Washington, D.C., [sic].

SHANNON PERICH: Washington state.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I mean, Washington state. I'm sorry. I'm looking at you, I'm thinking D.C. [They laugh.] And I thought, that is the most unusual landscape I've ever seen, also touched by the hand of man, because it was the plowing of the fields versus the unplowed fields that created this incredible contrast and undulations and what I thought was very beautiful. It was tiny, right? And it said Palouse. I never heard of Palouse.

SHANNON PERICH: I hadn't either until—[inaudible].

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So then I started investigating the Palouse, right? Then I found pictures of the Palouse. Then I looked at the Palouse in various seasons. Then I called the chamber of commerce there to see what they could send me. And then I spoke to a photographer who lived in the area about when is the land this color and that color and the other color and so on. So I learned more about that.

Then when I go—do you want to hear the process?

SHANNON PERICH: Yes, absolutely.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Then when I go, I go about it in a very deliberate way. So I pick the area. Let's say it's the Palouse. I pick the time of year that I want to be there, right? And then I make the trip. When I'm there, the first day or so, I take no photographs. I have my equipment with me just in case something extraordinary happens. Maybe, you know, I might shoot. But I try not to take photographs. I try to just do a reconnaissance. And I just drive around the area, familiarizing myself with it, and I have a notebook and a computer program. And the computer program is a program that shows at a particular longitude and latitude. And I usually—I will print this before I go so I have it as a printout. At the longitude and latitude that I'm going to, when will the sun rise, and what angle will it be at every 15 minutes of the day, all right?

SHANNON PERICH: What's the name of the program?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: They've changed the name. It used to—I think it was called *Sun*—I'll look it up for you.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay. You can answer at a later day.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I'll answer it later. But it was a DOS program. This goes way back.

SHANNON PERICH: Oh, my goodness, it is ancient.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. This is ancient programming. [They laugh.] Now they have updated things, so that's why I've forgotten.

SHANNON PERICH: It's okay.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: But this program, which was a DOS program, and it was put together by a photographer somewhere and he sold maybe three copies of it, to me and two other people, right? [They laugh.] But it was very valuable for me, would give me that information.

So then if I came on a scene—and we'll go back to the Ansel Adams where he talks about previsualization,—I do think that one of the key things that separates snapshots from, call it, photographic art, right, is the thoughtfulness that you put into it, right, in the landscape photography I'm talking about. That if you just come there and accept the light as is and take it, you get one kind of thing. And that's very acceptable to a lot of people, not to me. And it certainly wasn't to Ansel Adams, right?

Adams thought about what scene, how he wanted that scene to look, previsualized it, and then looked for the appropriate light and the appropriate angle to be able to express that.

SHANNON PERICH: He waited sometimes for a long time—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And I very much believe in that for my photography. So what I do is, I'll come upon a

scene, and I'll think, well, where do I want the shadows? What kind of light do I want for this? Where do I want to stand? How do I want to frame this, right?

And I will put down the time of day that I think is best for this scene, where it should be, even what lens might be appropriate in my camera, what lens, whatever, right, to do this, and any other notes that I have about what I'm seeing and how I want to express it, right? And I would write that down. And basically, I printed up my own little journal that was designed for this.

And I would go around for the whole day, and every time I'd spot a place, I would do that, go through that exercise. And in the earlier days, I used a Polaroid. And then when digital first came out, my first introduction to digital, because I thought that that was the future of photography and I didn't want to be behind the curve, so I started playing with digital as soon as there were digital cameras. And I substituted a digital camera for my Polaroid. Never thought of it as the real deal, right? [Laughs.]

SHANNON PERICH: So this is the 1980s?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. Never thought of it as the real deal, never thought that I would actually take a shot and use that as the shot, right? [They laugh.] This was just a tool, it was a note-taking tool, right? That's the way I thought of digital, the way I thought of the little Polaroid.

SHANNON PERICH: That's an expensive note-taking tool in the '80s, wasn't it? [They laugh.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: But nevertheless.

SHANNON PERICH: What did you use just for the sake of—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Nevertheless, it was the first Nikon. It was, I think, a Coolpix or whatever, whatever it was.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And so in any event, I would go and take a shot to remind me. And then I'd come back to the hotel in the evening, and I would take out all my notes, and then I'd create a new sheet, which would be my schedule. And it would be, that shot is at 6:00 in the morning, so I'll start there, and then I'll do this and this, and then the sun's not good for anything about then, and that's when I'll get breakfast or whatever. And then I'll do these. And then maybe there's nothing until the early evening or late afternoon. And then I'll go here, here and here for those shots. And that's how I would design it.

Now in between, when you're out doing that, you may find something you didn't see before, that maybe the light is appropriate, and you'll do that. Or you'll come to the scene that you think requires a particular light, and the light's not there. But you see in the sky—I'm a pilot. I don't know if you do that, Sharon.

SHANNON PERICH: Sure, I do.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And so, you know, you learn how to read the sky pretty well, about what the clouds are doing and where they're going and how they're moving. So you know, I think, gee, if I really stay here, there will be an opening over there, and the clouds are moving from west to east or whatever, and so on.

So I'll wait for it. And sometimes I've waited hours, literally hours, to take one shot when the light is just right. And that's how I would go about the landscape.

SHANNON PERICH: So were you doing this before you left your businesses to become a photographer full time?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, but not often.

SHANNON PERICH: Not often. [They laugh.] Yes. I can imagine. And I believe you've told me that you always do this alone.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: Usually, except under very rare circumstances.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, yes, practically always. I always try to do it alone. [They laugh.]

SHANNON PERICH: Well, it's hard to have a serene, quiet moment if you are with company. And it's hard to have this concentration and keeping up with the details and the process of—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: You really do it, because it's a very special—I know it sounds like a trite word and overused, but it's a special zone. You know, I really do feel when I'm out there doing my photography that I'm in a separate world, a separate place, it's a different kind of concentration, a different kind of enjoyment. And it really is a solo event.

SHANNON PERICH: I personally think all of that is reflected in the photographs. And so sometimes I think looking at the landscapes and then knowing you, it's like, is this really the same guy? And I think it is because you are in a different zone.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: It's—I think it's a rare gift to be able to do that and to have the luxury of time—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It's a rare opportunity.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes, and rare to be able to find it and hone in on it and actually live that out. So I think it is a privilege to see those landscapes, because we get to have a vicarious moment through that.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Thanks.

SHANNON PERICH: We went to landscapes a little sooner than I thought we would in the questions, but that's okay. But landscapes were the first—sort of the ongoing body of work that you have. Do you continue to do the landscapes today, or have you moved on to other projects? Or do you—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I haven't done landscapes for the last few years. I intend to do something in my next project that involves landscapes, but isn't, won't be anything like what I've previously done. But it will take me back to being outside and doing shots in the landscape.

SHANNON PERICH: What was the first photograph you sold? Was it a landscape?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: What was it?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It had to be. I am not sure. I am not sure. I'll bet you the person who bought it knows. [They laugh.]

SHANNON PERICH: Do you know what year it was?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It was in the mid '90s. I would guess it was around '96.

SHANNON PERICH: When did you commit to being a photographer full time?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: About that time.

SHANNON PERICH: About '96.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: About '96, '97, I decided that this was what I was going to do.

SHANNON PERICH: So being the deliberate, thoughtful guy that you are, were you always plotting to have a career in photography?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I was always plotting to do photography with more and more of my time. I didn't know that a career in photography was possible. And I hadn't thought about it in career terms. I thought about my career as finance, and I had done it to a certain level, and that photography was what I wanted to do. Whether it would be accepted by other people or not, whether it would become what it has become, that wasn't even in my good dreams. [They laugh.]

SHANNON PERICH: Oh, okay. So when did you get this—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: That really happened organically.

SHANNON PERICH: Well, I wouldn't say it happened completely organically being that you are very savvy and know how to, you know—I think there are business skills that you've brought, too.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yeah. Let me put it this way. It began happening very serendipitously and organically. And I wasn't really paying attention to what was happening. Then when I realized what was happening and that this really was at a different level, all right—this may sound a little ridiculous. But as the world got more serious

about it, I got more serious about.

SHANNON PERICH: Sure, no, no, no, that makes sense, yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Do you know what I mean? As others were—the indications were sort of coming from outside to me to be more serious about it. And so then, yes, then I think I applied all the skills that I have—[They laugh]—including business skills to organize what I was doing.

SHANNON PERICH: Well, that makes sense. I was wondering how that transition happened and at what—I think that's an important nuance for us to understand that it wasn't that you spent all your time in finance, thinking when I meet this certain goal, then I'm going to leave this world and emerge myself into this other world. It wasn't like that. It was that you were, in terms of being successful in photography, to the success that you have today.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No. I mean, that wasn't—that literally wasn't something that I could even imagine, that I could even imagine. What happened was, I decided to do my—it was all about doing the photography at a different level, not what would happen with it.

SHANNON PERICH: So audience has really never been a consideration for you.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No, no. What it was, was in mid 1990s, all right, my wife became a skier. Really. And she wanted to spend time in Aspen, Colorado. And I hate cold, get altitude sickness and don't ski. [They laugh.] Outside of that, Aspen was perfect. So—

SHANNON PERICH: Do you get altitude sickness when you fly?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No. I get altitude sickness—because a plane adjusts, you know, the plane has adjustments inside.

SHANNON PERICH: They pressurize it.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. So you're not really at the altitude you're at. But I get altitude sickness in Aspen, Colorado. And my wife just became enamored with skiing, so we were going to Aspen, right? And I thought, what am I going to do in Aspen? Well, I'll do my landscape photography. It is a beautiful place, so I'll do that.

So I went around in Aspen, and I was doing my landscapes and so on and so forth. And I had it printed there. I didn't have a darkroom in Aspen. And they had a very good professional lab there at that time. And they had printed stuff for me and so on. I remember being with friends in Aspen, and they saw what I had done. And they said, "Oh, this is terrific! Can we get this? Can we have this?" And my wife said, "Oh, I want to hang this one in my office." And blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And they were much more excited about it than I was. [Laughs.] I thought it was good to a certain level, but not the level I wanted to be at.

SHANNON PERICH: And just as an aside, are you working in color or black and white?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: At that time, I was working both, color and black and white. And so I said, I'm going to go on a tear, and I am going to get to the level I want to be at, because this is exciting to other people and unacceptable to me. And if I'm ever going to do it and it's what I've always been passionate about all my life, I'm going to do it now. And it coincided at a point in life where I could do it at—

[END OF TRACK AAA_weinga09_1876.]

SHANNON PERICH: This is Shannon Perich and Robert Weingarten in his studio. This is disc two.

All right, Bob, we were talking about David Waite—is that what you said his—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Charlie.

SHANNON PERICH: Charlie Waite—W-A-D-E?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No. W-A-I-T-E.

SHANNON PERICH: W-A-I-T-E. And you had mentioned that he has done 22 books of specific locations.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. And his aesthetic was right on to the aesthetic that I was working on. And so at the time, he had never done a one-on-one master class, call it, with anybody. And I tracked him down, and I told him that I wanted to spend a few days with him, working on photography, right, and working on his aesthetic.

And he said, "Well, I'm doing this, and I'm doing that, and I'm here, and I'm there, and these other places. The only time I could do it is December in Cumbria in England, which is nasty and cold and damp at that time of year. If you want to meet me there." I said, "Fine, I'll see you."

SHANNON PERICH: I've got the gear. [They laugh.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: "I'll see you at that address, I'll see you in Cumbria in December." And I'll never forget, when I got off the plane, his first reaction, it wasn't hello or whatever. His first reaction was, "My, God, you actually came here!" [Laughs.]

SHANNON PERICH: It was a test. [They laugh.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It was like, "You actually came to Cumbria in the winter to see me?" And I said, "Yes." And we spent a couple of days. And I learned a lot from him, because he was the most sensitive to the light, which is what a lot of my photography is about, and knew how to capture it better than anybody I had met.

And so that was a very important time for me and a very important person to meet at that time, because I did probably eight or 10 people like that. I've given you two names. It would be a reach for me to remember any of the other eight, they were so unimportant to me, you know. Charlie was the important one, and that's all you need is one important one.

And so I went with him several times different places and worked with him over time, developing the landscape work.

SHANNON PERICH: So what was that—what does working with him mean? Did you set your camera up next to his camera? Did you assist him? Was it the dialogue?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It was the dialogue. It was mostly going around the countryside and me saying, "I want to photograph that, right, and I want to do it in this light." And him commenting on why I wanted to do what I wanted to do and how I wanted to do it. And it was just dialogue.

As a matter of fact, the most interesting day that we spent was the first day that we met, went to this really, really crummy place. I mean, the places that I would stay for photography I wouldn't stay on a trip with my wife, or something, right? [Laughs.] But this was really a really—really, the kind of B&B in Cumbria, England, where the middle of the bed is a lot lower than the outsides of it, its sort of concave. That kind of place.

And I woke up in the morning. And I was supposed to meet him in the breakfast room at, you know, say, 5:30, 6:00 in the morning, whatever it was. And it was pouring rain. And I thought, "Oh, my God, I've come all the way to Cumbria, and it was pouring rain."

And he said, "Well, I'll tell you what. Why don't we just go to"—they had like a conference room there in this little thing. It wasn't hardly—I guess that's an over exaggeration of what the room was. But it was a room where you could sit and talk. [They laugh.] And he had a slide projector and some of his work. And I had brought some of my work with me, and we just talked for hours about photography and landscape photography and how he goes about his work and what I want to accomplish with mine, and so on. And that was very valuable, because up until then, I really had no dialogue in-depth with anybody whose aesthetic I respected. And so that was meaningful. And that was more valuable than going out and shooting photographs.

SHANNON PERICH: You can always produce better after you've been able to articulate it.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. There's a certain exploration—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: —a sense of, "I'm getting this, I feel like I'm moving towards it." But until you—once you articulate it—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Articulate it.

SHANNON PERICH: —then you can move to a different level.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Exactly. Exactly.

SHANNON PERICH: Do you still stay in touch with him?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, I do.

SHANNON PERICH: Is he still producing?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, he is.

SHANNON PERICH: Did he suggest the Royal Photographic Society [U.K.] to you?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. He was the one who said, "Why don't you—there's a thing called the Royal Photographic Society." [Laughs.] I didn't even know what it was.

SHANNON PERICH: Let's see. I think they've been in existence since 1846 or 1852. I can't remember which now.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. But Americans don't really focus on that.

SHANNON PERICH: I'm sorry, say that again.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Americans—

SHANNON PERICH: No, we don't.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —don't really focus on that. Fortunately, he's British. And he said, you know, "Are you familiar with the Royal?" And I wasn't. And he said, "You should get familiar with the Royal, you should join, and they have a program of Distinctions. And it would be a very good discipline for you to do one or two Distinctions."

He wasn't even suggesting that I go all the way to the Fellowship, right, which is the highest distinction. He just said, you know, "Just do the first Distinction, which is called the licentiateship." Sounds a little dirty, doesn't it? [They laugh.]

SHANNON PERICH: Those Victorians! They have a way, yes. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And then there's an Associateship, and then there's a Fellowship. So the—so I did go through the first level, and it was valuable, because you had to do—you had to submit 10 photographs that were of a level that this board of judges would approve for the first distinction of the Royal, right? And so I had done that. And when I got the Distinction, I was excited beyond belief. And I thought, "Well, this is a good discipline, I should keep doing it, go up the line with it, right?"

So then the next level is an Associateship, more rigorous, requires a different level of work, requires that the work all be united as a project that would hold together in a different kind of way, and requires more photographs that you submit. And they call these panels. In other words, not the judges, we would normally think of the panel as the judges. The panel is what you submit, right, to them.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So I submitted a panel for the Associateship, and they approved that. And then I decided to go for the Fellowship. And there were many fewer Fellows than there are Associates, and fewer associates than there are Licentiates.

The Fellowship requires a bigger panel, still, a higher level, something that you're bringing to the art form, you know, in a sense.

SHANNON PERICH: Your unique vision, your skill—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, your unique vision, your skill level, everything.

SHANNON PERICH: —it's not—yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And so it requires more.

SHANNON PERICH: Do you have to have a sponsor?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No. And then—you have to have an Associateship.

SHANNON PERICH: Right, but you don't have to have somebody—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: You have to have achieved that.

SHANNON PERICH: —already inside and—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No, no. And then they have two panels that do that, and then a board. And it's the only one that's done in private. The others, they view, there's an audience there. They have a theater, and they bring out the work. And the panel sits and talks, and they don't know whose work it is. They never mention a name. They just say, "This panel is submitted, and these are the things that the photographer said," or whatever. And then they just argue among themselves. And you hear the discussion, which is very valuable.

I went to one of mine, and I could hear them, you know—it's very nerve-wracking, because you're sitting there, and then they have yours, and they don't, you know, they don't know you're there or whatever. And they just discuss it very openly, and then they vote, all right? And that's up through the Associateship.

The Fellowship, there is no audience. It's done in camera. It's just in private. The committee meets, and then a first committee approves it, and if the first committee approves it, it has to go to a second committee. And the second committee is an oversight committee that approves that, and then it goes to the full board. And then they have to approve that.

So there's more steps to a Fellowship. But I don't know very many—there aren't that many Americans who are fellows of the Royal.

And then they have these initials that you can use after your name.

SHANNON PERICH: F.R.P.S.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: F.R.P.S.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: You got it, that's it. So I'm an F.R.P.S. So I have done that. It was a very—to me, it was extremely valuable, because it made you work towards a goal, it make you think about a project as a unit, not just disparate photographs. So it forced the concentration level in a different way. It forced the skill level to a different level. And then it had an end goal, right? And you either did it or you didn't do it. So that was interesting for me and an important piece of advice that Charlie gave me. He wasn't involved with what I did. He just suggested that I do it.

SHANNON PERICH: How long did it take you to work through those ranks?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I'd have to look it up for you.

SHANNON PERICH: You did it in about two years?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, I think it's there in my resume.

SHANNON PERICH: Yeah. I think it's '97 that you received your—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I think it might have been two or three years. If you have my resume—so here we go. The Fellow was in 2000—three years. The first Distinction was '97, then '99, then 2000.

SHANNON PERICH: And have you competed in any of their shows?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: And how did you do?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I competed only in one. I sent in an image called *Lavender [Field] and Lone Tree*.

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh. Which is in the Photographic History Collection [Smithsonian Institution].

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, which is in your collection. And it won the silver medal for their 100—and I don't know which number it was but—

SHANNON PERICH: One hundred and thirty-five, I think.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It was in the 135th competition. And—yes, it was in 2001. It was a silver medal for the 143rd—

SHANNON PERICH: One hundred and forty-third.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —143rd international print competition. And then they obviously published it in a magazine and so on and showed it in Bath, England.

SHANNON PERICH: The big exhibition.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, they have an exhibition now, and they showed the work.

SHANNON PERICH: Did you go and see the other work that was in the competition?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No, I didn't. I—the magazine covered—the Royal Photographic Society publishes a monthly magazine, and the magazine had my work right up front. I don't remember if it was on the cover or right as you open it, but it was a major display of my work. But then it showed other medal winners, you know, lower down. So I got a sense of what went on, what was being exhibited, but I didn't get to the exhibition or for the medal. They give a medal. They actually have a ceremony where they give the medal.

SHANNON PERICH: Oh, wow. [Laughs.] You have it framed somewhere?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I didn't get there for the actual medal. [They laugh.]

SHANNON PERICH: You don't have it hanging here in your studio. Is it in your library at home?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It's in a drawer somewhere, I think. I don't know. [They laugh.]

SHANNON PERICH: You mentioned the Royal Photographic Society magazine, which reminds me that you have owned magazines.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: Did you participate—what magazines did you own? And did you participate in the photography of any of those in terms of editing or thinking about them or cover images?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, first I'll answer which I owned. I owned magazines in several different areas. I owned *Financial World magazine*.

SHANNON PERICH: [Laughs.] Imagine!

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: A natural thing for that. I owned a magazine called *Flight*, which speaks to another, you know, interest that I had. And I owned a newsletter called *Money and Credit*. I owned a magazine called *View*, which was the first trade magazine for the cable TV industry. As it was evolving, we started that magazine to deal with programming of cable television at a time when all the networks thought cable television wasn't going to happen. I owned *Saturday Review* magazine, which was the largest-circulation magazine that we owned. I took it over really as a labor of love, because it dealt with topics that were of interest to me—literature, music, art, all the cultural things.

And to answer your question, I think one of the reasons that I got involved in magazine publishing was because I was so interested in the art direction and the way it looked and so on. And so I did spend more time probably than most publishers do with the art director and looking at the transparencies for the photographs that would go in the magazines and all of that. I did spend time on it.

SHANNON PERICH: Did you ever submit any of your own images to those magazines.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No, no. No, I didn't.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes, I guess it doesn't look too good if a publisher puts his own photos as the cover.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: [Laughs] No, no. It would be hard to turn me down, right?

SHANNON PERICH: Did you learn anything from that experience that you've applied to work in terms of thinking about publication images or color?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No, because I don't tend to think about publication in images. You know, I think about images in terms of display.

SHANNON PERICH: As individual pieces.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: As individual—well, as individual pieces as part of a project. I work in projects, as you know.

SHANNON PERICH: Right, right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: But individual pieces as part of a project. But I think about it in terms of display. I don't think about it the way a magazine photographer would think about it or a newspaper photographer or somebody who just does books. I mean, to me, I don't do books. Books are a result of a body of work that I've done for display, for exhibition, and then a book may happen from that, and does happen—

SHANNON PERICH: It has. [They laugh.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —has happened and is happening.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes, exactly.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: But I don't do work to do a book. I don't set out and say, "I'm going to do a book on this project."

SHANNON PERICH: On this project, right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: On this project. This is going to be a book of so and so.

SHANNON PERICH: Well, that goes back to your lack of concern for the audience. I mean, I don't want to say you don't care about the audience.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right, no, no, no.

SHANNON PERICH: But you're not producing for an audience.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: But I'll tell you something that I did learn from a great magazine editor, a really renowned magazine editor, who's no longer with us. His name is Norman Cousins. You may know the name.

SHANNON PERICH: Oh, sure, sure.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: But Norman worked for me at *Saturday Review*. He was the editor of Saturday Review. He was one of the best-known editors in America, in American history, really, of magazines. He was someone who—and I remember, while I owned the magazine, Norman was given a prize by the Association of Magazine Publishers. And I went to the award ceremony for Norman. And he gave a speech that I haven't forgotten.

There was a part of the speech where he said, "In my lifetime of editing," and by that time he was probably 70-ish, right, he said, "I've noted that there were two types of editors. There are editors who edit for their audience, and there are editors who edit for themselves. The former never succeed." And I think there's some validity in that.

I think that—and I think it's very true, more so true in art than it is in what Norman was talking about. You know, because magazines do rely on an audience and sometimes a large audience and whatever. And what he was saying is that somebody who's trying to pander to an audience and not really producing something that they are passionate about themselves is not going to produce a good product, and they're going to fail. And that was the message.

I think it's profoundly true in art. I think if I had to think about my audience or what would be acceptable or what would sell or what, you know, would be collected by a museum or whatever, it would be—first of all, I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't do it. It would lose everything for me. Second of all, I think I would produce perfectly lousy art.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. [Laughs.] Right. And that's not what people want to see in art museums, is something that is a mishmash of—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And you know, there's a very good—I faced the very—I faced that twice in my recent work. Want to discuss that now or—

SHANNON PERICH: Sure, absolutely.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Okay.

SHANNON PERICH: I was going to save most of icons for tomorrow, but go ahead.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, it's not about the work, it's about just the process. When I had completed my 6:30 series, and I was starting my PALETTE series, I had met Weston Naef, who at that time was chief curator of the Getty Museum, who had formerly been at the Met in New York. And he had been following my work, and finally

acquired it for the Getty. And it was the 6:30 series, right?

And so at that point, I was quite engaged with him and his opinions and so on. And I was beginning the PALETTE series, and I was having a meeting here in the studio with Weston. And I told him what I was going to do. And he told me why it was a dreadful idea to do.

He told me, you know, five reasons why it wouldn't work and I shouldn't do it, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And that should give you pause, you know. Here you're talking to one of the very noted senior curators in America, telling you why your new project is a terrible idea.

And ignoring that, I went and did it, because I think I have to just do what I have to do as an artist. When I completed the work sometime thereafter, Weston was on his way to his home in Ojai [CA] from LA, and passed by Malibu on his way up, and said he was going to be passing by on a particular or whatever, could he come by and see the new work, right, that I had done against his advice.

And when he came in, I happened to be in the restroom of the studio, so I didn't see him come in. And he was—when I got out of the restroom, he was standing, staring at the new work, which was on the jury bar in the studio. And he turned around. And he's not a very demonstrative human being, you know. And he hugged me, right?

SHANNON PERICH: My word! [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: He hugged me, and he said, "Thank God you didn't take my advice."

SHANNON PERICH: [Laughs.] Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right?

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So that was one. I faced it again when I completed the PALETTE work. And I was starting the PORTRAIT work. I was talking to Dale Lanzone, who was one of the directors of Marlborough [Gallery, NY], who was, you know, the gallery that represents me. And I had described to Dale what my next project was going to be. The PALETTE turned out to be a very successful project, both aesthetically, critically, commercially, in every way, all right. And so they had wonderful success with the PALETTE, sales success with the PALETTE

And I sat down, and I said, "I'm doing this new work." And I described what I was going to be doing. And Dale was really upset. He said, "You know, Bob, all the work that we have sold at Marlborough, all the work that we've exhibited of yours in various exhibits at Marlborough, all the success that we've had together, right, is all based on the fact that you can compose in the camera. Everything you've done, you've composed in the camera. What you saw in the viewfinder, you have put onto paper with great fidelity, right."

And you know, they have a crop. The PALETTEs are all uncropped basically. The *6:30*s are uncropped, right? The AMISH, some are, some are not. But basically, it's what I see in the viewfinder, that I've been able to capture it and put onto paper. He said, "That's your hallmark as a photographic artist. That's what you do. Now you're telling me you're going to do work on a computer. You're going to take the various things in the camera, but you're really going to be doing the compositional work in the computer. I don't know if that's going to work. I don't know if we're going to be able to sell that work."

And I said, "Dale, you know, you have to move forward, I think, to be an artist. And sometimes when you think you're moving forward, you're maybe moving backward. Who knows, right? But without trying, you'd never know. And if you stop trying, I don't think you're an artist. So I'm going to move forward. You may determine that I've moved backwards, and that will be too bad, you know, but that will be it."

And then I went and did the PORTRAIT [series] thing, which they, of course, have embraced and have done well with, and so on.

But, you know, there's two examples. One coming from the critical side, let's call it, you know, from Weston Naef, with advice. One coming from the more commercial side, the gallery. But I pursued what I wanted to pursue, right, and that didn't mean that it had to work. I mean, I was fortunate that it did work both times. But it may not have. But that wouldn't have been as important to me.

Failure is not doing it. That would have been—to me, that would have been failure to say, "Oh, I'm not going to do this. I'm going to keep pursuing what Marlborough says or what Weston Naef says or what, you know, some other critic or curator says or some other gallery says." Then you're pursuing the wrong thing for the wrong reasons. That, to me, is failure.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. You mentioned three topics that I want to talk about. You mentioned galleries, the 6:30 series, and the resistance to digital technology, and the anxiety that people, especially early on, have felt about digital technology. But let's start with the 6:30 series, because it's not digital.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It's not digital in terms of capture.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: But it is digital in terms of printing.

SHANNON PERICH: The print, uh-huh. Talk about the—what is the 6:30 series? And what was the concept behind it? Let's explore that for a while.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Okay. The 6:30 series—I've got to step back for a second, because that also started with Weston Naef—[laughs]—but in a positive way—in the sense that what happened was, he was here, looking at the AMISH, and it was before I produced the 6:30 series, and said that—he said, "You know, you've taken—I've seen you take photographs in Europe, here there, Amish community, whatever, but I've never seen you do anything, any project close to home. And I think the mark of a true artist is somebody who can create art close to home."

SHANNON PERICH: That's what Naef says.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And he—yes. And he cited [Alfred] Stieglitz when he was at Lake George [NY] and what he had done on the Equivalents and so on, and all the stuff he had done at Lake George. And then he said, "Well, why don't you do surfers? You know, you did the Amish community. That's a certain kind of thing. Why don't you do surfers? That's a certain kind of thing, right here, right under your own nose." And I said, "Weston, because I could care less about surfers. I'm not going to surf. I don't care about that. That would not interest me at all." [Laughs.]

At which point I thought I would never be in the collection of the Getty Museum, right, because I just—[They laugh]—I thought I just blew that one.

But then I started thinking about the fact that I have a home that faces the ocean. Before I moved to California when I lived in New York, we had a weekend, sort of vacation place at the ocean. I've always been attracted to living near the ocean, but I've never photographed it. And I wondered, well, why hadn't I done this? Why was I so quick to tell Weston I wasn't interested, right?

And the reason—I thought about it—and the reason was because most of the photography that I've seen is slow-shutter speeds of waves hitting rocks, and it's a cliché, and if I see another one I'm going to barf—[laughs]—and I wasn't about to create some.

But then I started thinking about, well, but I live at the ocean. What is it about that that I find particularly exciting? What is it? Is there something different there about that that I find really exciting? And the answer was, the variation in atmospheric conditions that I experience day to day to day, that it's never the same. That when I get up in the morning and open my eyes and look out on the ocean, which I'm privileged to do, I see a different scene every single day.

And then I started thinking of that with relationship to the history of art, and that [Claude] Monet had done 30 paintings of the Rouen Cathedral [Rouen Cathedral series, 1892-1894], and each one shows a different color of a cathedral that's basically gray. And what he's showing is the chromatic change and how it reflects off that cathedral. And he did it at different times of day, at different angles and different times of year.

And he had also done something like that with the HAYSTACKS [series]. And I started thinking about, well, you know, everybody knows that the light is materially different between, let's say, dawn and midday.

SHANNON PERICH: Sure.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: People know that. What people don't realize is how materially different the light can be at the same time of day, at the same exact place throughout a year, especially southern California, where they think of the light as being pretty much the same, .

And then I started relating that to other things that I have been interested in and have read a lot about. And one of them is a thing called chromatic adaptation. I'm very interested in the visual aspect of science, how people see, how the brain records what they see, et cetera.

And one of the aspects of seeing is a thing called chromatic adaptation, where the mind informs the eyes. And so therefore, if you grow up knowing that the ocean is blue, you will accept variations on blue to a degree, but

you won't accept a radical departure from blue, like red. So when you look at the ocean, you never see it red, and yet there are times when, because of the atmospheric conditions and the reflections from the sky, the ocean is in fact showing red, right?

Film is set to a kelvin temperature of light—daylight film, let's say, 5,000 kelvin. change in the color temperature of light will be recorded on a film because it has no—

[Telephone rings.]

—it has no brain, right, so it just records it. It records what you filter, what you don't totally record. So one aspect of the 6:30s was, I wanted to show, what's really there versus what your visual perception of what's there is, how that differs, and how vastly different the same place can be over a period of time, right?

And I set up that body of work in the tradition of making all the decisions up front and then staying with a program for the year, right?

So here were the decisions that I made. One was that I would use the Hasselblad camera. And by the way, you know, every photographer is asked about what camera he'd use and all that. [Laughs.] And we can talk about that at another moment.

But the fact is that I have never been married to one format of camera. You know, I've met people who'd say, "Well, I'm an 8-by-10 or a 4-by-5 or I'm a 35 mm," whatever. I use the equipment that's appropriate for the project that I'm doing.

For this project, I chose the Hasselblad, and there were two reasons that I chose the Hasselblad. One was that the Hasselblad is a square format, and I wanted to produce art where all the visual tension and interest was in the chromatic changes. There's no visual tension in a square. All the sides are equal. There's visual tension in every other aspect ratio, right? It has its own visual tension, the triangle, whatever, a rectangle, which is most art, and so on. So I chose the square, which is the Hasselblad, right?

I also chose it because the film camera; I didn't want to use digital. And you could marginally use digital then, when I was doing this, digital cameras had already come along a lot.

SHANNON PERICH: What year?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And I could have done—this was 2003. And you could have used digital camera. I chose not to. And the reason I chose to use film is to have the transparency as evidence, all right, that the chromatic change was real and not produced in the computer, digitally manipulated, whatever, right? So that was number two.

I bought all the film at the beginning of the year, so it came from one manufactured lot, so there was no variance, presumably, in the film that I used from roll to roll that would distort color at all, right?

I used a long lens to compress the planes so that what you look at would bring everything together, so you weren't looking at the depth of the ocean, the depth of the clouds, the little strip of land—which I'll come back to in a minute—that was in there. You were looking at all almost on one plane and just looking at the real color, what was happening to the color.

I chose an aperture or apertures that would always give me a shutter speed that was at least one-thirtieth of a second. And the reason for that is that the eyes blink at a thirtieth of a second. And so I wanted the shutter speed to at least accumulate the amount of light that you see in a blink of the eye, right?

And then lastly, there were a couple of angles at which I could have shot this from my home. One angle would have been straight out on the ocean, would have just showed you ocean and sky. I chose a different angle, an angle where you could see ocean, a strip of land and then sky. And the reason I did that was so that you would understand that the locus was specific and never changed.

And even though I knew that 80 percent of the time you would not see that strip of land because the atmospheric conditions makes it more of an abstract, 20 percent of the time you would. And you could go back and look at that in some of the photographs in the project and understand that it was all about the same location. Whereas, if I just took the ocean and the sky, I could have been anywhere in the world taking ocean and sky, and you wouldn't know, and there would be no way to prove it, right?

So those were the rules. And as I said at the beginning, it was based on the tradition of rule-based art, that I set the rules and then I—

SHANNON PERICH: Executed them.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —executed them. And then I set the camera on a tripod, marked on the ground so nobody could move it.

SHANNON PERICH: [Laughs.] I was going to say, hope nobody knocked it. Yeah.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: You know, and when they moved it, there were markings on the ground that showed it. Everything was set up, and it stayed set up for an entire year. And every day at *6:30*, except for some days when I wasn't home—so it doesn't cover every day of the year, but it covers pretty much the year—I took the same shot at 6:30 a.m.

SHANNON PERICH: And what was the result?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: The results were surprising, even to me, because as I said, I knew about chromatic adaptation, and I had read about chromatic adaptation, but how do you experience it, right? You experience by seeing the photographs and remembering what you saw—

SHANNON PERICH: Thought you saw. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —or what you think you saw, right?

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And when I got the very first roll of film back and printed it and looked at it, I could not believe the variance. First of all, the variance day to day. Second of all, the variants from what the film saw to what I thought I was seeing, right?

And the interesting thing is, as the year went on, and I kept doing it and developing it and printing it, because I was doing it on an ongoing basis—I didn't hold it all to the end and then print it—I was learning to see better. I was capturing more with my eyes from the daily shot, so that more towards the end of the project than the beginning of the project, I had a better understanding of what I was seeing. I was seeing closer to what I was recording than I did at the beginning. So you really can, you know, train—

SHANNON PERICH: Retrain your brain.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —train your brain to see. It forces to see. And the interesting thing is that that's been a rather popular series, and the book continues to sell. It's, what, six years later, so whatever. And people have told me, who have the book, that they see more in the morning light where they live or what they look at and so on—

SHANNON PERICH: That's terrific.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —because it forced them to think about it and see that. That's wonderful.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. I think one of the most fantastic presentations of that work was on the grounds at George Eastman house.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. That was.

SHANNON PERICH: The idea of bringing these California sunrises to a snowy January outside the George Eastman house, I think that's really spectacular.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: That was. And it was not my idea. That was Tony [Anthony] Bannon, who heads up George Eastman House, told me that he wanted to show the 6:30 series, and I was thrilled and delighted. And then called me probably a couple of months after he had already told me he wanted to do it, and then said, "I have this terrific idea. I'm going to show them outside of George Eastman House." And I said, "When?" And he said, "In the winter." And I was, like, dead silence. [They laugh.] And he said, "What's the matter? What's the matter?" And I said, "Are you kidding me?"

I said, "First of all, I don't know how you're going to do it. Second of all, why would you do it?" And he said, "Well, you don't understand, this is going to be spectacular, having those colorful morning light shots of Malibu, California in front of George Eastman House in the snow in the winter is going to be spectacular." And I didn't think he'd be able to pull it off.

And I also knew that he needed permission of the Interior Department [Department of the Interior], because it's a historic landmark, and they've never shown photographs on the front lawn of George Eastman House.

So anyway, it took about a year, I think, but he got permission. And they built specially designed housing for it,

and set it up in a way where the wind wouldn't blow them down—[laughs]—even in the wind in the winter. And it was spectacular, spectacular. And it stopped traffic, by the way, in Rochester [NY]. As people drove by—it's on a thoroughfare where people drive by George Eastman House every day on their way to work to downtown Rochester. And it literally stopped traffic on that street as people saw this thing for the first time, they saw these photographs outside George Eastman House in the snow.

SHANNON PERICH: They needed that hope in the midst of a Rochester winter. [They laugh.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, you do.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes, yes, the sun is rising somewhere in the world!

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: You do, you do.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. And of course, then it made the cover of the Art section of *The New York Times*.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, the front page.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. So that's spectacular. We have about five minutes left on this tape, do you want to take a break at this point, or do you want to talk for another five minutes?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Let's take a break.

[END OF TRACK AAA_weinga09_1877.]

SHANNON PERICH: This is Shannon Perich and Robert Weingarten. This is disc three.

We were talking about the 6:30 series and its success, and your choice to use film but print digitally. You mentioned earlier that you had an introduction to digital photography doing landscape—your landscape work. And then I know that during your project *Another America*, there was another shift that happened, in terms of that technology and your work.

Can you talk about that a little bit?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. As I said, I started—let's separate into two different things: the digital capture and digital printing, right. So I think you are asking me now about digital capture.

SHANNON PERICH: Let's talk about digital capture and then we'll talk about digital printing.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Okay. So digital capture, what happened was, I started with the very beginnings of digital cameras, right; and then they moved from very basic to SLRs [single-lens reflex]; and I think the first one that was really, quote, unquote, "professional grade" was 6 megapixels—and that was a Nikon that I had. And so I just kept following the trajectory of that. But while I was doing so, it was—I was just using it, as I told you, like a "note taker," or snapshots, or whatever. I never really thought of the quality, the capability as equaling what I could do with film, and so I never thought of using it for digital capture of the actual image in a project.

When I was doing the Amish book, I started doing it with film. I was using a F-5, a Nikon F5 film camera—handheld, because it was the nature of the work, for the most part, I mean there were shots that were—

SHANNON PERICH: And this—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —that were on a tripod, but a lot of it was hand-held because of the nature of what I was doing.

SHANNON PERICH: And this is a project that's done in black-and-white?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: This is a black-and-white project. Well, it's actually filmed in color. I'll explain that later—[laughs]—all right?

SHANNON PERICH: Okay.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: There was some black-and-white film, right; then I decided to film it in color and convert it to black-and-white. Might as well stay on it while I'm on it. It's a departure from what we're talking about.

SHANNON PERICH: It's okay.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: But the best way to have control over black-and-white images in the digital age—because the output was digital, the capture was film—and then, to complete what I was saying earlier, as I was

going through that project, the digital cameras were getting better—[laughs]—and better and better and better. And it reached a point where I said, "Well, wait a minute. I don't know that I'd be able to distinguish, really, between what I'm doing in film now and what I could do with this particular digital camera." It was the latest and the greatest at that time. I don't even remember which it was, all right.

And so the last couple of trips that I took to do the Amish work, I took film and digital. And the last one I think I just did digital. And then I wanted to see if I could make a seamless move from all those film shots to the digital captures, and see if you could tell the difference in the output, right. And you couldn't. And then I knew that I could be using a digital camera in my actual work. So that transition took place during that project. And since then—just as an addenda, I've not shot a roll of film.

SHANNON PERICH: Wow. And that's 2001, is that right—2002?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: That went from 2000 to about 2004, that project. I think I started taking them in 2000, and over a four-year period—

SHANNON PERICH: Okay.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —I did that. I did it—it was—

SHANNON PERICH: We can put the dates in later.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I was doing the 6:30s during one of the years when I was sort of finishing up the Amish. Those were the days that I was awake then. [They laugh.] But the end of the Amish, I was using digital. The Amish went until about 2004. The 6:30s were in 2003. And it was the end of the Amish that I did that. So from some time in 2004 until now—so the last five years, I've not shot a roll of film.

SHANNON PERICH: Although, there's plenty still in the fridge. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, there's outdated film in the fridge. [They laugh.] It's a start—

SHANNON PERICH: Next to the Diet Cokes. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: [Laughs.] You're right. You've seen that. [Laughs.]

SHANNON PERICH: I did. So you were saying about how you work to—the Amish you captured in colored film, but later converted to black-and-white—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Okay, so what happened was—

SHANNON PERICH: —and printed to digital.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —and we can go into it more depth when we talk about the—whenever you want to talk about the Amish project.

SHANNON PERICH: We could do it now. This is a good time.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: All right, so—well, why don't we talk about that, because—and then I'll come back to this color, black-and-white thing.

SHANNON PERICH: Sure.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: When I went to—I didn't set out to do the Amish project. I was in New York. I was showing my work at a gallery show in New York. I wanted to go somewhere and do landscapes. And I was thinking about, "Where should I go to do landscapes?" This is before I, obviously, arrived in New York—I mean, I thought about it before. But I knew I was going to New York, and I wanted to know where in the East I should go and do landscapes, because I wanted to do a landscape shoot at the same time, after the opening of the show.

So I thought about the fact that one of the things that's true of my landscapes, in addition to the fact that you don't find people in them, the other thing is that you don't find telephone poles, billboards, wires. You don't find any of the things that represent modern life, and so you can't place them in time. You look at the landscape, and it's touched by the hand of man. You don't see man, and you don't see anything else that represents modern society. So they're pure in that sense.

So I was wondering, "Where could I go?"—and a lot of that is in Europe; a lot of those are European landscapes—"But where do I go in America where I can get that kind of purity of landscape, but also touched by the hand of man?" I want to be around—I like being around farms and farming. [Laughs.] I never lived on a farm in my life—

but I'd like being there.

So I thought, well, you know what, when I was on Wall Street we had branch offices in Pennsylvania, all throughout Pennsylvania. And one of the places that we had branch offices was near Lancaster—it was in York, Pennsylvania, and that York-Lancaster area is right adjacent to Amish country. So I used to go drive through Amish country sometimes just for the hell of it when I was visiting the branch office in York.

And I thought, well, gee, I know the Amish country. Why don't I go there? They don't believe in electricity. They don't have telephones, so there's going to be no poles. There'll be no wires. There won't be billboards. They just wouldn't allow that in their communities. So it would be pure landscape. And, they're farmers, so it's touched by the hand of man. Perfect. So I'm going to go and do landscape in Pennsylvania when I finish up in New York. It's just a drive, right.

When I got to Amish country, I started and I did take a color landscape shot when I arrived the first evening. And then I took a shot that had a little cart going across the horizon in the distance. And it was a color shot, and there was this little cart, buggy—horse and buggy going in the horizon in it. And I referred to it as "a gesture in the landscape,".

And it was unusual for me. It was an unusual shot, because I would normally have waited for that cart to leave the scene and then just take the landscape. But somehow I just found the composition very appealing to me with that little cart in there, and I took it that way. So it was already a slight departure.

The next morning, I got up—it was a Sunday morning and it was raining, and I just wondered, I wonder how the Amish go to church? I wonder where they worship, what they do? And so I figured I'd go out with my car and drive around Amish country and wait until I see a lot of carts—[They laugh]—and then follow a lot of carts, because then they'd be going to wherever they worship, right.

And that's what happened. I went out, and then I saw a lot of carts. So I just followed the carts and they went to a farm. They'd didn't go to a church. And I thought, "Well, this is interesting. They must worship at each other's farms," which I later found out that that's what they do, all right. And they detached the horses from the carts, and they leave the carts there —just sitting—

SHANNON PERICH: Right. The poles—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: The poles are down to the ground, and the horses are in the corral, or in the barn, or wherever they put them. And then they go and they worship in the house or in some part of the farm.

And so I arrived on the scene and I saw these carriages sitting there, right, and it was sort of rainy. And I thought, this is very interesting, you know. This is the kind of shot that Stieglitz would have taken around the turn of the century. And these people think they're living in the turn of the century—the turn of the previous century, 1900. And I wonder if I can capture this shot in a way that it would have been captured in the year that they are trying emulate the way they live their lives?

And so I had cameras with me—I had a Hasselblad and a F5; I also had the Linhof with me; I had several cameras. And I decided that I was going to take the shot with black-and-white film, all right. And I took the color film out of the camera, and I loaded it with black-and-white, and I took the shot.

And then I thought, you know, this is really—much more interesting than the landscape here is the way these people live within this landscape, and maybe I should have this departure from what I normally do and spend the next few days photographing this area, and the people in the landscape, and how they're living in that landscape. And I'll do it in black-and-white film, because I was thinking about the capture. I wasn't thinking about the output, except that the output would be black-and-white. But I hadn't really thought it through, right.

So I was taking it in black-and-white. I took the first shot with black-and-white film, right. And then I decided, well, I want to print it digitally. And I was working with Mac Holbert at the time, from Nash Editions. He's an expert digital printer. And I had been working with him for some time. I started with him in the '90s—maybe '96, or thereabouts. So I'd been working with him for years, you know, prior to this.

And Mac said, "You know, if you captured this in color, we'd have a lot more opportunity for tonal management in black-and-white," because instead of converting from color to grayscale, I could go into each channel—the RGB, the red-green-blue channel, and I could adjust each channel the way I wanted. I could work in three channels instead of one. And that gave me a lot more tonal variation for black-and-white. It gave me much more control of black-and-white.

So I realized when I went out again, I was sort of seeing it in black-and-white—in my mind's eye; recording it in color; and then converting to black-and-white, giving me more channels to work with, right. So the way to do

black-and-white in today's world is to film in color, or do digital capture in color—

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —because it gives you this ability. So anyway, but I saw the project as a black-and-white project because I wanted to get closer to platinum/palladium than even silver gelatin, to reflect pretty much the way I might have taken it in the age that they think they're living in, and the way it might have been produced. And so that subtle tonality of grays that we wanted, we could achieve in the computer because I had done most of the work in color.

And then I switched over to digital in the end, and did the same with that. And then when the book was produced, you know, I doubt that anybody could say, This was shot digitally; this was shot on film. There's no way—

SHANNON PERICH: You can't tell, no.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: There's no way. And when you look at the actual prints, there's no way to know which was done which. And that told me that you could make this transition.

But at that time I was working—you know, I do—one of the things that I strongly believe in is that the output, in terms of the size, the print, should be appropriate to what I want to express, so that the Amish are not large prints. And so I was working with digital, but I wasn't stretching the envelope, in terms of how big I could go before it would pixilate, or, you know, and so on, because the AMISH is more intimate. They're black-and-white. I don't see them as very large photographs.

When I moved to the PALETTE project I saw those as only large prints, because I was working to produce abstract art and I wanted it to look the size of an abstract painting. So obviously, there would be more scale to that—you know, larger scale to that. So then it was important that digital capability was greater, because I was going to a bigger size from a smaller—

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —beginning.

And the digital technology was just moving along rapidly at that point. I mean, you know, so we went from, you know, 6 megapixels, to 8, to 11.5, to I think it was 18, and now 21.1 is what I'm using. And they're developing, I saw the other day Leica did a demonstration for me of a camera that's 39 megapixels. So you know, it just keeps going along.

But the capability was there for anything that I wanted to do since 2004, let's say. Anything I wanted to do, the capability was there to do it digitally. And, indeed, better—better because you lose something when you translate from a negative to a scanner, to a digital file, to a digital output, instead of going directly from digital to digital.

SHANNON PERICH: You have the opportunity to introduce new artifacts—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So if I'm—

SHANNON PERICH: —and news quality, and—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —so I'm going from a digital camera directly into the computer, right, instead of going from some other medium, right—of transparency, whatever it is, into a scanner, into the computer, there's something lost there.

So even if people think that the film starts maybe with more resolution, by the time you get into the computer on 35-mm—I'm talking about 35 to 35. I'm talking about 8-by-10 too, 35-mm. But if you're dealing with that, I think you're better off digitally now.

SHANNON PERICH: Right. Well, I mean, if you think about that, especially with a 35-mm, there is a maximum capability for resolution because of the size of the chemical particles. But that size is smaller now with pixels. The pixel size, if you were to compare it by pixel size to—I mean, if you were—you can capture more now with a camera than you can with—I mean, with some digital cameras than you can with—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, with silver—with silver.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: But also there's, you know, the limitation—it's sort of self-limiting, in a way, because what's happening—

SHANNON PERICH: The film.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —and I think Leica dealt with it by creating a bigger CCD, a capture—bigger capture mechanism, is that the more pixels you stuff into that same size CCD [charge-coupled device], the more crowded they get, the smaller they get. And so you lose something there.

So now, at least, you know, if you look at the Hasselblad digital, or some of the backs for some of the medium-format cameras, or the new Leica that's coming out next month, that it has a slightly larger CCD. So it's almost the equivalent of going from 35-mm medium format, right. And so you have not only many more pixels, but the pixel size doesn't have to shrink in order to accommodate the smaller CCD.

[END OF TRACK AAA_weinga09_1878.]

SHANNON PERICH: This is Shannon Perich and—it's not recording. This is Shannon Perich and Bob Weingarten, and we have returned from lunch, and we're going to pick up our interview.

So Bob, we got interrupted and we went to lunch. And let's talk a little bit about your relationship with Nash Editions. You had mentioned that with the AMISH project it was Mac Holbert who had suggested to you to work in color film. And you had talked to—and then we—you talked about—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: —that conversion to using digital.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: Well, let's talk about Nash Editions and what that has meant for you—to you.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Okay, a very significant relationship. I started working with Nash Editions in the mid-'90s. And the way it came about was, I was doing the landscapes that I told you about, and the aesthetic that I have is what I would refer to as a "painterly aesthetic," rather than what I refer to as "stark realism." You know, so it's—if we were talking about painting, it wouldn't be the super-realism; it would be closer to Impressionism, okay. And so that's been my photographic aesthetic.

I was doing some photo shoots, and I'd be translating it to what was in those days Cibachrome prints. And then when they sold out—and Cibachrome eventually became Ilfochrome, right. And what was happening is, I would have this soft aesthetic in mind when I film it; when I translated it to a Cibachrome or an Ilfochrome, it increased contrast—

SHANNON PERICH: Yes, that's hard to do. And the surface is—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —right. And even if you mask, and do things that you can do—with more advanced techniques, with those things, it still wasn't moving me closer to my aesthetic. It was moving me further from what I had originally seen in my mind's eye. And the question was: Could I find a methodology that would get me closer to it, right?

At that time I was reading about digital printing and what was happening in digital printing, and I was attracted to the idea of having a choice of multiple substrates to print on, and I thought, Oh, I'm going to try this. So I went to some shop—I forget the name, in Santa Monica, California who specialized in digital printing, and in those days there weren't too many of them. And I gave them materials to work with, and they gave me back perfectly dreadful prints.

SHANNON PERICH: [Laughs.] And when we talk about printing, we mean digital fine art printing, not just anything digital, right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Digital fine art.

SHANNON PERICH: Just for a point of clarification for the interview.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And it was dreadful. But somehow I felt that it was them rather than the technology. And I thought if I could find the right person with the right capabilities, who could follow what I want and achieve it, that somehow, in this new digital world—because I'd recognized what was happening in digital capture at the time, which was also in its, sort of infancy. And, you know, it started a few years before, but it was still in its infancy. And digital output for fine art was really in its infancy.

SHANNON PERICH: Oh, yes. Photoshop doesn't come out until 1991.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. So you know, you're talking about four years into Photoshop, five years into it, it's still in its infancy.

So I was on a plane going somewhere and I read an article, and it mentioned Graham Nash and Nash Editions, and that they worked with [David] Hockney, and they were doing these digital prints, and they had a thing called an "IRIS printer," and what they were doing. And I thought, oh, this is very interesting.

And then I couldn't find them. There was no address listed or anything. And then finally, through somebody, I found out that they were in Manhattan Beach. And it's a really funny story, because I contacted them and they wouldn't respond; and I contacted them; they wouldn't respond; I contacted them a third time and the response I get was sort of curt, and a little nasty, actually. And it said, "Listen, yes we do do digital printing, but we're not a fast-film, processor, you know"—[laughs]—like that. "It takes us a month to produce a print. It costs a lot of money." You know, it was a real discouraging, like, "You don't want—you know, if you're looking for One-Hour Photo, we're not it," that type of thing; and "we're, you know, we're a serious place, and we only deal with serious people," and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

And I contacted them again—[laughs]—and said, "That's exactly what I'm looking for, a serious place, who does serious work, who is interested in fine art and digital. I'd like to meet with you." "Well, we only meet, you know, one hour a week on Thursday mornings, the second Thursday of the month"—what it was—it was some crazy thing. And I said, "Okay, I'll be there. Tell me when; I'll be there."

So it took me, from the time I found out about them to the time I actually met with them, it probably took six weeks to be able to put that together. It was ridiculous.

SHANNON PERICH: Not a great business model, is it? [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I come in and I meet Mac Holbert. And I say to him, "Mac, here's my Ilfochromes," and I show him some Ilfochromes of landscape; "Here's my digital prints of this. If this is what you're going to produce, then you could save us a lot of time and effort and trouble, because this doesn't work."

He said, "If I produced something like that, I'm going to close the shop." [Laughs.] I said, "Well, would you be interested in printing this work?" He said, "Yes, I love it. It's beautiful work. I'd love to print it." "Let me do a sample print for you. If you like it, we'll work together. If not, you know, go on." And I gave him one—one of my favorite ones.

SHANNON PERICH: Which was?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Which was—and still is, *Early Morning, St. Quirico* [1997]. And he printed that and it was beautiful, and it was exactly what I was looking for. It didn't have any of the problems that I was having with the Cibachrome, the Ilfochrome. And I said, "This is it. This is the translation in a print of the work that I'm trying to achieve in the camera."

SHANNON PERICH: What were some of those things that made it a beautiful print? Was it the texture of paper and the—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It was soft. It didn't increase the contrast. It kept—because that particular shot was done in very early morning, sort of foggyish conditions, and the softness of it all was what it was about. And he captured that.

And he did it on Watercolor paper. And the Watercolor paper, the ink goes into the paper. It doesn't sit on top of it, it goes into it, in the technique that was used and the paper that was used. And that integrated it in a way that was different than the way a photograph normally would look, right. And I just fell in love with that.

And that started a collaboration that's lasted for years. And at first it was just a collaboration of me doing my photography, bringing it to Nash Editions and having them print it, right. What I realized—and I had no interest in the early days—meaning, in the mid-to-late '90s, of—I had no interest really in printing myself, or learning Photoshop in-depth, because I didn't want to spend my time inside a studio working on Photoshop. I wanted to spend my time outside of the studio photographing. So I was perfectly happy to have Mac do the printing for me.

What I realized, when we were into that relationship even just a short while, was that the language that I had acquired from the time I was, say, 12 years old—photographic language to describe things, was no longer the best way to describe what I wanted to achieve when talking to somebody who was an expert in Photoshop.

So my vocabulary was limited to things that you could do in the darkroom. So I'd say, "Can you "dodge" this; can you "burn" that; can you"—you know, whatever, okay. And that's nice, and limited. And I would get the proofs

and I'd mark them up that way, using pretty much darkroom terminology; or meet—or go down there and meet with Mac, and sit with him and say, you know, "Can you do this; can you do that."

But I could not describe it in the same terms of the tools that he had available to him. And I realized he had a vast array of tools that he could use, and I didn't have a way of describing—

SHANNON PERICH: Or even knowing what they could do.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —exactly what I wanted or what can be done. So that started to frustrate me a little bit.

I was getting very good results, don't get me wrong, and he was producing very good work, but I wanted to get closer to my work again. I was used to, even as a youngster, being close to my work—putting my hands in the tray in the darkroom, right, being close to my work. And this was giving me a certain distance from my work, right.

So I asked Mac if he would be able to cut out—carve out a time in his week when he could come to my studio and just instruct me on Photoshop; that I wanted to—and my goal was just to acquire the language to talk to him. That's all it was. I didn't want to spend—[laughs]—time doing the work. And so we arranged that every Friday morning he'd be here in the studio, and we'd spend, at minimum, three hours—maximum, all day, depending on what was going on. But we carved out—we both carved out that time, and we did it religiously, and we did it for years.

SHANNON PERICH: Oh, wow.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And during that time he was still printing my work. The only printing that we would do in the studio were proofs, to talk about, and then he would go back to Nash Editions and do the real prints.

In about—I'm not really sure what year it would have been, probably five years ago, maybe more, maybe six—I had reached sort of a crossover point where I printed something here in the studio, and Mac came on Friday, and I said, "Mac, criticize this; tell me about, you know, whatever." And he said, "Well, it's a beautiful print."

And I said, "The truth. How much better would this be if I had printed this at Nash?" And he said, "The truth? It wouldn't be. It'd be this print." I said, "Well, maybe I should start printing in the studio myself." So we agreed that I would start doing that, and use Mac pretty much as a consultant.

And so, starting with, I guess the PALETTE series—the 6:30s, some were there, some were here; it was like a mix of prints. And what I did do for just, I guess, historic records, or for people to know, is Nash Editons has a very distinct mark—

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm. Right, a blind stamp.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —that they use—their stamp. So I created my own stamp for the studio. So everything we print here has my stamp, and everything that was printed at Nash has the Nash stamp. So anybody can tell if this was a, you know, Weingarten Studio print or a Nash Editions print on any of the work.

But since, I'd say the last five or six years, it's all been printed here—100 percent of the work. So 100 percent of the PALETTE project, 100 percent of the new project, and any reprints of older projects have all been printed in the studio here.

And my relationship with Mac is—as recently as yesterday I called them, because I'm working on a new thought, a new project, and I wanted some outside input on some of the things I was thinking about, and I just wanted to get his views on it. So I still—but I hadn't spoken to Mac professionally. You know, I've spoken to him socially, a couple of things here and there, but I probably haven't spoken to him professionally in the last two years. And I just called them yesterday because here I was up against something—I thought there must be a lot of other answers and I'd like to talk to Mac about this. So we still have that relationship.

SHANNON PERICH: Is he still up in Washington or Oregon?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: He's in Oregon.

SHANNON PERICH: Oregon, yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, and loving it.

SHANNON PERICH: Good. And so what turned—from a teaching situation, went to a collaboration, to taking flight on your own.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: That's a—it's more than just having had lessons with him. The commitment to printing digitally is beyond—like, setting up another—is going back to your darkroom and working. You had to buy, and invest and commit to a whole new set of production tools.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. And we could talk a little bit about that if you want. I'm just looking around the studio. There's three printers along the wall—that are very large. Not desktop printers by any means. [Laughs.] And beautiful, you know, drawers here for storage, that are very large as well. Do you want to talk just a little bit about that?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Sure. Well, first of all, at one point, when I knew that digital was the future, and was my future and the future of photography, I gave away my darkroom to charity, to a school in the bad part of town—[laughs]—where I knew that kids don't get that kind of equipment.

By that time I had the very best equipment. And I thought, wouldn't it be nice to give somebody an opportunity that I had when I went to high school and all of a sudden there was great equipment there, and I didn't—I couldn't get my hands on that. So that's what I did with my darkroom. So the darkroom is gone, and has been gone for years.

And I said, it's all going to be about digital printing. And so that then becomes the computers, the software, and the printers, and the substrates that you use. So what we have here in the studio is—I count here one, two, three, four, five, we have five Macs. And that's because we have Macs that are associated with screens that I work on; but we have Macs that drive printers, so that I can work on an image—these images are very large, especially the new project. A typical image could be five gigabytes—one image.

SHANNON PERICH: For single images.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Single images. So when you're transferring that to a printer, you want it off of your—

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —on to the printer that's going to run the computer. So it's running—it's running—the computer is running the printer and freeing up what I'm doing on my computer. So we have computers that run printers and computers that—

SHANNON PERICH: You can work on.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —that you can work on.

Then I have a Wacom—which I used to pronounce "Way-com," until yesterday when the company answered, "Wacom"—[laughs]—when we called them. A Wacom tablet, a W-A-C-O-M tablet—which is a screen where you can use a stylus and work directly on the screen, all right. And that I love, because it allows me to feel like I'm hand-working my art—like I'm painting, or drawing, or whatever. I like working with the stylus on the screen. I don't like working with a mouse when I'm doing art, so I only use a mouse when I have to. 99 percent of the time I'm working with a stylus.

And so the stylus works in two ways: There's a Wacom tablet, which is the screen. It's called the "Cintiq," and I have the largest one they make. And then there's an "Intuos" tablet—the same company, it's also Wacom—which sits flat on the desktop, because I work with a 30-inch Apple screen, a Mac screen, and you can't use a stylus on a Apple directly. So the Intuos tablet allows me to move the stylus when I'm working on the big screen. So I'm working remote on the big screen, not directly.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And then I move things from the big screen to the smaller screen. So it goes from a 30-inch screen to a 21-inch screen basically, to a smaller screen—

SHANNON PERICH: So you've got really got really good eye-hand coordination. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —when I'm working, when I'm working parts of an image, details of an image, and then I can work directly with the stylus on the image on that screen. So that's the way I tend to work. I work with the 30-inch screen, the Intuos tablet, and the Wacom Cintiq. So that's my set-up for working on the compositions, doing my digital work there.

Then, when I have something that I'm going to print, I send it to one of these other computers that are sitting out here. There are two computers with that screen, and those two computers drive these three printers. The printers are Epson printers. I only use Epson printers. I think they make the finest fine-art printers. I've tested all the others.

And we work, depending on the project, with different substrates, depending on what we're doing. And so here you have two Epson printers that are capable of a size that—for me, I print my 40-by-60s on these two, right. These are 9800 Epsons. And there's an 11880 printer, which is the largest fine-art printer made, and that one gives me the capability of doing these 60-by-90 prints that you're looking at for the new project.

SHANNON PERICH: Do you work directly with Epson?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No. No, I don't. They're very aware of me. They came to George Eastman House. They were very thrilled to have Epson prints at that exhibit. They realized that it was Epson prints somehow, they knew it. They went there and they wrote it up for their website. And so there was a big thing on their website about that exhibition.

I recently went to a convention called "NAPP." Do you know NAPP?

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-uh.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It's the National Association of Photoshop Professionals. And they had a convention, and I went there for certain seminars that I was interested in and to see what was new. They have a, you know, like convention booths where you can—

SHANNON PERICH: Right. On the floor—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —see the equipment, the floor of stuff. And I walked by the Epson thing, and I didn't know anybody, but they knew me, because I was wearing a badge. And so—one of the people who was—somebody who was at George Eastman House, who wrote up the thing for the website, happened to be there and he was asking me about what printers I was working with, and so on.

And I asked them if they would make a 64-inch piece of—wide paper, because theirs is only 60 [inches], and therefore I have to print a little bit smaller than that for the margins, right, to have the borders. And I asked them if they were thinking of 64 [inches], and they said, no they hadn't, but if I needed something, to call them and they may do something for me.

And, they also told me they were working on something with some characteristics that I may like, if I'm working with—I'm working with UltraSmooth Fine Art Paper right now for what I'm doing, and they said that they have some new things that they've been experimenting with that I might like, and they'd like me to try it, and so on, and so forth. So that would be—if they do that, and if they, in fact, make a wider sheet, that would be the first time that we've done anything directly. But, no.

SHANNON PERICH: Are your papers from Epson?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: So they kind of use large, huge, long rolls —

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. [Laughs.] And very heavy, and—[laughs.]

And what are the paper substrates that you use?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: The other one that I've used a lot is the Watercolor paper. And that's a very delicate paper, and, frankly, very hard to work with. Would that there was something easier to work with that would give the same aesthetic results. And I used that up through—I used it for the 6:30 because there was a characteristic of it that I liked for the Landscapes and for the 6:30s.

When I went to the PALETTE [series], I didn't want that much absorption, because the PALETTEs, I wanted you to feel like it was three-dimensional. I want it to pop off the paper, not be absorbed as much in the paper.

SHANNON PERICH: Right. [Inaudible.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And so I went to the UltraSmooth, because the UltraSmooth, that—things seemed to pop off of it. It's not absorbed into the paper as much.

So that works for the PALETTE series and for the PORTRAIT series. Both those series are on UltraSmooth Fine Art. But the other is on the Epson Watercolor.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay. And I would imagine that there is an archival component to sinking the papers with the printer, and the ink sets, and—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, the whole—you know, I don't know if it's a topic you want to get into now, but the whole evolution of the archival aspect of digital printing has changed dramatically. And the attitude towards it, by museums, and curators, and galleries and collectors has changed enormously.

And I can give you a really interesting example of that. The 6:30 series was the first acquisition of digital prints by the Getty [Museum]. Up until that time, for any number of reasons—one of which was that they weren't sure about the archival values—the Getty avoided digital prints, and that only goes back, you know, we're talking maybe five years ago. Today, I'm chairman of the Getty Photo Council. And that council was put together to acquire contemporary art—to advise, consent, you know, whatever, and acquire contemporary art, right, and contemporary art is mostly digital.

Well, the last meeting we had I found myself in the twilight zone, because we were sitting and discussing some prints of a photographer, and they were C-prints, chromogenic prints. And the curators, and some of the very serious and knowledgeable collectors on the committee were saying, "Can we get that artist to also give us a digital print of these?" And the reason was that everybody was concerned that the C-print was going to fade, and that the C-print didn't really have the archival values of today's digital prints that are using a pigment-based ink.

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SHANNON PERICH: This is Shannon Perich and—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Do you want water—

SHANNON PERICH: This is Shannon Perich and Robert Weingarten, and this is disc four.

Bob, you were talking about this pivotal twilight zone moment at the Getty Council—[laughs]—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: [Laughs.] Yes, so I'm sitting there and I'm hearing this discussion about being very nervous about C-prints and wanting digital prints. And it was less than a decade ago when I can remember talking to curators who would ask me, "Well, can you give us a C-print or a Cibachrome print of this instead of a digital print, because we're worried about the archival values of the digital?" And I refused to do it because it wasn't the aesthetic that I wanted. But I remember having that conversation more than once, and here I was and it was just flipped over, and now you have institutions like the Getty, who were very conservative and late in getting into digital prints, concerned about having non-digital. That's amazing.

SHANNON PERICH: It is. My anxiety over material now has changed just because of the kind of longevity that we're—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, right.

SHANNON PERICH: —talking about different digital media. I can never imagine, though, asking a photographer to produce something to fit into a particular box or—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Oh, well, then—

SHANNON PERICH: —I mean—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —what was really bizarre for me was I found myself on the opposite side of the argument because, I was saying, if the digital was that photographer's aesthetic, they would have produced a digital print. You can't just produce a digital print to compensate for not having one. That's not the aesthetic. The aesthetic is a chromogenic print and it'll do what chromogenic prints do. And if we want it, that's what we're acquiring. So I found myself arguing—that's the digital print. It was very bizarre to me. It was very backward. [Laughs.]

SHANNON PERICH: [Laughs.] You mentioned being on the Getty Council. I was going to save this question towards—for the end of our interview. But you've also mentioned that you donated your darkroom to a school so that other kids might have a similar experience, or have the opportunity, anyway.

What do you think is your—do you feel like you have a responsibility to share knowledge, to share photography? What is it that drives you to participate beyond being a photographer, and working and staying with just doing your work?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, I think it's—it's complex, because it's driven—When I do, like, the Getty, on the one hand, it's responding—they asked me to do it. They asked me if I would chair the council. First of all, I was asked if I could sit on the council, and I agreed to do that; and then they asked me if I would chair it. But it was—it's real—it was really more of a thinking about how much I really enjoyed that council. It was really that. I went on it because I was asked by somebody I didn't want to say no to. I mean, it really was—it was that.

And once I was on it, I really enjoyed the process, because I got to hear what educated, smart, alert curators were thinking, for the institution. I got to learn, through the council, because we've had invites to people who make presentations to the council for all the parts of the museum. So I learned things from the Getty Research, or Conservation, things like that.

So that was interesting to me; and, very interesting, listening to the views of collectors who were on the council, people from Sotheby's and Christie's who sit on the council, and so on. So it's been educational for me, and it gives me an opportunity to add my input—you know, like that dialogue we were having—[laughs]—to add my input to the process of collecting for a great institution. So that's a joy to do.

On educational stuff, that's something I haven't done a lot of. I've been asked to give lectures here and there, and I've done that a number of times. And I would do more of that, and I enjoy that process. And I enjoy the interaction, especially if it's students. I enjoy that a lot. I gave what they call the "master class" to the Presidential Scholars in the Arts, to the—it's divided by performing artists and visual artists, and they have a category for photography. And so the finalists for the Presidential Scholarship in the Arts in Photography, they gather—they have a thing called "Arts Week in Florida" where they gather all these kids, and they asked me would I give a master class to them.

Well, that was wonderful, because these were talented young photographers with a fresh, new point of view. And I think I was much more—I was at least as equally interested in what they had to say as they were interested in—[laughs]—you know, perhaps in what I had to say. So I enjoyed that process, and I would do more of it.

SHANNON PERICH: You talked a little bit about Marlborough and you mentioned Dale there. What other galleries represent your work?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, right now I'm represented by Craig Krull Gallery, which is in Bergamot Station in Santa Monica; Weston Gallery in Carmel, California. Up until very recently, Benham Gallery, but they're closing that gallery. She's going to become a private dealer in Seattle, Washington. And Marlborough Gallery, who represents me, basically, world wide—New York and elsewhere in the world. And they've shown me in New York and Madrid. They also have galleries in London, Monaco, you know, and elsewhere.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes, we counted the other day and said you had over 70—you've had over 70 shows?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: Or have been included in over 70?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I counted it because the High Museum was doing some press release, and they had mentioned a number of over 50. And I thought, no, it's a lot more than 50. And so I went back and I counted it. And I think that show, which is coming up in January, will be the 73rd.

SHANNON PERICH: That's a lot of work that's out there in the world, just in those—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It is.

SHANNON PERICH: —just in those venues alone, much less to have your work in these galleries and having them put your work out.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: I know that—I would say, in having collected your work, you probably are the most high-minded person, high-minded photographer—and I mean that in a good way, in that you have incredible respect, and respect for the line between what a photographer does and what your responsibilities are in a relationship with a museum, and what a museum does.

And I think that you go right up to that line, in a good way, and give everything that you can give, and then it becomes the responsibility of—you know, there's—it's easy to step over when you're—when one can be so invested, and I really appreciate that. And the little bit that I've heard you talk about, in other conversations previous to this, about galleries, I think it's the same thing—that you let the galleries do what they're, what they're trained to do and what their skill sets provide you as a photographer.

Can you talk a little bit about how you think about galleries and your work?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, first of all, I'm going to trace back to something that you asked me at the beginning of our conversation—

SHANNON PERICH: Okay. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —today, which is about business, and how it informs my photographic career. And one of the places that I think it really does is that if you interviewed executives who worked for me in business enterprises, where I was chairman and CEO, I think that they would tell you that I'm a very good delegator.

I didn't micromanage anything that was in our organization. I would set the strategy, and hire the people to tactically do the work consistent with that strategy. And I would monitor that it was happening, but I wouldn't get into their job. I'd let them do their job. I gave authority along with responsibility.

And so that carries over. That's just a characteristic of me as a person or as a manager. And it carries over into my art career, that I do what I do, and other people do what they do, and I let them do—[laughs]—what they do. And I don't try to micromanage what galleries do, or even putting together museum shows.

You know, I've got a nice, but I guess it was a generally left-handed compliment from a curator who was doing a show of my 6:30 work, and turned to me one day and said, "You know, I usually prefer working with dead people"—[laughs]—

SHANNON PERICH: [Laughs.] You've heard that more than once then. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —"But, I really like working with you, because you let me curate."

SHANNON PERICH: [Laughs.] Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So getting back to the gallery situation, what did you want to know exactly?

SHANNON PERICH: I guess it's—I'm particularly interested in how you got to Marlborough. It is an incredibly prestigious gallery, and to be represented by them is a mark of status in itself. And so I'm curious about how you developed a relationship there, how—what work they took first.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: This is an example where good luck —[laughs]—and having the goods, sort of coincide. At that point in my trajectory, it wouldn't—

SHANNON PERICH: Which is what time—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Which was—At the point in my trajectory where I met Marlborough, which I believe was 2004 —probably early 2004, it never would have occurred to me that I would be represented by them. I wouldn't—[laughs]—it never occurred to me to approach them or do anything like that.

I've been very fortunate in my photographic career that it has been organic, and sometimes serendipitous in some of the wildest ways, and this is good example of it: There is a painter who's right across from us, on the other side of that fence.

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I don't even know his last name. His name is "Joe."

SHANNON PERICH: [Laughs.] "Joe the painter." [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Joe the painter. And I say hello to Joe and I say goodbye to Joe. And that's my relationship with Joe, the painter.

And I was sitting in the studio one day—and as you can see where I work is in the back of the studio, and I was working on the computer. And Lila [Chacin], my assistant, came in to me and said, "Joe was here with somebody else," and he just came in, you know. And my first reaction was, "Oh gee, this is—I'm trying to do work. And who just barges in to the studio?" So I was a bit annoyed, right. I came out and he said, "I want you to meet an old friend of mine. His name is Dale Lanzone and he's the director of Marlborough Gallery." And I said, "Oh, hello Dale," right. [Laughs.]

SHANNON PERICH: [Laughs.] And any frustration dissipated immediately. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. So all of a sudden I wasn't so upset.

And Dale started looking at work, and then he looked at the 6:30s and he said, "These are really interesting to me. I love this work. I like all the work, but I really think we can do something with this." And he said, "Would you send me some of these?" And I said, "Why?" [Laughs.] And he said, "Well, because, you know, I'd want to engage in discussions back in New York about representing you." And I almost fell over. And I said, "Oh, yes, right."

So then I sent the work to them. And I didn't hear from them for about a month. And I found out that it was because Pierre Levai, who's the head of Marlborough and owner, was away and he personally has to approve everything.

SHANNON PERICH: How interesting.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Nothing happens at Marlborough that Pierre doesn't approve, all right. So he had to wait to meet with Pierre. And he was thinking of—he wanted them to represent me, and he wanted to show my work down in Chelsea [NYC].

And I remember that he called me the morning after he had the meeting with Pierre Levai. He told me when he was going to have the meeting, and I was all excited. And the next morning he called me, and he led with, "Pierre doesn't want to show your work in Chelsea." And I thought, "Oh, that's the end of that."

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. [Inaudible.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And then he said, "Because he wants to show it on 57th Street."

SHANNON PERICH: Wow.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: He wants to bring it uptown. So he said, "But, you know, we don't represented anybody that Pierre doesn't meet, and talk to," and whatever, blah, blah—

SHANNON PERICH: I'm on a train; I'm on a plane. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —and, you know, "Could you come to New York and meet with him?" So I came to New York; I met with Pierre Levai. And, as long as I'm telling you everything—

SHANNON PERICH: [Laughs.] Please.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —they said, "We want to represent you worldwide, but we don't want anybody else to represent you." And I already had a preexisting relationship with Craig Krull Gallery, Weston Gallery, and Benham—who had been there for years, at that point, and who'd done a nice job with my work; and also, Maggie Weston, of Weston Gallery, was a collector of my work, and is to this day.

And I said, "I can't do that. I cannot abandon Krull, Weston and Benham, as much as I'd love to be represented by Marlborough. You know, and I know it'd be a bad career move not to be, but I just can't do that." You have to carve them out so that they don't work under you. And any other galleries that you may want to assign, you know, work to in the future, can work under the Marlborough umbrella. But I can't change their economics. And he said, "Let us think about that." And he left me in a room for quite a long time. They all walked out of the room —

SHANNON PERICH: Oh my goodness. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: There wasn't an—

SHANNON PERICH: It wasn't, "And we're going to get back to you." It's, "You wait here and we'll come back?"

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: Wow.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And I sat there for quite awhile. And they had their pow-wow, because they don't like doing that evidently.

And they came back and they agreed. They said, "Well, it's West Coast. We don't think it'll interfere much," blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And we did the carve-out, and they've been representing me ever since, and it's been a great relationship. They've shown me in New York. They've shown me in Madrid. It's a wonderful relationship. I love them.

SHANNON PERICH: They showed your PALETTE series in Madrid, and that was so enormously successful.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: That was a beautiful show. It was fantastic. And the major network in Madrid—I don't know if you knew this, but the major network in Madrid did an interview with me on Madrid television, in Spanish, because I speak Spanish—

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm. [In affirmation.] And you gave it in Spanish, yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I gave it in Spanish. And that was a kick—walking around in the museum and giving the interview in Spanish.

SHANNON PERICH: And then in the magazine you—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: There was a lot of magazines, yes.

SHANNON PERICH: You were featured with—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: But they had featured—well, they featured. It's right here. *Arte Y Parte* is a major magazine there, and covers all of Spain. And for each city, they breakout,—they have shows, and then they breakout with a more expansive writing about the ones that they think are, you know, important shows.

So at this point—see if I can find it for you, in Madrid—oh, this was a kick: The first show that they—when you get to Madrid, the number—the very first show in Madrid is, "Bob Weingarten, Marlborough show of the PALETTE series." And then the second one that you get to is Goya—and the third one—and it's at the Prado, this is the Goya show; and then the third one is a Picasso show.

SHANNON PERICH: [Laughs.] That's good company to keep. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So that's it, and those are the three. [Laughs.]

SHANNON PERICH: [Laughs.] That's good company. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: That was Madrid. [Laughs.] That was pretty exciting. That's good company.

SHANNON PERICH: You were listed there with painters. You've talked about—again, this is a question I was going to save for tomorrow, but you've talked about inductive and deductive, in terms of working digitally. But also I think you mean that really more specifically in reference to the ICON and PORTRAIT series. You want to talk a little bit about what you mean by inductive and deductive—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes —

SHANNON PERICH: —and how that plays to your work?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Photography, I think of—you know, and in the true literal sense of the word, that's sort of a strange definition, but I think people can grasp generally—I think of photography as a deductive medium, in that every single photograph is a slice from a larger whole. The photographer was in this particular situation—this scene, saw all of this, and zeroed in, from the array in front of them, into what they wanted to focus on, and framed something bordered by that viewfinder, and that became the composition, or the initial composition, all right. That's deductive.

A painter sits down at a blank canvas and has to add to it. It's an additive process. And has to add to it, and add to it, and add to it until they achieve a composition. The latest work that I've done, which I'm sure we'll get to tomorrow, gave me the opportunity to do both: to take the photographs, which is the deductive part of—typical for photographic art form; and then, in the computer, to create compositions—starting with a blank canvas, and putting things into it until you have a composition. And that's more like painting. That an inductive process.

And so in the latest body of work, the PORTRAIT series, I've combine the two—the deductive and the inductive. And that's wonderful, because photographers don't—aren't shy of—before the digital world, you really couldn't do inductive photography.

SHANNON PERICH: Well, there would be some who might say that, like—well, Brian Lander, in 1850, is preconceiving of allegorical scenes, and then creating—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yeah, you can do it. Jerry Uelsmann did it—

SHANNON PERICH: Right. Jerry Uelsmann—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —in the darkroom—

SHANNON PERICH: Right, and Jerry Uelsmann—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —you know, some of what we're doing on the computer. So but that's—

SHANNON PERICH: But it's—it's—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —the rare case.

SHANNON PERICH: It is rare. And it's—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It's the rare case. And it's not—it's more limited than what we can do now.

SHANNON PERICH: That's right. That's true. Absolutely.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: But you're right.

SHANNON PERICH: Let's stick with the painters. We talked about Madrid and the *Palette* series. What is the PALETTE series?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Okay. We talked earlier about the 6:30 series, and the PALETTE series came from that work, in a way, all right, because I had spent the year photographing chromatic change and thinking about chromatic change.

And it started with—I'm going to give you two different data points and then connect the dots for you: One was, it started with an inquiry that said: Do painters' palettes—are painters' palettes informed by the color of light they live with? If they live in sunny California and paint outside, let's say, do they have a light palette? If they live in the Northeast and they're painting in the middle of the winter on a dark day, do they have a dark palette—darker palette?

Would I see a pattern if I went around the country, and met and asked that question of the greatest living painters? How would they answer that question? And what would I observe in their palettes? Would it confirm their answer? Would it contradict their answer, et cetera, et cetera? So that was one part of the inquiry—data point one.

Separate from that was that the thinking about abstraction in painting—that abstraction in painting, in part, was a movement away from the idea that the photograph is such a great representational tool. Then why paint representationally? Why do that? The camera can do that better. So let's do what painting can do that cameras can't do. Let's do abstraction, all right. And so that was, in part, behind some of what happened with abstraction, and why it happened.

And I said, well, wouldn't it be interesting to turn the two medium upside down—to take the best available representational tool in the 21st century, to date—a great digital camera, right, and use the raw materials of the greatest living painters, and create abstract art off of that.

So those were the two things that came together in a quest to say, okay, if I go to the studios of these great living artists; ask them about the palette; inform myself about the answer to that quest, that question; and at the same time have an opportunity to work with their raw materials to create my abstract art, that's how I conceived of that project and what that project would be.

And what I learned, first of all, on the first part of that quest, was that there is absolutely no correlation between the two, even though clearly half of the painters said there was.

Some of them said there was—maybe half. Some of them said, absolute nonsense, you know, nothing to do with that. And one of them had the answer, and it was Eric Fischl. I got into really some interesting conversation with Fischl when I was in his studio, and his answer to the question was, he said, "You know, I believed there were two lights that we live with, the light we see every day, and our psychological light. And I think it's the latter that informs my palette no matter where I am in the world."

And that, I think, was it, because I also noted that the very lightest palette was the super-realist, Richard Estes, who I photographed in his studio in New York on a miserable, dark day. And the darkest palette was Ed Moses, whose studio was outdoors in Southern California on a sunny day. [Laughs.] That was the extreme examples of it. But it was all over the lot, and it wasn't—it didn't really correlate.

Also, just as an aside, the palettes—my definition of "palette" was the color palette, which was represented—either I photographed directly from the palette, or it could have been, in the case of Ed Moses, it was drippings on a sink, it was drippings that took place over 50 years using that sink, to drippings on a floor, walls, or—

SHANNON PERICH: An apron, a sock.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Apron, a sock, yes—

So it was all over—all over the place. And that's my definition of palette, is their color

palette, and their raw materials, is what I used.

SHANNON PERICH: And talk about scale, in terms of that project.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Scale? As I said earlier, scale is very important to all my work, right, and I try to keep all my work scale appropriate.

And when I conceived of the PALETTE series, I conceived of it as being the size that an abstract painting might readily be. And so I printed these 40-by-60. And while I'm willing to print larger, I've been very reticent to print any smaller. I have some artist proofs that I printed 17-by-26, but the Edition prints are all 40-by-60.

SHANNON PERICH: You also mentioned that the—you know, one of my favorite photographs from that series is the Spanish painter who does burlap—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Manolo Valdes.

SHANNON PERICH: And I can just—you know, I can see it in my mind's eye against the—jury wall over there in the center. It's a marvelous photograph in which this tiny little moment—one-by-two moment of reality becomes massive, and becomes an architectural moment, and is not about the painter or paintee; it's about something—about form and shape and color and depth. It's a marvelous example, I think, of that series.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, it's—there's a question of transformation, in a sense, that also has to do with scale, because if you—behind you is a thing I did of Botero's palette, all right, and that's probably three to five inches of [Fernando] Botero's palette, all right. And you're looking at a 40-by-60 image on the—you know, hanging on the wall.

So it's seeing the composition within that, right; and you're moving—when you work with micro lens—macro photography, rather, macro lens, you're seeing very small pieces at a time. So you're all over trying to find the composition. There's a thousand different—

SHANNON PERICH: Opportunities—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —variations and opportunities to create. And the objective was to find the composition that works as a full-scale composition from this very small slice that you take of what you're seeing. And sometimes the studios were just rife with things, and you'd—you know, wonderful things; and sometimes it was almost impossible to find where the composition would be and what it would be.

And a good example of that is Ed Ruscha. Ed's studio is vast, but the working space, with the raw materials, is tiny. And all he had, when I was there, in that area, were a couple of cotton balls, and one of the cotton balls had yellow pigment paint on it. And so I went in deep with a macro lens to find a composition within the cotton ball. And that composition within that cotton ball became a 40-by-60 image.

SHANNON PERICH: Wow. And what was his reaction to that?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: He loved it.

SHANNON PERICH: How did you gain access to these important painters?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, once I had the idea for the project, I realized two things that were missing—one was that my knowledge was limited, in terms of when you get beyond the top 10 contemporary painters, or the top 20 contemporary, who were the next? If I want to do 40, or if I needed a list of 50 to get 30, or whatever it is, who were they? I didn't know. I didn't know—I knew names, I didn't know who was considered where, beyond the obvious.

So first I had to get an idea of who these people were, right. I knew Jasper Johns' name; I knew Chuck Close's name; I knew Brice Marden, you know; I knew Jim Dine. I knew names like that, but there were names I didn't know—younger artists that were becoming important—Lisa Yuskavage. And I'd never heard of her, all right. Today she has million-dollar paintings.

So what I decided was—I'd mentioned earlier that I owned *Saturday Review* magazine at one point, well, one of the art critics for *Saturday Review* was a gentleman by the name of Carter Ratcliff, who writes for "Art in

America," and he's been around for, you know, 40 years as an art critic. And so I contacted Carter and I said, "Carter, who are the names that I should be interested in, right, as contemporary painters? Who are the names?" And then I asked some curators the same question, who are the names. And where I saw that there was an overlap, I said, "That's my list."

Then the question was how to get to the list. And there were multiple ways. Carter Ratcliff wrote letters for me about what I was doing; that he thought it was going to be an important body of work; and that I needed access to studios, and so on. And so he wrote to artists that he knew, and that helped. We wrote to galleries that represented artists, where we couldn't even get the address of the artists. Like Jasper Johns, we had to write to the gallery. And there were also some curators of new artists, so they helped—

SHANNON PERICH: A variety of ways.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. So there was a variety of ways that we did them. We had to just keep following up and working the process. And it wasn't easy.

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-uh.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It wasn't easy at all, especially with the bigger names. But eventually I got most of who I wanted. The big disappointment was that I never got [Robert] Rauschenberg before he died. I had Johns, and I wanted Rauschenberg, and I didn't get him. And I still wanted to get David Hockney, who I haven't done yet, because he really fascinates me. But other than—

SHANNON PERICH: How many have—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —that, I've gotten them.

SHANNON PERICH: How many have you done in the series so far?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I think there's about 40.

SHANNON PERICH: That's a lot.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. I've done a lot. I've done Americans; and then I did some in Spain. And Marlborough told me that there were interesting people to do in Spain, and they were going to do a show in Madrid, and wouldn't it be great if there were some Spanish artists in the show in Madrid. So I agreed to go over there and take a look and see what—

At that point, I thought I'd pretty much said everything I had to say about the PALETTEs, and I was done, all right. And so I went to Spain, a little bit reluctantly, and I don't know that I'm going to find anything new that—to say, or see, or whatever. And then I found fascinating raw materials, different color arrays, and I was, like, restimulated all over again to do that work.

And I loved some of that stuff. Gordillo was working with—Luis Gordillo was working with old photographs, and had pigment on old photographs. I would be putting them together, these incredible combinations, to create his work. [Juan] Genoves had the very bright, cheerful, incredible—incredible palette that he didn't pay any attention to. And it was one of these wood palettes. It was an actual wood palette. There are very few of those in the whole thing—

SHANNON PERICH: Mostly plastic ?—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —he had two, you know. And he was just amazed that I was fascinated by his palette. And it's a terrific composition from his palette, because it's such cheerful, bright colors, and the way they mix, and so on, the way they interact. And then Manolo Valdes, who works with burlap as a raw material, along with pigment, and so I have pigment in burlap and all of this. And it was fascinating to me. It was just wonderful stuff.

So that was a whole new, wonderful experience—to be with artists in another country, and seeing how different their raw materials really were, and that the palette really was different than the American artists. That was an interesting observation for me—interesting to visit with them. So that turned out to be a very interesting exercise, to expand it to that. But in all, there were about 40.

SHANNON PERICH: You mentioned a little bit earlier something about—you said some of the PALETTEs you've printed smaller, as artist proofs Can you speak to your take on editioning work?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes—I can. Well, it's sort of a long thing, because I have a take on editioning work, and I also have a take on vintage. I don't know if you want—

SHANNON PERICH: Well, talk about editioning first, and then we'll talk about vintage.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: All right. So on editioning work, I edition all my work. And I do it so that there's a "scarcity value" to the object, and I think that makes each of those objects more important.

And I edition in more than one size, if it lends itself to it; or one size, if it doesn't—in the AMISH, it's all one size; in the 6:30s, they're 40-by-40 or 30-by-30; or there are editions where somebody could get a group of five, or a group of 10 of smaller prints, they're 11-by-11—and because it works that way. It works as a group, smaller, or it works 30-by-30, and it works—

SHANNON PERICH: And you've established what those five and 10 sets are?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. And each is a edition of 10. In other words, so if you were doing a group, let's say, you'd design your own group of five, or your own group of 10; pick out what you want. But once 10 of one image is sold, you can't put that in your group—

SHANNON PERICH: Done.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —it's done, it's gone.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And I normally work in editions of 10. So the 6:30 started that. Before that, there were editions of 33—the LANDSCAPE [series] are editions of 33; I believe the Amish were editions of 25. Don't ask me why, because I don't know.

But then the 6:30s were groups of 10; the PALETTEs, 10; the PORTRAITS—the PALETTEs also, and the PORTRAITS, I will do five 60-by-90s. When I started doing the PALETTEs, 60-by-90 wasn't available, so I was just doing 40-by-60. I like it 60-by-90 as well. So I'll do five 60-by-90s, 10 40-by-60s. And the same thing with the PORTRAITS—there are 10 40-by-60s and five 60-by-90s editioned.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay.

And then what about the question of vintage?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: The question of vintage: To me, vintage is more an economic construct than a aesthetic one. And I think the best example of that, for me, is an image you mentioned earlier, *Moonrise*, by Ansel Adams. I believe that vintage came about because galleries were scratching their heads as photography was starting to be accepted as fine art, as to how you can create object value since you can make a bazillion photographs. So how do you create object value? And I think, and it's just my conjecture, I believe that that's how vintage came about.

So, well, within that year that the photographer took it, there were just so many prints he could do. So even if he lived another 40 years and kept printing it, there's something special about that. But you couldn't describe it as what it really was, which was creating a limited supply of an unlimited thing, to create object value. So I believe it was described in aesthetic terms rather than in those terms.

And the aesthetic terms which describe it are that, "Well, that was what the photographer was thinking at that time, and that was his vision at that time, and that's closest to what the photographer's vision was at that time when they printed it. And that may be true, but is it necessarily a valid description of the best print?"

Because, take the Ansel Adams *Moonrise*; take the 1942-ish, because it was the end of '41, so take '42 as the year, all right. They're okay to me. They're not as contrasting, and they have a different aesthetic. I believe that, as time went on, Ansel's aesthetic changed—his abilities, his techniques, whatever, they all changed. And he started to find a way to create more drama out of *Moonrise*, and more contrast, because that worked for *Moonrise*.

And so you go on and you look at, let's say, a '60s print of *Moonrise*. To me, I like that print better than the vintage print. It's not worth nearly as much, but I like it better. And I believe that if you asked Adams, he probably liked it better. He probably saw more in it, and said, "This is my interpretation, and this is how my interpretation has changed, and so on."

And I know that as I reprint—there's one particular image, and I won't mention it for the Archives—[laughs]—

SHANNON PERICH: It's okay. I know. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —because people own this image—that I was printing for years, for years—and then saw

a little thing in there that I didn't like. And after printing this image for 10 years, I took something out of the image on the computer that I had never noticed before. And I consider every print after that a purer print.

So even in my own work, if you said, "Well, I have the—I have number one of that, right; well, fine, so I did that closest to"—

SHANNON PERICH: Your original imagination—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —when I took it.

SHANNON PERICH: —imaging —

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: But number one of that, first of all, was printed elsewhere. It was printed by Nash, right. The prints that I made later—printing for a few years before I noticed this little thing, and then I took it out, I was much happier with it. And I know that every print since then is a better print. It just is.

SHANNON PERICH: So vintage is a market—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I think it's an economic construct—

SHANNON PERICH: I do too.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —with a—I think it's an aesthetic justification for an economic construct. That's what I think it is.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay. And it doesn't have anything to do with the photographer's input or value—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No.

SHANNON PERICH: —the way that they value the print.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. Yes. What was the—I'm want to go back and ask this—what was the panel of images that you sent to the Royal Photographic Society for your Fellowship, for that level of achievement?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I did a study of trees. I did 20 different images of trees. And I also took a chance. We were talking about digital, because the Royal didn't have rules against digital, but as far as I knew had not granted a fellowship—[laughs]—at least on digital prints. And I thought I would just go for it, and take a chance and do it. So I submitted—I had asked them if it was okay, and they said, "Yes, you could do that, but—you know." And so I submitted a panel of 20 digital prints of trees for the Fellowship and it got the Fellowship.

SHANNON PERICH: Were they in color or black-and-white?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Color.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay. And what size were they?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: They varied. What I did was, I did it salon-style, so everything is matted to it. They give you a constraint of the mat. But I had taken the images in different ways, and so on. And so the constraint is the mat, and then the opening is salon-style. So all the mats are—

SHANNON PERICH: The same, but—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: They have to be the same.

SHANNON PERICH: Sure.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: They tell you what size mat to submit and it has to be exact. You know, they're very rigid about that. [Laughs.] So it has to be the exact same thing. And then the prints vary. I think I have that panel here.

SHANNON PERICH: Oh, good.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: If I don't have it here, I have it at—

SHANNON PERICH: We are at the end of this disc.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, let me see if I have that.

[END OF TRACK AAA_weinga09_1880.]

SHANNON PERICH: This is Shannon Perich and Robert Weingarten, and this is disc five. And we are looking at some of the photographs that Mr. Weingarten submitted for his Fellowship at RPS [Royal Photographic Society]. So if we're looking at photograph of burned trees in Aspen, it's not just a single. When you said a study of trees, I was thinking like in that famous British tradition of a single tree—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Tree—

SHANNON PERICH: —that has a name and a history, and a legend.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No, no. These are all—these are all landscaped photographs where trees are the subject.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm. And have you shown these before? Or, these were produced, and only seen by the panel and a few select friends?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It's never been shown as a group. In other words, these 20 were presented as a panel to the RPS. And it has never been shown—this is my RPS panel or whatever. Be neat to do it, I'd love to do that, but it hasn't been. But individual ones of these have been parts of other exhibitions.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm. Oh, wow!

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: That was right here in Malibu Canyon Road [CA]. I was coming from my son's home, which at that time was in town. And I was coming across Malibu Canyon Road, and I had my camera with me, because it was my granddaughter's birthday. So I had a camera with me. And it was pouring, and as I came across Malibu Canyon Road, the rain stopped; and the light was shining right on this thing. And I jammed on the brake, almost killed myself, and people behind me. [They laugh.]

And I pulled off, and I got into the mud—it was muddy. I came home just full of mud. But I managed to capture that shot. It looks like a spotlight.

SHANNON PERICH: It does—I mean, you can't imagine that occurring naturally in nature.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, yes.

SHANNON PERICH: It's an image of a Palo Verde, and it's a—you know, it's that thorny, scraggily, light green, with this gorgeous light on it. And a rich, lush, mossy-looking background. Or it looks like the clouds could be green even if it were taken at night or something. Very mystical and mysterious.

Do you feel the same way about these photographs, when you look at them, as you did at the time you submitted them?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Pretty much—not all of them.

SHANNON PERICH: Oh this is a—that sky is incredible. It looks like it's just sitting there, hanging.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And this is just like—

[Break.]

SHANNON PERICH: We were on pause for a few minutes. And I think we've decided that we'll save looking at the photographs—for the panel of photographs—for looking at them for another time.

We talked about additions, and we talked about the question of vintage. Let's just stay talking for a few minutes again at sort of a higher level, instead of a specific level. Just directly—you've mentioned this in various, different ways. But what does working digitally provide you that working in film could not?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, on the capture side of life, it is incredibly convenient—let's start with that. Because on the capture side of life, I used to work with cameras, various kinds of films that you had to carry, filters. You know, you brought basically a system with you, not just a camera.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And the system meant more than just a system of lenses. It meant all the other stuff that you were working with. So you've pretty much eliminated that, because I don't have to worry about indoor film and outdoor film, and daylight—you know, daylight film. I don't have to worry about filtration, because I can

deal with that in other ways.

And I can adjust the light temperature in the camera. So there are a lot of tools within the camera that allow me to do the things I want to do without a lot of external stuff, including film. Right. So there is a convenience factor to that.

I find that the biggest change is not in the capture so much, but in the output. There it's vastly different, and in my opinion, vastly improved. And will lead to all kinds of additional creativity, changes in what you see, ideas that we haven't thought of yet, and a real advance in the art form.

In output, if I think about what I could reasonably do in a darkroom, and what the limits were to that—both the paper that I could print on, the things I could do in an enlarger. And I compare that with the array of tools that I have in front of me in my computer with Adobe—I'm using Adobe CS4, Creative Suite 4, they're the same league.

When I think of the array of tools that I have, it's not in the same league. I mean, I have such an array of tools to get—and the more you know, the more you know you don't know. And you get deeper and deeper and deeper, and deeper into these programs.

And you find out more and more subtleties, and more and more things you can do. And it stimulates your thought process, too. Well, actually, I can do this with this or whatever. And I just think it's vastly better, vastly improved.

SHANNON PERICH: Do you care about whether it's—whether process is called digital photography, digital imaging? Is it photography? Does any of that matter to you?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Not really—I mean, I don't think it's important. I think in my case it is photography because it starts with photographs. And everything I do starts with me photographing something, even if I end up putting them together creating you know composites, whatever it is. But it starts—with me, it starts with photography.

With some artists, it may start in the computer, they're just creating art in the computer. And that's different than photography. You know, it may be the same output in that they've printed it on a computer printer. But the input was different, right. They may be painting in a computer in essence. Or doing graphic design, or whatever they do.

So I think of my work as photography. But I don't—this whole idea of this purist idea of what photography is supposed to be. You can't—and can you manipulate a photograph. And how does the photograph relate to reality. That whole question of photography and reality—I can understand that in a forensics sense, if you're going to use a photograph in a courtroom and say this was the scene, and the film could prove it.

I don't understand that when you talk about art. Because to me—first of all, to me it's not art if it isn't interpretive. It's the eye of the taker, and it's their sense of what it is. We haven't talked very much about the AMISH, we talked a little bit about it.

But going back to that body of work, I gave a speech at the Museum of Photographic Arts in San Diego [CA], when they had a show of two bodies of work—it was the Amish and the 6:30s. And one of the people in the audience said, "Well, this is different for you because the Amish is documentary." Right. And I said, "I don't believe there are documents of photography."

I said, "This is my view of the Amish and their landscape—my view of it. That's not a document because—if I had a different view, if instead of saying that this, *Another America*, as I called it, was a serene America during the time." Because some of this was done right after 2001—9/11. I was there right after that, and so on, which was part of the book. That I'd seen this other America going on while we were in trauma.

And I was showing the serenity of that life. I wasn't showing how difficult that life was. If I wanted to express the difficulty of Amish life—what's it like to be in a buggy in the winter without a heater? [They laugh.] All right—or an artificial one.

SHANNON PERICH: With oncoming cars to scare your horse, yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: What's it like to live without a telephone, right? What's it like to live without TVs, and you know all the modern conveniences in your home? I wasn't showing the struggle of how they elected to live. I was showing the serenity of it all.

Now that's not a document, that's my view of it. And it's the view that I wanted to express. And I think it was [Richard] Avedon—and you'll correct me because you're an Avedon expert, if I'm wrong. But Avedon said, that—

when talking about documents versus points of view, he said. "I've never seen an album that shows only babies screaming and crying in a family."

SHANNON PERICH: Sure.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right? There we show the kid smiling.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: But is that a document? That's a point of view. You want to show the kid when he's smiling. You don't want to show the kid when he's screaming, tearing his hair out and crying.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So I believe that's true. So to me it's much less important whether it represents reality or not. What's important to me in that dialogue is that the photographer be honest. That's the only thing that's important to me.

If they say, "This is my interpretation of it," or "I've changed things around," or "I've computer manipulated it," I don't find anything wrong with that. That's part of the way you can express the art form today. But say you did it.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. Don't say this is exactly the way life was, if you've done something to really manipulate or change it, et cetera. So, that I don't appreciate. But I think if the artists is honest about what they're doing and what they're trying to do, and why they're doing it, then I think all the different things you can do are fine. And I see no problem with that.

Now from an art point of view, I don't particularly appreciate doing things with the computer just because you can.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Even if it doesn't express something artistically. In other words, so that this cup is on this table. And I have the ability to lift it off the table and have it in mid air. Well, fine, if I have a reason for doing that. If I just did it just because I can, I don't really get that art. That's just using the tool because you can.

I try to use the tool because it can do something that I want to do. So I know what it is I want to do, and then I use the tool to be able to achieve that. I don't do something just because a tool can do it with no reason to do it. Does that make any sense?

SHANNON PERICH: Absolutely. Absolutely. You've mentioned Avedon; you've mentioned Adams several times; are there photographers who inspire you? I mean, you've mentioned a few of them. Are there others that—whose works you read or words you read? Things you—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Depending on what I'm doing, I was inspired by different—different artists. I think that in the AMISH, there's—had I never seen a Walker Evans photograph, I think my AMISH would look different. Or I wouldn't have taken some shots that I took. Right. And that's not only true of Walker Evans. It might have been true of Strand—there is a particular shot in there with a white fence, which is a Paul Strand thing.

So things do relate to what you know and admire in photographic history. But for me, it's also paintings and painters. And I don't make a distinction in my world between photographers and painters in terms of what informs my art. I think it's a sort of a combination of both that inform my art.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

So who are some of the artists who paint that you think about, or you have thought about in relationship to certain projects?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: In earlier work, I thought very much about the Impressionists, and that, above and beyond anything else was that. As I moved to the new work, I've spent a lot of time studying [Pablo] Picasso and [Georges] Braque and Cubism, and the creation of a new language—in a sense, a new visual language. So I think I—I zero in on things that—at different times, for different reasons.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: In earlier landscape work, one of the painters—one of the painters I really love is Edward Hopper. And you will see—like in one of my Palouse shots, I actually call it *Ode to Hopper*.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And that informs some work. And then, you know, the abstracts are informed in a different way. I love—the newest work I think there are actually three painters that I've really focused in on when I was starting the new work. I mentioned Picasso and Braque, but also Rauschenberg.

SHANNON PERICH: Oh absolutely.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I spent a lot of time on every book I could get my hand on of Rauschenberg, and see every exhibit I could see. So Rauschenberg very much informed the—Braque, Picasso. But no photographers that I can think of consciously that really informed this work.

SHANNON PERICH: I can understand that. I understand that. A note I've made to myself during one of your earlier comments that inspired a number of questions. I want to go back to the story that you told about Dale at Marlborough Gallery, and his concern about the PALETTE series, and that—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No, his concern was about the—

SHANNON PERICH: The digital aspect—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: The PORTRAIT series.

SHANNON PERICH: Oh it was, okay.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It was the PORTRAIT—

SHANNON PERICH: Oh, okay.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It was moving from the PALETTE to the PORTRAIT.

SHANNON PERICH: Oh, okay. Well, then, I'm glad we brought it back up so we can make sure that we clarify that point. That makes more sense than in the story.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, because the PALETTE was still done in the Viewfinder. It was very much about seeing the composition in the Viewfinder, and then, just making it large.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm. Well, that will help inform that earlier comment then. But he was still resist—I mean, he was still reticent about the digital aspect of it?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: Is it—was it the—you mentioned the new visual language. Was it that part that he didn't think people would get? Or was it the combination printing aspect of it? Or—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No problems with digital prints, because they had been showing and selling my digital prints for years prior to this.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So there is zero problem with digital print. It was referring to the reputation that he thought I was building as a photographic artist being able to find my composition in the Viewfinder. And now, I was going to engage in a different kind of art, which is finding my composition in the computer. And he didn't know how that was going to work.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay. And clearly, you've proven him wrong time and time again. [They laugh.] So again, sticking to your guns. In the—you know I'm interested in collecting for the history of digital technology. And I think we're just about to pass away from the—this early pivotal period. I think we've probably actually already passed out of the initial phase of—of what digital—you know, working through what digital photography was going to mean to us as a broader culture.

We're not anxious about the archival standards any more. The quality is—in some ways exceeds what conventional film can do. We're seeing—I think especially in your PORTRAIT series, we can see that digital photography opens up all kinds of new ways of thinking.

But I want to ask you about—you've talked about your personal transition from conventional to digital

photography. In working with galleries at museums, you've talked about this—you told the story about the Getty a little earlier. Are there other stories that you can think of that reflect the anxiety that was present five years ago?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, this wasn't five years ago, but I remember—I had appeared in a show in the High Museum [Atlanta, GA] once before. This is a solo show coming up, but I was in a show that they had done a number of years ago called "Ansel Adams and His Legacy".

And they did who preceded Adams, and then they did a major Adams show. And then, they had contemporary artists who did landscape following that. So I was in that part of it, and proud to be.

And I remember being introduced to a gallery down there. This is before Marlborough was handling my work. And it was an important gallery in Atlanta. And they liked my work, and they said that they would represent me if I produced the work that they wanted to represent as silver gelatin in the case of the Amish, or Cibachrome, Ilfachrome, and so on. And in the earlier work, which I had refused to do. And they refused—they did not want to represent me because they would not represent digital art. And that wasn't so long ago.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. So the *Ansel Adams*—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: *Ansel Adams and His Legacy* was at the High Museum in 2003. So it's six years ago—major gallery there, who would not represent digital photography. Today they do.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: They don't represent me. [They laugh.] But they represent digital photography.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. A lot of my questions that are left, I want to save for tomorrow.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Okay.

SHANNON PERICH: What kind of art do you live with? You live here in your studio, and your own work is hanging here. But—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right, at home?

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It's sort of eclectic. I have less of it now than we used to have because we change around what we wanted to live with—but American Impressionism, American sculpture, some of my photography.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: The photography of others is normally black and white. And we have my color work in the house. But we have black and white photography—you know I have Adams and Weston. In the contemporary, I have—well, he recently died, I had Arnold [Albert] Newman. And I had several of his portraits of musicians, it was in a musical theme. And that Ruth Bernard—

SHANNON PERICH: Oh, yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. And some abstract paintings, Chinese Coromandel Screen. [They laugh.] I mean, just a couple of antique kind of things, but not really because it's a modern home—[Dale] Chihuly glass.

SHANNON PERICH: Did you collect his work before you went to visit his studio?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. So I have—and I like the juxtaposition. We have one staircase that has landings where we can put the Chihuly glass and the bottom.

SHANNON PERICH: Oh nice.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So you're walking in between like Chihuly glass on landings, and black and white photographs on the wall going all the way up. So I like the contrast of the black and white photographs on the left, and on your right is very colorful glass, from the bottom up.

SHANNON PERICH: And you included Chihuly in your PALETTE series, correct?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: After I completed—basically completed the PALETTE series, and then I decided—well you know, I have no glass artists, it's all painters. And what would that—what are the raw materials of glass artists, and what would that look like? And I went to Chihuly's studio, and I did that, which I really like.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm. You know the walls of *The Tubes* is what I remember from the way you had—some of the shots that you had shown me from that. Is there anything that you feel like from today that we didn't get to, that you wanted to say right now? Were there any topics or ideas that—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No, because I don't know where you're going tomorrow.

SHANNON PERICH: No, I'm okay. I was saving most of tomorrow for—all right. So you've just mentioned a series that I don't know about, which would be an important thing to highlight. What is the Jackson Pollock series?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, first of all, I completed the PALETTE series. And then, as you mentioned earlier, I thought about including a glass artist. So I went and did work at Chihuly's.

I also—a little bit separate from the PALETTE series, but related to it, because the PALETTE series was all living artists, obviously. Because I was asking the question about the color of the light and so on, and their materials had to be current.

But I also did one deceased artist palette. I did a series of Jackson Pollock's 4 . And the way that came about was I was in eastern Long Island, and I was—I was in eastern Long Island, and I had done Itzhak Perlman's portrait. And the next day, I was supposed to meet with Chuck Close at his eastern Long Island house at Bridgehampton [NY] to work on his portrait, and he took ill.

And Lila [Chacin] called me and said that he just called, or his office—the studio called, and that he was ill, and I couldn't do it. And I would have to come back another time, which I did do later on. But then, I was stuck. It was a Monday—I was leaving, I think on a Wednesday. I was going to do Chuck Close on Tuesday.

So—and as I was—got the disappointing news, I was driving back to my hotel in what I thought was East Hampton [NY], but it turned out it was in an area called The Springs, which is adjacent to East Hampton. And as I passed that sign, I remembered that Jackson Pollock and [William] de Kooning both had homes and studios in The Springs. So I thought oh, I have a free day—be neat to visit those if they're museums. I'd love to see that.

So I looked up the de Kooning thing, I couldn't find anything open to the public. But when I looked under Pollock, I found the Jackson Pollock house. It's the Pollock-Krasner House. All right. And I found that it was in fact —open to the public on certain days. You know, not all week—and I wondered what they had there. So I called, and wanted to know if it was open on Tuesday. And they told me no, it's only open Thursday, Friday, and half of Saturday, or something like that. And I said, "Oh, but I'm here, and I'm leaving, and I can't get there, and is there any way to open up," and all that. And I was speaking to somebody who had just answered the phone. And I said, "Can you photograph in there?"

And they said, "No, it's absolutely forbidden, copyright of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation," blah, blah. I said, "Well, that's too bad. I really would love to do that. Right. I've photographed in artists' studios, and I'd love to do it." And she said, "Well, you know, the director is here today. Do you want to speak to her?" So I said, "Yes, sure."

So they put this woman on the phone, and I spoke to her and she told me the same thing. "It was closed from Thursday to Saturday. And you couldn't photograph there." And I told her how disappointed I was because I had done a series called PALETTE. And she asked me if I was Robert Weingarten. [They laugh.]

And she was familiar with it. And said, "Well, what can I do for you?" And I said, "Well, you could open up the museum, you know, the studio, and let me photograph." And she said, "Sure, I'd be happy to. You come by tomorrow, and I'll open it up for you. And you can go into the studio, and I'll get you things to put on your feet and on your tripod, and you could photograph."

SHANNON PERICH: Wow!

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So I thought this was very exciting. So the next morning I met her there. She showed me into the studio, and left me alone for hours.

And I was there in Jackson Pollock's studio. And it turned out that the floor color was saturated. First of all, it was loaded with stuff from the drip paintings that he had done on the floor. And the color was saturated, and I wondered, how did this happen?

SHANNON PERICH: What do you mean by saturated?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It hadn't faded. You know, you would think—

SHANNON PERICH: Oh, it was still vibrant, yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: You know, you would think from all those years that it would have faded you know. It's decades since he's gone. And what I found out was that when Jackson Pollock died, Lee Krasner, his wife, who is a painter, covered the floor in the studio to use it for her own studio. And she put linoleum or something on the floor to cover the floor, and used it as a studio for 30 years.

When she died, the foundation decided to test and see what was under the floor that Lee Krasner put down. And they discovered all of this stuff from his drip paintings. And then, scholars came in and were able to identify what parts of the floor relate to what paintings.

SHANNON PERICH: Wow!

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Do a pauls [ph] on it, whatever.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And so I was able to—I did a series of six of that.

SHANNON PERICH: Wow.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Which they now have a copy—they have one set of.

SHANNON PERICH: Cool.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: There in the Pollock-Krasner Foundation. And I also did one photograph that I call *Artifacts*. You've seen those, haven't you?

SHANNON PERICH: I've seen some of them. Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, these are things that I took in artists' studios that were not abstract. That were just things that I thought were really interesting. And I did a little series of those.

And I did one of his paints, because he used—house paint is what he used. So they're cans, the actual cans of house paint that he used, with his brushes. I was able to do a photograph of that. Have you ever seen that?

SHANNON PERICH: I don't think I've seen the one from Jackson Pollock. I've seen—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I'll show it to you. But any way, so that was—it's not part of the PALETTE series.

SHANNON PERICH: Right, but—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: But it's an extension of the PALETTE series. And it was fun to do.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. Are there—just out of curiosity, I know there were—people talk about in art history classes when you're sitting there, and they talk about Jackson Pollock. Are there like cigarette butts and other things that are stuck in the floor? Was it—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No.

SHANNON PERICH: Was it just paint?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Paint.

SHANNON PERICH: Just paint. [They laugh.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Just paint.

SHANNON PERICH: Well, why don't we call it a day, if that's all right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Okay.

SHANNON PERICH: We've only got like 20 minutes left on this one any way.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

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SHANNON PERICH: Okay, so, we're recording. And this is day two of our interview. It's October 21st. Bob, I wanted to ask you—when we talked earlier on, the top of our conversation about—that you had turned the bathroom in your parents' apartment into a darkroom. So how did you actually learn to process photography—process your film and—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Books from the Brooklyn Public Library. [They laugh.]

I just kept taking out books on photography from the public library. And it was trial and error, really. I mean it was reading, understanding what to do, and how to do it. And then, it was a lot of trial and error to do it.

SHANNON PERICH: So you didn't have a—pick up a how to, because this would have been in the mid-50s. And it would have only been something complicated like an Ansel Adams probably at that time—putting out books. I think he had *The Negative* put out at that time. But that wouldn't have been a process that would have been—that wasn't written for a teenager. So were you looking at magazines, photo magazines as well.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, I—I think I might have mentioned yesterday, half my room was photo magazines. [They laugh.] Right. I got *Popular Photography*.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It was a thing called *U. S. Camera*—I forget the names already. But I remember *Popular Photography*, *U.S. Camera*, I think there was something called *Photo 35 or 35 Photo* [*Photography 35*], or something like that.

I mean, whatever there was, I saved my pennies and got those magazines. So I had, you know, the magazines, but the magazines didn't walk you through process that much. You know, they taught a lot of other things, but not so much process.

And I took out books from the library on photography, and how-to in photography, and all of that. And that's how I learned it. I didn't read Ansel Adams until years later.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm. Yes.

Thank you for filling that in, how did you make your money as a teenager? What kind of jobs did you have?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, at various times, different ones. The earliest job that I had was working in a grocery store, delivering groceries. Then in the summers, we used to—even though we were quite poor, we would rent in Rockaway Beach [NY].

But we didn't rent houses, we rented a converted garage, which was divided by two. And my aunt took one half of the garage—it was a wall in between, and they made it into like two little apartments. It was literally a garage. On 40 some odd street in Rockaway Beach. And we had one half of the garage, and my aunt and uncle and my two cousins had the other half of the garage.

And so, I had summer jobs in Rockaway. And starting quite young, I got—I drove my bicycle to a place called Woodmere and—from Rockaway. And there is a thing called Woodmere Country Club. And I signed up as a caddy, and I caddied at Woodmere Country Club. So that was another job that I had.

Later on, I worked at tennis courts. You know, hitting with people, rolling the courts, doing anything around—around the tennis courts.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

Where did you play tennis when you were growing up—here, but during the school year did you play?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: During the school year, I was very fortunate because even though I lived in the inner city, what you would call the inner city, in Brooklyn, in a place called Brownsville Brooklyn. Which is not the kind of place that you would think that would have tennis courts or any kid that would play tennis. But there was a thing called Lincoln Terrace Park, and Lincoln Terrace Park—a public park, about 10 minutes walk from where I lived had two levels of tennis courts. One was clay, and one was hard court.

And they had an instructor there, and a permit was about $4 a year. And you could have a permit to use those courts. And I used them all year round in a strange way. Used them you know, in the spring and so on, and the fall. In the summer I was out in Rockaway.

But then, they would get rid of the old nets. And I would roll up the net, and I kept it—I dragged it all the way to my basement, in the apartment building where I lived 10 minutes away. I mean, it's quite a drag to carry that

thing. A friend of mine also—who played tennis, who was on the high school team with me, did that. And then, we would take the net out to the court and play in the cold.

SHANNON PERICH: You've been a committed guy, dedicated all your life. [They laugh.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, I think I have.

SHANNON PERICH: Once you set your mind to something, you really do embrace it and work it, and make it your own, no matter what the endeavor is.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: One of the things that I can—I know from our working together is that you have really made this current project, that you've referred to several times—the portraits without people, icons, what do you like to call this project? You've really made this your own.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, I—the name of the project has been *Portraits Without People*. But I've not been totally satisfied with that, because it indicates something that it isn't. Because it's not devoid of people, it's devoid of the subject of the image.

SHANNON PERICH: The subject being the sitter.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: The subject being the sitter.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. So—and I thought of people originally as—as that, or people in their lives. Right.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Because that was part of the way I set up the constraints. But as it turns out, there are in a number of these photographs people, but they're not relatives of the sitter. They're not friends of the sitter. They're not et cetera.

SHANNON PERICH: The sitter's face is not depicted in any of these projects.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No.

SHANNON PERICH: In one case, in Baryshnikov's case his feet are depicted.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No, that's not him.

SHANNON PERICH: Oh, those are not his feet?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It's not him.

SHANNON PERICH: Oh.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No, and there is an interesting story to go with that.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Which we can get to as we get into the project.

SHANNON PERICH: All right. Well, describe the project and what the parameters are that you set out for yourself.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Okay. The history of photographic portraiture is a history of images that are time, place, and subject specific. It's the likeness of the sitter in a particular place, at a particular time. And whether it's in the studio, on location, in the street—[They laugh]—on the fly, whatever it is, that defines what a portrait is. And has defined what a portrait is from [Louis] Daguerre until now.

SHANNON PERICH: Absolutely.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: All right. And I—the—actually, the way this has been described by the High Museum for their exhibition is they call it *The Portrait Unbound*. And I like that name, and it actually came from a conversation that I had with the curator there. Where he said, "Describe it." And I said, "I unbound the portrait from the time, place, subject specificity," right.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So I sort of like that way of describing this. All right. And what I wanted—it started with a quest, and it was a question that—I keep a what some people would call a journal. I don't because it's not really a journal. But it is a—it is a little book that at the beginning of each year, I just put the year's date.

And then, during the year, I just write ideas in it. They're usually one-liners. And they're photographic ideas, project ideas. And it can be sometimes just a question—can you do this or that?

And several years ago, I wrote in that book—I wrote a question. And the question was, "Can you describe a person photographically without showing them?" Just a question, right.

And then, what I typically do is I go back to these things. And sometimes I start several of them—several different ideas. And I find that one doesn't resonate or another one I don't think is, you know, particularly interesting, or I'm doing it particularly well. Or whatever the case may be.

And so I drop it. And the one that resonates and where I feel attraction is the one I pursue. Well, I hadn't pursued this idea for a couple of years. And then, I went back to it and it was an intriguing idea to me. And I decided to pursue it.

And the way I decided to pursue it was—and the way I decided to show people without their likeness—describe people without their likeness is to go to, and I chose icons, American icons. And I chose icons because these ultimately are sort of biographical portraits. And I didn't think that—that the elements would be very interesting if at the end we didn't know or care who the sitter was.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. So if I just went to the man on the street, and asked them the question that I asked icons, which was: "If you could do your self portrait, but you couldn't photograph yourself, no member of your family and friends, and no pets, what would be the list that would metaphorically represent you? Give me no fewer than five items, no more than 10." Right.

"And then, give me permission and access to take those photographs." Right. So that was the initial construct. If I'd asked that to the man on the street, and photographed those elements and put them together in something, and you looked at it, you may find it visually compelling. But then, there would be no more depth to it than that, because you wouldn't care that John Doe had this list.

SHANNON PERICH: Right. These icons—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It has no significance—

SHANNON PERICH: Being that they're icons and well known to us, we have a starting point and a reference point.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: We have a starting point, a reference point, and interest in knowing.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And at the end of the day, it will have revealed something about those people that we wouldn't know from just their likeness. We'll actually know more about them without seeing them, than we would if I took a traditional portrait. We're going to know how they define themselves—what's important in their lives.

What's important in their history. What has resonance for them? Right. You don't know these things necessarily about people. And you certainly don't learn it from looking at the portrait.

SHANNON PERICH: Right, the traditional portrait.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: The traditional portrait—so this does give you a lot more information, a lot more insight into the sitter, than a traditional portrait does.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And what I set out to do was get that—those lists, right. And then, take the shots—initially, initially, because these things do evolve, my idea was to take those shots and then put them together in a polyptych. So I might have five different images representing whomever.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And I thought, well, the way to see if this works, the way to know how burdensome the question is to my subject, and my own skill in putting it together; and whether it resonates, would be to do my self portrait.

So I started out with my lists. I made my list, and then I took the shots. And then, I started putting together the polyptych. And I thought this is the most boring thing I've ever done photographically. [They laugh.]

And looking at these is just like you know a series of still lives on landscapes, basically. Right.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And not necessarily the most interesting ones I could take or would take.

SHANNON PERICH: Right, right. So what were some of the—what were the images that you used in that initial self portrait?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: In my—in my self portrait?

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, I used a violin, because as I mentioned yesterday, I grew up playing the violin. I also was in a orchestra called the All City Orchestra in New York. And the All American Orchestra—I was assistant concert master of the All American Orchestra. And my wife was in that orchestra, and we met—

SHANNON PERICH: Before she was your wife. [They laugh.] Because you were in high school.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: We met as teenagers in that orchestra. So the violin has obviously been an important part of my life. And then later on in life, you know, I've also been involved with symphony orchestras.

And I was chairman of the L.A. Philharmonic Orchestra, and things like that. And the Hollywood Bowl and so on. So music has been an important part of my life. So that was one element.

I photographed a HP 12c calculator—

SHANNON PERICH: Very sexy object.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: A very sexy object. You know, just stunning photographically. [They laugh.]

To represent as a metaphor for my business career, right, because my business career was mostly in finance. I owned insurance companies, I was on Wall Street, and things like that. And therefore, the 12c calculator is representative of all of that. And so, I used that as a representation of that.

I took a picture in my home of a corner of my library that houses all my photographic books. Because books have been a part of my life, and photographic books obviously a very important part of that. I photographed my studio to represent my art and my art work. And where I'd love to be, and what I do.

And then, I went back to this neighborhood that I was telling you about that I hadn't been back to ever since I graduated from college, and had enough money to move out. And it was sort of purposeful that I didn't—I didn't want to go back. And so I never went back.

And I went back for that—for this project, and photographed on the street where I grew up and the tenement.

SHANNON PERICH: Forty-some-odd years later.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. And so, I did that. I even went back to Lincoln Terrace Park and took some pictures there. [They laugh.]

And I used that in the—photograph. I had a picture of a tennis court, because I grew up playing tennis, as I mentioned. Some things that represented just things in my home and so on.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And that basically was the elements. But individually, they were really boring photographs. [They laugh.]

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SHANNON PERICH: This is Shannon Perich and Robert Weingarten. This is disc six.

Okay, Bob, we're talking about how these individual images weren't working.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. So I'd set them up on the computer screen as a polyptych and it just didn't work for me. And I thought, well, this is going to be very, very boring visually as a project.

Well, I started thinking about it a lot and I said, "You know, we aren't really—or we are not really that discreet in terms of the individual things that we do or think about or our history. They're not really segmented that way into silos the way these photographs are—we're really the composite of all the things that we've done, learned, been through, our emotions—whatever.

And I thought, well, I really should try to see if I can put all this together, because that's who I am. It's the combination of all of this, right? And as we spoke about yesterday, I'd spent a lot of time learning Photoshop and, you know, the skills of using the computer to do things with photographic art. And I thought, well, why don't I really explore that world? Why don't I really explore that world and see what I can do.

And I started playing with these images to put them together. And what I didn't want to do was to create a traditional collage or montage. I wanted to do what I thought I could uniquely do with the new technology, which was to play with the opacity of each layer that I was creating, so that I would have the effect of translucency, even though I was working—it'd ultimately be printed on a flat plane on a piece of paper.

And that way, as a viewer, I could feel like I'm peeling back layers of a personality looking through layers of a personality. And so I started playing with how I can work a complex image out of these disparate pieces. And when I did that, ultimately, I found that really satisfying; I found that really compelling for me.

And then I had to ask myself the next question, which was: Now that I've achieved this, as I look at it, do I think it's a portrait of me? Does it accomplish that goal, as well as being interesting art and a visually interesting experience?

And I looked at it and I said, yes. This really does represent me. And then I said, okay. Well, now let me see if I can do that with others. And that's when I started to put together the list and started to reach out and find icons who were willing to participate.

SHANNON PERICH: The first—when you began playing with opacity of multiple images, you must have recognized at that point that this was something that could not happen in conventional photography.

You can combine multiple images, as other photographers have, in black-and-white in a much easier way. Jerry Uelsmann, one of the most well-known contemporary people doing it. Certainly there were other photographers. The woman who does faces early on—I can't think of her name.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I have—I know who you mean.

SHANNON PERICH: She did the Gorbachev and the Reagan—combined the two of them.

But in color—color photography—conventional photography is difficult to print enough, much less combine imagines.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Even in black-and-white there's a structural limit.

SHANNON PERICH: Exactly.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: You can do several things. One is, obviously, you can do double exposures, and do a couple of things. And there are triple exposures or quadruple exposures.

I have one shot that I've taken in Provence where I wanted to create an impression as to the fact of some—of a scene and the scene consists of 16 shots on the same frame. And it worked, all right? But if I did 16 different things on that frame it was all like moving the camera very slightly and taking this poppy field and so it has a very impressionistic look.

But so you could do double exposures or multiple exposures on the camera. You could do a combining of negatives in an enlarger. But supposing you tried to duplicate what I would do in one of these.

So take one of the ones we're looking at here, Colin Powell. That probably has 32 layers, okay? Now, think of 32 negatives. You'd get black.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It would all just back up and nothing would come through. You'd have black, so you couldn't have control of all of that. And then, each one of those layers has been changed, adjusted, moved, expanded, contracted, isolated elements, adjusted in some way, filtered—whatever, all right—a million different things that might have been done to each of the elements and then to the overall.

So that's just beyond—well beyond the capability of the darkroom, well beyond the capability of the camera. So now we truly have tools that if you push it beyond two images—I mean, two images you could do in a camera; you could do it in an enlarger. But you know, you push it to tens of layers with adjustments and so on and now you're talking about with masts and adjustments and whatever and you're talking about a new world. You're talking about an ability to do things that just didn't existing photographic art until now.

SHANNON PERICH: And as a result of that, these images reflect something that you also talked about yesterday in terms of a new kind—a new way of seeing, a new kind of image that we're seeing. I tell people about these images. I say the experience of looking at them is like looking at reflections in a storefront window.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Mm-hmm.

SHANNON PERICH: They're that size and there's scale that is skewed from what one would—you know, there's not a relationship, necessarily, to scale within the images.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No.

SHANNON PERICH: Some things are very prominent, some things are hidden. So that's the experience and people know that experience. But even, say, a Lee Friedlander who's trying to photograph that, you can't capture it, because it compresses in the photograph. But when you're producing this digitally for this format, you do have the experience of depth that I've not seen in a photograph.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yeah. That—I was very cognizant of—I think I might have mentioned this yesterday when I said Picasso and Braque and so on. Picasso, in discussing Cubism, talked about the active viewer. That when—if you see a portrait—I'm talking about a painting now and I'm just paraphrasing the idea, Picasso's idea—you're used to seeing a portrait. You know what a portrait is supposed to look like and you spend a certain about of time, but generally minimal amount of time looking at it and then go onto the next one—in a, say, a museum setting or an exhibition or whatever.

You see your first Cubist portrait of somebody. You say, what is this? So you stand there trying to figure it out, right? And whether you like it or dislike it—whether it's comforting or discomforting—you're actively engaged. And he's referring to that as an active viewer. And he said that a new visual language—this is not a direct quote, but it's an essence—a new visual language creates the active viewer.

That's what I'm trying to do with the portraits. Create a new visual language that creates the active viewer and does one other thing for that active viewer: When we look at a photograph, we all know that we're looking at two-dimensional item, right? And we do up and down, right and left, diagonally with our eyes across it. The third dimension of that photograph is taken for granted. It's there—the third dimension, the vanishing point, whatever. It's all there and we take it for granted.

When you're looking at a translucent composite—that's the phrase that I've coined to describe these—when you look at a translucent composite, you're forced to move in and out with your eye, as well as up and down, right and left, across. That is a uniquely new experience in looking at a photograph. Forcing you actually in and out—I'm going to concentrate in there on that thing, I'm going to pull back here and look at this thing.

I'm going to look through this thing to the thing beyond it, or I'm going to come back and look at this, all right? That's a new experience. That is—creates a very active viewer in that sense.

SHANNON PERICH: So how—what is the—what is your definition for a translucent composite?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: A translucent composite is something that is similar to collages or montages or whatever. But the individual items are never opaque. Each individual item can be looked through to see the something behind it, beyond it and so on. So the entire—the entire image consists of translucent elements. And so you always can look beyond something to see something else.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay.

This is an—each of these images is an extraordinarily labor-intensive process.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. [Laughs.]

SHANNON PERICH: And each—I mean, to think of the amount of work you do for each one of these images,

much less to have produced 20-something—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: 21

SHANNON PERICH: —21 at this point, it's just mind boggling to me.

Talk about the list of subjects—the sitters. How have you created that list? How did these—how have you thought about who goes on the list and how have you approached getting access?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: First it was setting what I thought was a basic criteria about the list, which I'll get back to. And then, in part, putting down some of the names that were obvious to me, having Lila [Chacin]—my studio assistant—do research of certain lists that we could look through and see if anything, you know, jumps out at me.

Discussing it with you, Shannon—a lot of discussion with you about the list and who and so on—and discussing it with some other people just in my own immediate world. You know, my wife, my kids—[laughs]—you know, friends. Who do you think? You come up with a name, blah, blah.

Going back to the criteria, because I think one of the—one of the dangers that I saw right away, immediately, when I started thinking about the list and when I would just sit at dinner with friends and say, "Who do you think would be interesting icons to do?" That people would more often come up with celebrity than icon. And I did not want to do a project of celebrities. That interested me not at all.

So my definition of who I wanted to do was people who 50 years from now my grandchildren, let's say, would either know who they are or if they didn't know who they are by name, they would know what they did. And they would know that what they did somehow was important, relevant, iconic in its time or whatever.

And so that's how I went about screening—that was the funnel; that was the filter. And through that filter, I take whatever names and then try to put it through that filter and say, well, do they pass the test with that—does that work for me?

And that's how we got this list. And then I wanted a diversity in our society from science to art to law and government to whatever.

SHANNON PERICH: Right. And we—part of our discussion was looking at the list of subjects from our Richard Avedon collection.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: And so there is some crossover there. Avedon photographed—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: That was fascinating to me, Shannon—fascinating. I was delighted when I got that, because I was well into the project when you mentioned it. And you sent me a copy of the list of who we had done. And by that time, I'd already done a number of them and there was an incredible similarity in this sense: He had done [Rudolf] Nureyev; I had done [Mikhail] Baryshnikov. He had done Eugene Ormandy; I had done Itzhak Perlman. He had done another astronaut—I forgot who he had done.

SHANNON PERICH: He did Glenn.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: He did John Glenn and I did Buzz Aldrin and so on.

And I thought, this is fascinating! I mean, he was covering the same kinds of people—

SHANNON PERICH: And you've both done Billy Graham.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —appropriate for its time. And I was doing the equivalents in our time—not knowing about his list. And we both did Billy Graham. You're right.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. So it fascinated me.

SHANNON PERICH: I think this is one of the—that's one of the exciting things, I think, about having your work at the—in the Photographic History collection is that both of these are slices of our time that point to some of the philosophers and thinkers and activists that influenced culture and society and shape.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And I think he—did he do anybody in science? I think he did.

SHANNON PERICH: He did. He did Linus Pauling.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. So that was another thing, because who was important in science when Avedon was doing his, right? And what was being invented, discovered, whatever. And then you come to mine and he did [Linus] Pauling, but I'm doing—you know, I did James Watson, who discovered, you know, the double helix of DNA. I did Len [Leonard] Kleinrock, who is the father of the Internet, right?

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So—and that couldn't be available to Avedon at that point. There was no—

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I mean, it could be, but he wouldn't have known. It was too early on—

SHANNON PERICH: Yes, to really be of valuable to him.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: In the cycle of the Internet to know the impact it would have, because the first connection was in '69 and Avedon did his in the '70s. So it was right proximate to that.

SHANNON PERICH: '40s and '50s, actually. Late '40s, early '50s, '60s, because the collection came to us in the mid-'60s.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: All right. And when did he do the—they covered what period?

SHANNON PERICH: From the '40s—late '40s—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: To the '60s.

SHANNON PERICH: To the early '60s.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Oh, to the—all right, so this came after he was complete with that work.

SHANNON PERICH: Right, yes. Some after—five years, I guess.

Let's talk about the—let's go back to—you mentioned the basic criteria for the list. Did you cover—you wanted this range of areas of influence so it is the science, the arts, the culture. You've got Quincy Jones, for example, who's got his fingers in a lot of different areas.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, I have.

SHANNON PERICH: —who's got his fingers in a lot of different areas.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: A lot of things and mostly, say, popular music—let's call it, for lack of a better term. And things connected with that.

And then I have Itzhak Perlman, you know, for classical music. I have Edward Albee as a playwright, but I have Stephen Sondheim, who's musical theater. So I'm covering theater in that sense.

I have Sandra Day O'Connor, because she was the first woman justice of the Supreme Court. I have Colin Powell, not because he was a general in the Army, but because he was the first African-American secretary of state.

So I mean, they have their place in history in my mind.

SHANNON PERICH: How do they generally respond? These—all of these individuals get numerous requests every day. And I know that just any other endeavor people are going to sometimes say no and sometimes say yes. Is there a general response to you and the idea of this project?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No, I can't say that there is. I mean—first of all, the ones who say no—I don't have a record of this, but I would be willing to place a pretty fair bet that many of them have never seen the letter or the accompanying material or don't know what it is, because it's normally—people have a gatekeeper and it just doesn't get to the individual, right?

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So you get some of that.

Sometimes people get confused. And even though the letter straight out says, "We're not going to take a picture

of you, you know, it's not that," they still—you know, an assistant will call and say, "Well, you want to take a picture of so and so?" And I say, "No, we don't."

So we go through that a lot. The people who get it normally are really intrigued. And then, when they get involved with it and when they see the result, they're very intrigued and I get either wonderful phone calls or great letters about the work after it's done. After it's done, they're really happy they did it.

SHANNON PERICH: I would imagine, as one of these subjects, that it would in some ways be a relief to have—you know that you've achieved a certain status and that you're in demand. I would think it would be a relief to them to not have to be in a photograph. But for somebody to actually take interest in them to say, "What makes you who you are" and have the opportunity to say something and contribute to the production of an image about oneself, instead of always being at the mercy of the photographer—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. The artist, right.

SHANNON PERICH: Whoever—the artist; whoever's taking and creating this image. What does that back and forth like with—I mean, they're individuals and so it varies.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. It really—it really varies.

Some put together their list, send me the list, have brief dialogue about it with me—usually before they do the list, you know, to just to get a better feel and so on and so forth.

Some have done the list sitting with me and talking about it and talking about their lives and doing it that way. So it's been all over the lot—it's been all over the lot.

And I think that they view it in some ways it's easier than sitting for a portrait. You know, because they're always being burdened to sit for portrait, these people, but in some ways it's more burdensome.

In some ways, it's—they have to really spend the time to think about this. And they're really concerned that it really be right. That what they say represents them—really represents them, you know? So it's a bit of a more personal burden than, you know, somebody setting up a camera and lighting and whatever in another room, and then your assistant coming in and saying, could you go into that room, John, for a minute? Go in, sit down, they take the pictures and they get up and they leave.

That's not much of a mental exercise, you know? This is really more of an exercise for them.

SHANNON PERICH: And it's a collaboration in a way that—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. It's a different kind of collaboration.

It's not a self-portrait, because they're not doing it.But it's not the artist determining what the items are. And yet, they have no input in the actual art.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So it's an interesting combination because they input the elements and then they lose control.

SHANNON PERICH: I think it's very rewarding to see these as a viewer, because I feel like I'm looking at something that—it's like a photo album in some ways. Our lives are not, as you mentioned, you know, a portrait being a single moment in time. Our lives are really more like photo albums in which we've put many things in them. And to have all of those images compressed into a single frame, you begin to get a sense of experience, highlights, career, the personal and the private. Acknowledgement of, yes, this is what I'm known for, but the things that you don't know about these individuals' emerges as well.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: In thinking about these life experiences that get compressed into 60-by-90—if 60-by-90 is compressed, I don't know—when thinking about the images that are prominent and those that wash across the entire surface, do you balance that with the subjects, the sitters? Do you give priority to certain objects? If they're mostly known for music, do you put music up front; if they're mostly known for some other field, do you put that up front?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I try to balance it in a way. What I try not to do is make something a huge element that's not a huge part of their lives and it's more like that.

And I actually had a funny instance with Baryshnikov, which is, I think, worth talking about.

I had done the Baryshnikov and you thought it was his legs in the front, because there are these prominent legs in the front of that—in the forefront of the image. And what it actually is is a young woman who was practicing in one of his studios. What Baryshnikov has a thing called the Baryshnikov Foundation. And in Manhattan in the 30s—I think 37th Street or somewhere about there—there's a building that says, "building" and it has a number of dance studios in the building, as well as a theater and his offices and so on. And so those studios are used by dance companies and young dancers and whatever to practice and work and so on.

He had put on his list young dancers and so on. And he had put his foundation and so on. So when I was there, I took these shots. And I don't know who this woman is and I doubt very much that he does. And it's just the legs—it's just the bottom of the legs in sort of workout outfit, you know?

So I had done this. And as you said, these things are labor intensive. And typically, it'll take up to a couple of months to put together the composition. A lot of trial and error and changing and refining and it's huge.

So I'd finally completed Baryshnikov. And that night, I watched Charlie Rose on television and he was interviewing Baryshnikov. And I watched this interview and my wife saw that I was getting a little bit disturbed or concerned or whatever. And she said, "Bob, what's the matter?" And I said, "You know, I'm getting upset. I did this thing and I have these legs prominently in front. And is that the best, you know, way to represent Baryshnikov? Did I do this whole image and not really capture him right? I mean, I'm listening to him and I'm listening to him through Charlie Rose and I'm not sure I did the job, you know?" And I got very concerned.

And I thought, well, the only way out of this—even though it may mean going back to the drawing board and starting all over again after a couple of months of work is to call Baryshnikov. And he said—he was very affable to me, very, very nice and very warm to me. So you know, he said call him "Misha" so I'll call him Misha for this interview.

So I called Misha. And I said, "Misha, I saw Charlie Rose last night. It was wonderful, great interview and so on and so forth. But I'm concerned. I did your image; I've completed it and I want to discuss it with you, because I'm not sure you're going to like it."

And he said, "Well, do you like it?" And I said, "Yes. I like it very much as a matter of fact." And he said, "Well, isn't that what counts? You're the artist. Isn't that what counts?" And I said, "Well, that's very nice of you, but I also want to know that the subjects think that it's representative of them; that it is what it's supposed to be."

And he said, "Well, what's your problem?" And I said, "Well, I have this young woman's legs very prominently in the front of the photo—of the image. And it's a woman I'm sure you probably don't know; it's just some young dancer in your studio. I'm not even sure if she's a good dancer or bad dancer. I don't know. I have no way of judging that myself. And I don't know if you would think that that would represent you. You know, because it's very prominent in this image."

And he said, "Well," he said, "First of all, I told you that young dancers are what I'm all about now. That's what we do and who we work with. So of course a young dancer would be representative." He said, "And secondly, what of what you know about me or my background would tell you that I wouldn't enjoy looking at a woman's legs?" [They laugh.] And so the image stayed.

SHANNON PERICH: That's a good story.

When you're photographing all of these individual objects—this is a technical question—how do you light them knowing that—how do you photograph them knowing—not knowing completely how they will be used in the end?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Did you say how you light them?

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. How do you photograph them so that they have personality and shape and whatever you need them to have without being—without creating too much drama that will be difficult to wrestle with on the backside of putting them together.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Okay. First of all, I never use studio lighting. I never use flash. I take everything in its natural light. And that was especially important in the PALETTEs project—just to step back to that for a minute.

Because—remember, I was trying to show the color palette of the individual artist. I wanted to be true to their color, right—and the environment that that color lives in. So I think I'm one of the very few photographers who uses a color-temperature meter.

So instead of setting the—instead of setting the camera to either automatic white balance, which you have on

most digital cameras now, or to a particular, you know, thing like indoor lights, outdoor lights, whatever.

I set my camera to the actual kelvin temperature of the light. I have a meter that measures the temperature of the light—the color temperature of the light. And then I have a camera that allows me to set the number in the camera. So I'm—when I take a photograph, it is exactly the color temperature of the light that I'm in so that it's true color to where it was at the time. And I never use any artificial lighting on anything.

The question that you asked me has a sort of a broader context and is very similar to a question that Stephen Sondheim asked me.

After I had done the shoot—because, the Stephen Sondheim shoot was basically done in his home and he had all these different elements and everything, it was basically in one place, which is very unusual.

But as I was leaving, he asked if he could talk to me for a minute. I said, "Great. I'd love to."

SHANNON PERICH: No, no, Mr. Sondheim. I'm too busy for you. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: "I'd love to." And he said, "I have a question for you. Would you mind discuss—would you mind discussing—I want to discuss your creative process with you?" And I said, "Well, I think it'd be a lot more interesting to discuss your creative process. Can we discuss your creative process?" He said, "No, no, no. I really want to discuss your work."

And I said, "Okay, what?" And he said, "When you take the individual shots, do you have the complete composition in mind and you're filling in the pieces or do you just take the shots and then you develop your ideas for the composition? How does that work?" Which I thought was a fascinating question and a question that you would ask as a curator and that somebody like Sondheim who's such a—he's a genius of creativity—that he'd be thinking along those lines.

And the answer that I gave him was that when I started the project, I was just taking the shots individually the best I could, realizing that I had to take various angles, various sizes—you know, vertical, horizontal, whatever. Zero in more, pull back more, whatever. But I gave myself a lot of variety, because I really didn't know where I was going with it. I just was gathering elements and then I would sit down. I would have this whole puzzle and start to do the work.

As I moved into the object more, as I'd done more—the more I had done, the more I understood my own process in this project and the more I understood the elements that I would want to achieve in somebody—in a particular portrait of a particular person.

And so I started shooting with more of a mind towards what the composition would be—how I needed those elements. That didn't mean I knew the composition.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: That didn't even mean that that was ultimately the way the composition worked, but I had a much better insight into—I'll give you one example, right, to be very specific.

I did Leonard Kleinrock, right? And I knew immediately in doing it that there was an elements—there was the machine that was basically the backbone of the first Internet connection, right? And it's at UCLA and it's this big machine. And I opened it up and I saw this wiring inside that I found very interesting. And I knew that that wiring was going to be a filter over the whole thing. That the wiring for the first Internet connection would be a beautiful visual element and would also be meaningful in that composition.

And I took that shot with that in mind. I used the macro lens to get in close enough to the area that I wanted and I really had thought that through and I'd taken a lot of shots and I left.

And the next day, I called his office and I said, "Can I get back to his office? I need to be in his office." And they arranged with him and they said, "Yes, you can go back and do this."

And the reason was that I had—before I even got to the computer, before I ever even downloaded these images, I realized that I had only flat planes; that everything that I took was a flat plane and that I needed a depth shot in this. And I went back to his office to create some shots with depth, because I knew that that would work best against the other things that I had taken.

Now, at the beginning of the project I don't think I would have realized that until I was in the computer and, you know, worked it. And by then, I probably should have known it while I was there, but I didn't—[They laugh]—I didn't. But what I—it very quickly dawned on me that I needed that other shot and went back and did it the very next day.

So as it developed, you know, I sort of understood the process more and more and more and more.

SHANNON PERICH: So talking about—just going back for a moment to the color temperature meter—so when we look at these images, there is a variation —of warmth and coolness.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Mm-hmm.

SHANNON PERICH: Is that in part due to this color-temperature metering and the kinds of spaces that they experience, that you have gone to?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: The warmth and coolness are—well, a couple of things. One is just what people chose. You know, some of them just happened to be cool colors, some things warm colors. And then you're talking about the overall effect.

SHANNON PERICH: Right. The sort of experience, because you have a feeling about these people—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: The experience.

SHANNON PERICH: —just as you approach the image. The complexity, the—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. And the warm and cool images, I would say some of it's very deliberate—

SHANNON PERICH: On your part.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: On my part, in the sense of in somebody's portrait emphasizing the cool-color range of what I shot, or another one the warm-color range or bringing out the warmth in the computer or, you know, reducing those elements and bringing forth the different elements.

Also, you know, one of the things is that there's an element to doing this work that is incredibly different than what we generally learn in photography. Because in photography, we learn how colors work with other colors, right?

And if you've studied color theory or whatever and you know, I've read a lot of books on color theory and so on, you know, you know what works with other things. You know about complementary colors, you know about adjacent colors, you know about how colors work with colors. But you never get an opportunity to mix colors.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: When you do this work and you layer something over something else or under something else, you're mixing colors. And so now you're getting results that you never had in photography and you're working with a whole other aspect of the art that photographers don't normally work with, which is mixing colors.

So I had to train myself to mix colors. I had to train myself to what was going to be resolved when I took this photograph and placed it on top of that photograph with this opacity. How's that going to read? And when I put something behind that, how's it going to make the other two things read? And it gets more and more complex as you keep adding to it.

And you—and so then, at a point, you may have an opportunity to say, well, if I do it this way, then the cool color will emerge. If I do it that way, the warm color will emerge and where do I want to be in this? How do I want this to feel and look, right? And so you deal with that.

And there's—I can't tell you how many permutations and combinations there are. The possibilities are endless and that's what makes the process so long.

SHANNON PERICH: Right. Because you might start with—you might start with a collection of 300 to 500 pictures that you've taken, right, to select from, to draw on and ultimately may only use 10 or 15?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. So there's an enormous editing project that has to happen before you even begin to start building.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: And then this layering—it's the painting aspect of mixing colors, but in a digital way. But there are also other aspects of building these images that—the size of individual files that you bring in that

adding them together, working with them on such a large scale, you're pushing the limit on what we experience visually, you're pushing the limit on scale of the printing of these, but you're also pushing the limit on what the technology and the software can manage.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes, in a sense. I mean, they're—where you're really pushing the limit is what you can send from the computer to the printer—[They laugh]—because you do have to flatten these files in order to print them. You know, we have the complete file in the computer, but you can't transmit that file. The equipment's not quite up to it yet—to taking that file with all the elements.

SHANNON PERICH: And tell us again what size the—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, typically it'd be five gigabytes. So you don't take a five gigabyte file and transfer it to the printer. What you do is you take that and you flatten it. So you create a file that's maybe one gig.

SHANNON PERICH: That's still a huge file.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And then send that to the printer, while retaining all this information in the computer.

SHANNON PERICH: But what about the software and what software and what Photoshop and the other programs that you're using—what they can manage when you are working with—when they built these programs—"they" being the companies—did they anticipate that people would be doing what you're doing?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, they're such geniuses I think they anticipated things well beyond what I'm doing. [They laugh.]

I think they did, I mean, because the longer I work at this, the deeper I get—and as you discovered, Shannon, I'm an intense student. So when a new—when the new software comes out, I read the entire manual, you know, not a lot of people do that. But I have that kind of patience; I've always been that kind of student.

And so I sit down and I read through all of it and then I read books about it, you know, that other people write and so on. If you look here, you'll see a lot of stuff on every single version of Photoshop, I have a lot of things that I read, right—in addition to working with Mac, right?

SHANNON PERICH: Mac Holbert.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Mac Holbert. Not "The Mac."

SHANNON PERICH: Yeah. [They laugh.] Our Mac Holbert of Nash Editions

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: But—so they've anticipated huge capabilities.

At the size file that I'm working, things are a bit slow. You know, to open up a file in the morning, you're watching that blue band come across pretty slowly to get the file opened, right? Or when you make a major change sometimes in the file, that takes awhile for it to adjust.

But basically, the capability of the program far exceeds, I think, anybody working in it. I think they just—it's just incredibly deep and the more you—it's one of those things where the more you know, the more you know you don't know. And you know, I've studied some fairly complex things in my life. Economics—econometrics and economics and things like that are very complex things.

I'm a pilot. I have an instrument rating—instrument flying is an eight-hour exam, the written examine for instrument flying. That's complex, but I'd never come across anything as deep as this. You just keep going and going and going. Or maybe I'm just stupider at this, I don't know.

SHANNON PERICH: I don't think. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: But it's just that it's very, very deep and you can do so many things.

And then you say, well, there's 15 ways to do this. So maybe there's a better way than the way I'm doing it, you know, or a more subtle way or a quicker way or whatever or—you know, and so on.

And what amazes me is how many people are working with software like this at very sophisticated levels. But I think it's more graphic designers than photographers, because I just came back from Las Vegas where the NAPP—National Association of Photoshop Professionals—and they had a seminar on smart objects, right? It's one of the things in the program now. But you'd think that you and three other people would be in a seminar on smart objects, right? Well, there were 1,000 people in the seminar with three huge screens. And 1,000 people, literally, in that seminar.

So start asking people just around me, "Are you a photographer, are you a photographer?" I was—and I found most of them were graphic designers.

SHANNON PERICH: And what kind of work are they doing?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I didn't really get into depth with it. I think working for publications and marketing companies and advertising companies and things like that. But it's interesting. So people are working with these things in all different ways.

And now there's—they have a thing called CS4-extended, which is a three-dimensional thing and you can work in literally three dimensions. You know, like the old glasses that you put on and see three dimensional? That's—

SHANNON PERICH: Wow!

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: People are working in that now; that's coming next. You'll be seeing things like that.

SHANNON PERICH: These would be exciting to experience in that way—[They laugh]—reach in

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: —and touch the little red wagon.

Some of the objects on the list are pretty straightforward and sometimes they're less straightforward.

I know Sandra Day O'Connor's—to paraphrase what she wrote was the sound of the windmills at the Lazy B Ranch.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: So there really is a lot of room for interpretation on your part as an artist. They might give you the object or the topic, but sometimes they're very challenging to wrestle with to translate into something visual.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: Can you talk about some of the approaches that you've taken to photographing objects or things off of the list?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: You know, sometimes the things were—it was, what did you mean by that? You know, that it was so vague that I had to go back and say, can you tell me—

SHANNON PERICH: Give me some direction. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Give me some direction. With Hank Aaron, for example, he just wrote, *Baseball*. Well, we sort of—we sort of knew that. [Laughs.]

[END OF TRACK AAA_weinga09_1883.]

SHANNON PERICH: This is Shannon Perich and Robert Weingarten. This is disc seven.

Hank Aaron said baseball needed some definition.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: [Laughs.] And so I had to probe that when I met with him because I wasn't getting anything out of his assistant or whatever. So when I met with him, I had to sit down and, before I did any photography, I had to probe that. Well, you know, "Where's the bat where you hit the homerun that beat Babe Ruth's record?" "Where's the ball?" You know, "Tell me more." You know, "Which fields are important to you? This field? That field? Whatever?"

And, you know, in discussing it, for example, he said, "Well, you know, the old field, before they built Turner Field in Atlanta, is where I hit the 755th homerun. And the home plate is still there in that—it's a parking lot now, but home plate is still in that parking lot. They didn't pick up it. It's in the ground there. And if you go out to the parking lot, you'll find it. And this was in the winter, so there was no cars in the parking lot, right, because nothing was happening at Turner Field.

So I went out to the parking lot and marched around the parking lot up and down and found home plate. And I was able to take an interesting shot from behind what was home plate to a sign at the end of the parking lot that says "755th Home Run, Hank Aaron." Right?

So I was able to get that whole view. Well, that's not on his list, but it was an interesting thing to take, and I got that from talking to him that it was there. I never would have known it was there. You know?

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And so you get sort of vague things or broad-stroke kinds of things and you have to probe it.

SHANNON PERICH: I think it's part of what makes these projects, these individual images dynamic and interesting. Again, it's not—it is a two-way conversation to various degrees that allow you opportunity. One, the privilege of getting to know these individuals and touching history but, also, that they get to participate and you get to draw out these moments of their lives that are important.

And in a way, these are more like traditional painted portraits in which the painters could put metaphorical—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Elements—

SHANNON PERICH: —and symbolic objects in the paintings that were not from that particular moment in time.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: You think of the grand paintings of Napoleon and other things, and you've got the symbols of the bees and that kind of thing.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. Exactly.

SHANNON PERICH: So looking at these, you do have these elements that are individually symbolic. Your violin, for example, is not just a violin, and it's not just that it represents your experience with that violin. But there's a whole other—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Context for it.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. It has much more meaning beyond just the object itself.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, one of the good examples of something on the list that was interpreted in a different way and I think is sort of interesting in the image itself is *Dennis Hopper* [2006]. There were two things that I wanted to show that were in his list but not in this way.

One was that I wanted to somehow demonstrate that he has a terrific and important contemporary art collection and he's a very important and knowledgeable contemporary art collector. Two was I wanted to go back to, you know, the *Easy Rider* [1969] era and so on and reflect the fact that he did have an addiction problem, right, at one point in his life. He hasn't for 30 years, but he did at one point in his life, and I wanted, you know, to express that.

And he hadn't shied from it—his list—he was about to write marijuana, and they said, "No. I don't think that would look good historically to have that on the list. So why don't we put"—and he put the—what do you call it—the paper—

SHANNON PERICH: The wrapper?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. I forget the name but the little papers for marijuana.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. I don't know.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: There's a name, right?

SHANNON PERICH: Okay.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And he put that—so that was going to be representative of the drug culture background. Okay?

And then I was in his home, and I was photographing and I was taking some pictures of some of his contemporary art and modern art and whatever. And I saw he had an Andy Warhol Mao. And I was taking the Mao, and I had taken it from far and then I was coming in and taking closer and closer shots of the Mao because I wasn't exactly sure how I was going to use it in the final image and I wanted some close-in and some further back.

And as I got closer to it, I realized it had two holes in it. And one hole said "warning shot" and it was to the left of

Mao, and one near his eye said "bullet hole." And it was written in sort of an orange—

SHANNON PERICH: Grease pencil or something.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Grease pencil. And Dennis was there. And I said, "Dennis, what is this?" And he said, "Well, I was in a drunken stupor, drug induced, and I was railing against communism, and I took out my pistol and I shot Mao twice."

And so that became a very big element in the final image because it represented both that he had this collection of art, that he would have a Warhol Mao, and that he also had a relationship with Warhol. So that was representative in that. And the culture scene that he was very much a part of—right. So it's both represented in that one shot.

SHANNON PERICH: How about if we move to your workspace.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Okay.

SHANNON PERICH: And let's talk about that. We talked about it a little bit yesterday, but could you walk me through—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Sure.

SHANNON PERICH: —some of that?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: We're looking at the image of *Colin Powell* [2008]—Colin Powell's visual biography or biographical sketch.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, this one follows a pretty clear trajectory that not all of them do. His charity is "America's Promise". And the symbol of that charity is this red wagon—this little children's red wagon. And he has one in his office, and I photographed it.

SHANNON PERICH: This is in the lower left corner of the image.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It's in the lower left corner of the image. I decided to use the symbol of this carriage—of this wagon rather—and "America's Promise" as a way to structure the image.

And I did it in two ways.

One is his own realization of the American promise in terms of his trajectory and then America's struggle to reach its promise, too. And so I constructed that very consciously in the composition of this.

And it starts on the right-hand side here with Kelly Street in the Bronx where Colin Powell grew up. So he grows up on Kelly Street in the Bronx, goes to CCNY where he joined the ROTC and so on, and eventually becomes general of the Army and you have his—that's his helmet in the middle of the image here—and earns the purple heart as well which is in this. All right?

And then goes—eventually becomes Secretary of State. And this room that you're looking at is the Adam's Room in the State Department where he got me access. That has very important historic antiques like this desk where they signed of Treaty of Paris and this desk, which was Thomas Jefferson's writing desk where he wrote the Declaration of Independence.

So all right. So that's following his trajectory, his realization of his American promise. The other is he had had on the list the Vietnam Wall, the Desert Shield, Thomas Jefferson. So what I did was I did a picture of Jefferson Memorial from the back, from the highway, so that I could isolate Jefferson and put him out facing this whole scene, all right, with his back to you.

And, also, because this is very busy with the Vietnam Wall as a filter in front of everything, I wanted an important place where your eye can rest. And by Jefferson being black in this, it doesn't confuse the scene.

SHANNON PERICH: Right. It calms it. Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. It calms it. And so I set the Vietnam Wall as a filter, which was very, by the way, one of the most difficult photographic things in this whole project because the wall has so many reflections and people are always there.

So I had to isolate the wall so that the names were like a filter over everything. And I set it up in such a way where—

SHANNON PERICH: And the wall is black.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —and against the black Thomas Jefferson, you can clearly read names. And I set one of these names up on Thomas Jefferson so you can read it. One of the soldier's names was De la Paz which, in Spanish, means "of the peace" and so I thought there was an irony to that.

And so it was set that way. And then if you look past the Vietnam Wall, you can see—you have to concentrate—you can see the Desert Shield [Operation Desert Shield, 1990] map. And it's an interesting map because, in this map, it says "Warning: Flying over Iraq without permission is prohibited." And you look here and it says "Area in dispute: Tehran" and so on.

SHANNON PERICH: But what's interesting is here on the couch in the State Department is the phrase "neutral zone."

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: And that the way that this space works, is you have this desk, you have this couch. It is an office space. And yet it's this—there's a tree that seems to be looming to the right of the fireplace. And so you really do get this gesture of suggestion of—that his world and the State Department is not about being contained within the physical building.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: That there is—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. It's out.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. These three elements—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. And you can't tell, you see, how these things are all merged here from—as you move from this space from Kelly Street into wherever you're going. Right?

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: The State Department, City College. You see that? That's part of the college. So it's all—it's very hard to distinguish—[laughs]—where one thing begins and where the other thing ends. It's very seamless which is part of the difficulty in these is to make them seamless.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And so that's the *Colin Powell* image.

SHANNON PERICH: But I think the other thing that's interesting about these is that people—individuals who approach these and spend time with them will relate, will find—they know that they're coming to a biography, will be able to say, "Oh, well, I had to start somewhere. This is where I lived. This is where I went."

The College [City College of New York] looks like it could be a church. So one might interpret it that way. But it's this idea that you move, that you—I think there are things that you can relate to as an individual to connect with this icon which is part of why you selected the icon as, I think, in hopes of understanding them better so that you can understand yourself better.

We had talked—a conversation we had a long time ago, you had mentioned reading a book and trying to find out is there something that makes—these people who have been incredibly successful in their lives, what is it about them—is there a commonality that makes them succeed? What is it about successful people? And, certainly, there are tons of books about how to be a successful person and the three things that you need to know or five or 10 or whatever.

And I don't know that—we haven't talked about that for many years, but I think about that when I look at these. Is there something that's in this image about this person that I can learn from to make me a more successful person? Successful in the terms of achievement, and not successful in the terms of fame or celebrity.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. Right.

SHANNON PERICH: And the one thing that I do see is diversity of interest and passion and commitment.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: And it's not about—there's not a dollar sign anywhere.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No.

SHANNON PERICH: There's not, you know, a marketing firm somewhere. This is all about experiences that they've had, positive or negative, that they've learned from.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: And that give them strength and something to stand on and that they all have a belief system.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: That's what I get from that.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: I think it's a collective. I don't know if that was—if that's part of what you built on in thinking about, but I go back to that very early conversation we had, probably the first time I met you or came to visit, as where I think that these build from.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Well, I think that passion and commitment is a huge part of all of it for these people.

SHANNON PERICH: But I don't think it's just because of these particular 20-some odd that you've selected because they come from a different—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: No. I think it would be true of people like this.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Do you know what I mean?

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. Let's talk about the *Chuck Close* [2007].

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: This is one of my favorite ones.

SHANNON PERICH: What makes it one of your favorite?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I find it visually one of the most satisfying of the whole project. And it was also—well, first of all, it was very important for me to have Chuck Close agree to do this. And the reason is—and I hadn't ever discussed it with them—but the reason was because I consider him the most important living self-portraitist—his self-portrait is iconic.

So here's somebody whose life is spent in doing variations on his own self-portrait and doing portraits—I wouldn't call it traditional because the under-painting is so interesting on what he does—but traditional in the sense that it's always the likeness of the person and the face is a dominant, you know, it takes up most of the image.

And so for somebody whose life is that, who is iconic in his abilities and known for it, to have him accept that a photographic artist is going to do a portrait of him that doesn't have his likeness, that is very different from anything in his world, to have him accept that—artistically accept that—you know, was important to me. So of all the artists—you know, I've done PALETTEs of, as I told you, about 40 artists. Of all the artists—

[Pause.]

Okay. Where were we?

SHANNON PERICH: It was important that—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: That Chuck Close—

SHANNON PERICH: —that you had Chuck Close—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —buy into the—as I said, I did around 40 artists, give or take, between here and Spain, because I did some artists in Spain for the PALETTEs. And I did want an artist as part of this series. I didn't want

more than one because I had just done artists, but I wanted at least one. So who was it going to be, right? And the one that I wanted was Chuck Close.

SHANNON PERICH: And did you do his—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I did his PALETTE [Chuck Close #1, 2004, as part of the PALETTE series].

SHANNON PERICH: And what does that look like?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Very, very different than what I would have projected it to look like because everything in his work is so very organized and specific and delineated. I would have thought that the way he kept his pallet would be as tight in a way.

But there are very loose strokes across where the paint is and the way he sets up his pallet. It's very loose and flowing. And it's a very different kind of feel than his painting. I was interested in it and he—I knew he had liked it when I'd sent him a copy of it. So that's why I felt I could approach him for this series.

He wanted to see another one first before agreeing to do it. And I sent him [*Mikhail] Baryshnikov*'s [2007] to look at on the computer.

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And he was able to open it up on a big screen, and then he agreed to do it.

So in any event, his list—it was interesting. I sat with him in New York. I went there thinking that I'm going to do his portrait, more or less, that day or week. And the first thing that he wrote on the list was, "My favorite room of art in the world is Scrovegni Chapel and it's Giotto's frescoes and Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, Italy.

I thought, "Oh, my God." [They laugh.]

SHANNON PERICH: And this is one of the first ones you did, right? I mean, this was like in the first five?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Probably, yes. And so there was that. And then the second thing he wrote was that he loves gardens, and that his favorite garden in the world is at Sissinghurst Castle—Vita Sackville-West Gardens at Sissinghurst Castle in Kent, England. [Laughs.]

And I said, "You're going to send me all around the world, Chuck, to do your portrait." And he said, "You know what? When you go to Scrovegni Chapel, you will thank me because it's my favorite room of art in the whole world." And I said, "Okay."

And then he continued to write. So what this consists of is I did go to Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, Italy, which, by the way, has people coming in for tours for 15 minutes at a clip, and I think it's something like 90 seconds in between—between groups.

So I had to set up—they let me set up my camera and tripod in there, but all day, I was taking shots in 90-second segments in between 15-minute things. So that was—

SHANNON PERICH: In natural light. In a dark interior?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. And I could walk you through this image in terms of how difficult it was to balance the light and what I had to do on the computer.

SHANNON PERICH: That would be good.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Taking various shots of this. And I could walk you through that.

SHANNON PERICH: That would be good.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So then he said that—so I did that. If you look at the image, you will see that the ceiling of the chapel looks translucent. It's a blue ceiling. In the real world, it's, obviously—

SHANNON PERICH: Solid.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. Opaque. It's solid. But it looks translucent.

And what you're seeing through that are white flowers, and you're seeing white flowers through the window. And if you look to the left, you're seeing white flowers through that window. But there are no white flowers outside the windows of Scrovegni Chapel. Those are the white flowers from the garden of Vita Sackville-West from Kent,

England —the white gardens.

And some of that—it's hard to tell, but it's part of this overall thing, and it lends a sort of an impressionistic view to the whole thing. And you can't really spot it individually, but there's a field that I created with that.

On the left, you have *Woman with a Red Hat* [*Girl with a Red Hat*] by Vermeer which is his favorite painting in the history of painting. His favorite painting that was painted during his own lifetime is *Woman,I* by de Kooning.

If you look at them—and I've put them on each side of this composition—they represent vastly different images of women. Vastly different. One very romantic—and, you know, different kind of thing—and the other sort of a hateful look, to me anyway, of women.

And they're both in it. And it's interesting that an artist would pick—that an artist that would pick one of these were also pick the other one. It's a very interesting range.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And that they're both women, I thought, is very interesting.

One of the nice things about these translucent composites and, especially in this, is it gives you an opportunity to put together some very unusual juxtapositions of art because you can look through the Vermeer and see Giotto frescoes through her face. That's, I think, a very rare kind of experience that you're looking through the face of a Vermeer painting and seeing Giotto's frescoes.

SHANNON PERICH: We see history through time. We see it through space. We see it through filters of historical experiences.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Exactly.

SHANNON PERICH: I mean—you can read this very deeply and interpret it—the human experience of looking at art and painting faces. I mean, you've got four different styles of portraiture here alone.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And a fifth which is it.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Which is it—itself.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And that's Phil [Phillip] Glass. I asked him to list his own favorite painting X his self-portrait. And it was Phil Glass. So that's why that's there.

And then his favorite wheelchair is this one. It's a high-tech wheelchair, and it can climb stairs. It can stand up. I mean, it's a very unique thing, and I put it in the dark there and people sort of discover it after a while. It's not obvious when you look at this that it's there. But then you discover it.

And then he said the biggest boon to painters is Bounty towels that are unadorned, you know, just straight white Bounty towels with nothing else on it, and Sharpie pens. And so I did that.

When he got his copy of it, he was very pleased with the whole thing. He was very complementary about it. Never said anything about the fact that I'd gone all over—[laughs]—to do it. Never mentioned that at all but mentioned how proud he was that I left the Bounty towel and the Sharpie in the image because he thought that took artistic guts. [Laughs.]

SHANNON PERICH: Well, that's, you know, there is this high level of interpretation and art historical theory, and then honesty about—respecting the honesty of these individuals who are trusting you with this knowledge about them that they might not put out to the rest of the world and yet here it is. And you get to present Chuck Close's love of Bounty paper towels and Sharpies to the world. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. Right. Right.

SHANNON PERICH: But it makes him very human.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: And when they have these icons whom we know about and we respect and we idolize in some cases and think, "I could never achieve that," there are ways that you can learn from them and things that we can bring.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: And that's in all of these, I think.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: That human element that brings them down to earth. And I think, in some ways, engrandizes [sic] them because they are approachable—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: —and they are human.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. I think they're incredibly—this is just such an exciting project because it's visually exciting, the stories are great, the experience to get to know the individual icons in a new way—there's so much here for us to—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Would you like to see how this is put together?

SHANNON PERICH: Yes. That would be great.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Let's do that.

What I wanted to show you was how this image was built.

SHANNON PERICH: This is the *Chuck Close* [2007] image.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: This is the *Chuck Close* image. So this is the Chuck Close image.

And what I'm going to do is I'm going to eliminate all these layers—

SHANNON PERICH: And how many layers are we looking at here?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I'll count. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: We're looking at 24 layers. So it's one of the—one of the fewer layers that I have. So here's the original picture that I imported, and it became the background layer for this piece. And this is Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, Italy.

Now, you notice the chapel was under construction. You know, not under construction but under renovation. And you see these three black poles?

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Because they were working in that chapel. Well, I didn't think that we'd want those poles. So I made a copy of the background so that I wouldn't be destroying the original photo. And then, on that copy, I eliminated those poles.

SHANNON PERICH: The poles are gone.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: You see it?

SHANNON PERICH: I don't see them, actually. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Now, you don't. All right? So I eliminated the poles.

Then the next thing I did was I had to balance the light. The light—and I only did over a series of things. You

notice the light is coming through these windows here.

SHANNON PERICH: Pointing to the left.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And all the windows are on the left. Right? The shadows you can see. So as a result, this wall—

SHANNON PERICH: On the right?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: The right wall is lighter than the left wall. So the next thing was to start to balance that out. So I made that wall lighter. Now, it's all too light for what I want it to be, but these are balanced now.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: These walls are—so I start with the balance thing. Then the next thing I imported was the flowers. All right? And what you're looking at is the flowers after—you could see each of these layers has a mask. Can you see that?

SHANNON PERICH: I can.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And the black in the mask is an area that won't allow something to go through to the lower layers. And the white allows it. So what I was doing is I was blocking—on this third layer up, I was blocking this side. I didn't want to make an adjustment on that.

SHANNON PERICH: All right. So you're only permitting the flowers to show through on specific—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And I'm only permitting the light to change here. And that's—and when I made those changes, that's how it balanced out. If I did the whole thing without a mask, when I made this change, it would have changed here, too. So it was important to block one and let the other one through.

Then here, you can see—if you look at the image itself—

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh. This is the image of the—the entire image of the flowers.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Maybe we can do this for a minute. Let's go onto the mask and block it.

SHANNON PERICH: Oh, wow.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Okay?

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So if you—so what I really brought in here was the flowers which is over everything, and then I created a mask to block the flowers except where the windows are to let them through the window.

So when I eliminate that mask—when I turn on the mask, you can't see the flowers here. You can only see them here, here and there. Right?

And then I have, above that layer, there's an adjustment layer. And do you see what happens there? Do you see how those flowers are getting darker?

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. So I'm allowing some more stuff in, and I've darkened it. Now, I'm still not happy with the brightness and contrast here. So I—

SHANNON PERICH: Of the walls of the chapel?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Of the walls. Right? So I have what they call a radial adjustment, an adjustment that allows the adjustment to be very subtle going from no adjustment at all to a complete adjustment. And I have a layer here that's a brightness contrast layer. See it?

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And that is making an adjustment. I've darkened that again. All right? I've created a new adjustment there.

And then above that, I have another adjustment layer, but here you can see this is all white. So that adjustment

layer is allowing it through to the entire area. Right? So now, it's getting a little bit for more vibrancy. This part is coming up.

SHANNON PERICH: Right in the center.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: You can see it?

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: The center. And it's starting to get a little life into this. That's starting—

SHANNON PERICH: The depth is heightened as well.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And now, over that, I did put the garden. Now, I've created this impressionistic effect with the garden but I have the ability now, by separating the full garden from what I put in here, I have the ability to have these darker and this lighter.

SHANNON PERICH: Got it. Wow.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Because I've separated those elements. All right? So now I can do that.

And now, I've punched through an area in that. You can see this area?

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: It's a little blown out.

SHANNON PERICH: To the center left.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I've punched through. I've created another adjustment layer, a mask on that layer. I've opened up a part of that to allow the adjustment through. Right? But only allow this adjustment through to that one area. And I've darkened that slightly to take that—see how that's—

SHANNON PERICH: Wow, that's so subtle.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: What a big difference it makes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. But that's a very subtle area. See? Now, I've imported the Vermeer, but you can see there's a mask that refines the edges around the Vermeer. Let me put that on for you and let me shut off the mask.

SHANNON PERICH: Oh, and so you've got the whole background of the painting—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: You've got the whole background of the painting.

SHANNON PERICH: You've got the right frame of it, the right—right up to the frame.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So that's the actual photograph. But now, it's adjusted so it's just sitting as an element on its own isolated in here. And that takes painting. You have to paint out these—when you do these masks, you have to create a brush that's appropriate. I usually move it to this tablet here—

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh. On the right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And I work with the stylus directly on the tablet to paint out the areas that I don't want. Then there's an area here which—it's extended—this was pulled out and then was put back separately so that I could lighten. It was her hand.

SHANNON PERICH: This is the bottom center left.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And it's an awkward—it's awkward in the actual painting, and I wanted to be able to reduce the hand without reducing the rest of the image. So I separated it. All right?

SHANNON PERICH: When thinking about the scale of this—of the Vermeer girl, did you know intuitively that it needed to be a certain size? Did you scale it so that its composition only in balance? Her hand runs along the aisle—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I scaled it in—what you don't see—I mean, each of these layers, you're seeing the final result of what I did, but you don't see the steps that got me there except if I have a mask.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right? So for example, if she was half this size and I used a free transforming tool to resize her or a camera distortion to move her, direct her—

SHANNON PERICH: To rotate her?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: To rotate her, to change the perspective on her, you don't see that here. You just see the final result of it. So when I imported this—and that's another thing. I may have changed from the original image. I may have resized it because every image is the same size—

SHANNON PERICH: Sure.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —coming out of the camera.

SHANNON PERICH: Right. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right?

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So this was the same size as the full thing. So first, I may have just taken a stab at it and resized the image—and you know it may be a good idea to make a copy of this. Hold on a minute. Let's say I'm isolating that. So I want to be on that layer.

SHANNON PERICH: All right. So we're looking at the Vermeer layer.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. And the opacity of that layer is 66 percent. See it?

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Up here. All right? So I'm going to record the capacity—the opacity so I can get back to it after we make the thing.

Now, let's assume that I said, "You know, that's too big. I don't like that." All right? So I'm going to use a shortcut here for a free transform tool. And now I have a free transform box. See this box?

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh. I do.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: All right. Now, I can do various things with this. If I hit the "shift" key to not change the proportions and pull up on this, I can make her smaller. All right?

So you can see now I could put her into the image here. I can move her here. I can say, well, that's too small or too big. Those are things you don't see because when I finally click and say this is okay—I'm going to not. I'm going to get rid of it. Oh, my God. I did something I didn't want to do. I did not want to transform. Okay.

So once I set it up there at that size and that position, in that way, you're just seeing—you're seeing one layer, but that may have been a number of things that I did. First, I might have worked the image. I might have dealt with the saturation of the image, the tonality of different things.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Then I imported it in after I may have resized it, imported it in. Then, I may not have liked the way it was, so I may have transformed it in terms of size, I may have worked with the perspective of it.

SHANNON PERICH: So you move the images in and out. You use the left screen as sort of the test area, and then you work the images on the right-hand side?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: When I have to work the stylus on the image to paint or to do something like that, that's one—all right. So let's do—let's look at this. Let's look at lens correction, for example. All right? Now, what you're going to see is I'm opening up the Vermeer into something that's very much like an architectural tool. It's a lens

correction.

SHANNON PERICH: But the grid over it looks like something Chuck Close might do. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And I'm about to change the grid size once it's done so that I can work better. But I'll give you a sense of something.

SHANNON PERICH: How did you acquire this image?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I photographed a poster—

SHANNON PERICH: A poster.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So here's the size. Right?

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Of that grid, right.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay. So we're looking at the size of the squares.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: All right. So now I'm making it a bigger grid so I can work. Maybe I'm trying to relate it to something else. Sometimes, there's something else that I'm trying to relate. You notice her hand is not there?

SHANNON PERICH: Yes, it is missing. [Laughs.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Because it's part of another layer.

SHANNON PERICH: Ah.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Remember?

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I had separated her hand. All right. But just for argument's sake, let's say that I thought that she was leaning down too far. See, I can move her.

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh. Wow.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I can change the perspective. I can change an angle. I can do all kinds of crazy things with it. I'm not going to do any of that, but I just wanted to give you an idea, there's all kinds of things that you can do. I could shift her this way and that way. I can move her up and back. I can—right?

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Okay. So now she's here. Maybe I could move her that way, move her that way. Right? Whatever. Okay. Vertical perspective. I think a horizontal perspective, too. Maybe I want her facing more—her shoulder more this way. Or maybe I want her shoulder more the other direction. I'm creating other distortions.

All right. Cancel all that. But so you can see it's no accident that she's sitting looking at you the way she is.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Her hand is right in that slot. She's a size that I wanted. I wanted the de Kooning sort of looking down at her.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Because that de Kooning is such a dominant, mean-looking thing. I wanted it to be more dominant than the image in terms of looking down on this soft, romantic kind of view of woman.

And so then, also, I've sized Philip Glass so that he's right in the middle here. Right?

So we were going up the layers. So we had gotten as far as her.

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right? Now, let's add back her hand. And then this layer—you see how these little arrows facing down?

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: That's attaching a layer—an adjustment layer—to only what's directly below it because I wanted to make certain adjustments, but I only wanted to make it to what was below it. So see that? See what I did with the hand?

SHANNON PERICH: Do it again. Oh, wow.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: See that hand?

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Now watch. See that little adjustment?

SHANNON PERICH: Just barely, but yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. There's a little adjustment, but I only wanted it to be to the hand. I had separated the hand from the body. I had then created a layer that's only attached to the layer that has the hand. And then I made this little tiny adjustment.

Then there's some other judgment. And now I put in the de Kooning. Now, when I put in the de Kooning, you can see there's a mask. So I had already taken out part of the de Kooning because I wanted it to end here and just be that. Right?

I had already sized it either in here or before it got to there. And so now you have basically the final layer is what you're looking at of the de Kooning. Then I had a curve on the de Kooning. See it? See the de Kooning got a little bit more vibrant?

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: See it?

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Without. With. Okay? And that's just for the de Kooning. Then I did an overall brightness thing, to start to level out that. And then I did a curve—see, and now you're starting to get a little—

SHANNON PERICH: It blends it.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —a little bit of vibrancy and everything's sort of—now, the colors, now the intensities are starting to blend. This is still a little bit blown out.

SHANNON PERICH: This is very much more like painting than it is photography.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes.

SHANNON PERICH: Your concerns and your control and—

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. And now this is here. I've added the Bounty. And, obviously, I've done things to that. Before I could add the Bounty, I had to separate it out from pictures. You know, you take a picture of Bounty towels. There's thing in the background. It's on a table, whatever it is. The Sharpie pens and so on and so forth. So they—

SHANNON PERICH: Is that a single image with the pens? Or are the pens separate?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: That's a single image with the pens.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: I set up the pens in front of the Bounty.

Now, I've imported Phillip Glass. Right? Now, each of these things, obviously, I could play with opacity or all different levels. Look at all the other—I can blend it in different ways. I can have a normal thing. I can have a—look at this alone. Look how many different variations there are—normal, dissolved, darkened, multiply, color burn, linear burn, darker color. All right?

So I have all those opportunities. And this, I've done as normal. Now, I have imported the wheelchair which I took in his studio, isolated from the studio shot, and then, with a lot of difficulty, I had to paint out all the detail here.

And that's what this mask is, is painting out all that detail, all that fine detail—the wheels and—so that it just sits alone in there. And then finding the proper opacity for that.

Now, it's still not balanced again, in my opinion. So I did another adjustment to balance it. I wanted to darken that. I will show you why in a minute.

And then I did what's called a levels. And now you'll start to see it come to life where I create an adjustment layer that moves the white point and the dark point to the appropriate places—

SHANNON PERICH: Wow.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: —in the histogram.

SHANNON PERICH: Wow. That's extraordinary.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. And now I'm still seeing this. I don't like. So now I've taken that layer and, above it, I've carved out an area that I wanted to darken and blocked all the other areas. See it?

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And then I did an overall brighten-contrast thing because this looks fine on the screen, but it won't print fine. And I made an adjustment because I can look at how something is going to print. I could do a proof setup and look at how it's going to print and then make adjustments so that it'll print right.

And that depends on the paper you're using and all that. And you can create a proof based on the paper and so on.

So if you're looking at it, look how light it is here. But if you go into the print profile, all right—I'll show you. Okay. Now, here's the print profile. The first thing I do is let's pick the printer. Let's say we're going to do this on the 11000/880 because I have all those different printers, right? And now, we're going to do it—we're picking the printer.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And we're doing this thing. We're looking for the 90-by-60 paper. See it?

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Okay. And we're going to do it as a landscape shape. Right? Okay. So that's that. So that's the—so I'm looking at that.

Now, when I look at this preview, I can show a [color] gamut warning. See those things that come in there?

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: That tells me that the RTB file in the computer is different than the gamut of the printer—the printer's capability. So I can see where it's out of gamut, where I'm going to have some problems. All right? And then I can show the paper. See it how it dulls down?

SHANNON PERICH: Right. Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: See it go from there to there?

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And that show me how it's going to look on that particular paper because I've got the paper in here. See?

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: See, USFAP? That's [Epson] UltraSmooth Fine Art Paper. MK 2880 ICC—that's the profile of the paper that I'm using.

SHANNON PERICH: The amazing thing about this is that you have—you're able to predict and be able to see pretty much what you're going to print, whereas, in conventional photography—not that you could do this in conventional photography—but the only way to have known what it would be is to actually do it.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: And so there's a whole cost-savings element here. I mean, being—aside from the cost of printers and the paper—[laughs]—and all of that. But you're not having to run many, many proofs.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: We do it anyway because the one thing that you can't get here is the difference between—you can get pretty much everything, and understand it pretty damn well. But you can't get the difference between a backlit image and a flat piece of paper.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: And that's where we find that we run a number of proofs so that I have the same kind of feeling that I get on the flat piece of paper as I do on a backlit screen.

SHANNON PERICH: Right. And the experience of the size.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Yes. And the size.

SHANNON PERICH: Yes.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Although, you know, we can—you can test by—I can take that—see, that's a 12.1 percent.

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh. Oh, so you could do it at a hundred percent?

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. So what I can do is I can go up and get a sense—and you do this when you sharpen it—of what's going to happen as a hundred percent of the size that I have the image at. In other words, this image is a 40-by-60 that I have in there—that we're looking at.

SHANNON PERICH: Uh-huh.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: Right. So a hundred percent of the size is 40-by-60. So it shows, at 40-by-60, these are how these different parts are going to look. And we go through it with a fine-toothed comb at a hundred percent of size before printing it.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay. Wow.

ROBERT WEINGARTEN: So that every—and sometimes every layer at a hundred percent size so that we can see what you're really going to see.

SHANNON PERICH: [Laughs.] That's intense.

[END OF TRACK AAA_weinga09_1884.]

SHANNON PERICH: This is Shannon Perich and Bob Weingarten on Thursday, October 22nd. Bob, I wanted to ask you if you think you've lost anything by working digitally.

BOB WEINGARTEN: No, actually. Well, let me start with a no.

[They laugh.]

BOB WEINGARTEN: I'll explain that and then go to one sort of exception to it. No in that I think you pick up a tremendous amount of creative flexibility with digital that you didn't have with film. So, in that sense, I don't think so. I don't think that there's quality loss at a level that I need, and so it—and it's certainly easier to work with, more flexible. For me, I think it's better all around. So, I don't mourn the loss of film, even though all my life I shot in film, and it's only in the last few years that I've not. At first, I thought, oh, how—horror of horrors, you know, where's my film? And now, I could care less. The only thing—only reason I hesitated when I said no is the one thing that is missing—for me at least, because I haven't expanded my equipment array—is when I worked with film I had a lot more opportunities for different format cameras, to find the camera that fit the purpose.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: So, I'd work with a 35-millimeter Nikon; I worked with a Hasselblad, which was two and a quarter square. I had a Linhof four by five. You know, I had a big panoramic camera, 11 by 17, Linhof [00:02:00]. And so, for various things, I used various format cameras. And I would like a little bit more variety in format cameras in digital. But absent that, I don't feel I'm missing anything at all.

SHANNON PERICH: What about on the back side of preservation and keeping—the ability to go back to the

negative? And with digital, it dissipates, or theoretically could dissipate—

BOB WEINGARTEN: Well, you know—

SHANNON PERICH: —or do you care—

BOB WEINGARTEN: —the problem—

SHANNON PERICH: —about that?

BOB WEINGARTEN: No, I do care about that. It's not—the problem hasn't yet manifested itself in my life, and probably won't manifest for me in my lifetime. All right? It's just—we store it in a different way.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: Right? We did keep, and I do keep, and I have all my negative files and transparencies that I was keeping in a particular way, in plastic sheets and so on, and file drawers full of those things. And in digital, we're storing them in several ways. I have offsite hard drives that are bank vaults so that—in case of, you know, robbery or fire or whatever. And then I have DVDs that are stored elsewhere of all of the important images. Right? So—

SHANNON PERICH: Do you see them—

BOB WEINGARTEN: —what I don't know is if there's going to be a problem in the future, if they will come within my own lifetime—

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: —where I'll take one of those DVDs, put it in a computer, and it can't read it.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: All right [00:04:00]? Or something happens that the hard drives lose information. I don't know—

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: —you know? Or, you know, some other deterioration. I would tend to think that it'd be more stable, not less stable. I would tend to think that we're not going to lose information digitally.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: It's why I can edition something and know that I'm going to—if I have an edition of 10 of an image, I know that number 10 is going to be exactly what number one was unless I make a change.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: You can't do that with an analog output.

SHANNON PERICH: No, mm-mm [negative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: There are going to be slight differences.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Any concerns you have about preservation? Are they mostly in relationship to your usage rather than for posterity? I mean, are you concerned about future researchers being able to see your working, raw materials?

BOB WEINGARTEN: It's flattering to be asked—

[They laugh.]

-- and since I've been asked several times [laughs], I guess I should—you know, I guess people think that there may be a reason someone will look at it in the future, and that, in a sense, is concerning, a little bit, because I don't think that the field, meaning the institutions that collect digital work, have done the real work that needs to be done on conservation and preservation of digital prints.

SHANNON PERICH: Yeah.

BOB WEINGARTEN: And I know, for example, that there's very little knowledge, even at the highest level, of conservation and preservation of how to work on a digital print itself that may have, you know, a speck or something.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: There's great difficulty—

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: —[00:06:00] in figuring out how to deal with that.

SHANNON PERICH: Right. So, you're talking about sort of in a museum setting when a conservation—a conservator comes to—to a print in which there's not access to a file, or the photographer to reprint—

BOB WEINGARTEN: Reprint—

SHANNON PERICH: —or a desire to reprint.

BOB WEINGARTEN: —right.

SHANNON PERICH: How do you—what kind of materials do you use on digital output—

BOB WEINGARTEN: Right.

SHANNON PERICH: —[inaudible]?

BOB WEINGARTEN: And there's very little known about that.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: I mean, I can say that with some authority, because we've asked about making little, you know, corrections and things.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: You know, after it was printed—

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

BOB WEINGARTEN: —somebody—

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

BOB WEINGARTEN: —did something.

SHANNON PERICH: In a conventional—

BOB WEINGARTEN: There's a speck—

SHANNON PERICH: —photograph, you would spot it.

BOB WEINGARTEN: —and so on.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

BOB WEINGARTEN: And it's just—it's problematic—

SHANNON PERICH: That's interesting.

BOB WEINGARTEN: —and it depends on the paper.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: The Epson watercolor paper is particularly problematic.

SHANNON PERICH: And is it because you can't match with existing pigments?

BOB WEINGARTEN: Yeah, it's very, very hard to match, and you can see the correction normally—

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: —you know, especially in—

SHANNON PERICH: Raking light.

BOB WEINGARTEN: —raking light. In raking light, you can see the corrections, and that paper—you know, Epson—they'll kill me if they ever hear this tape, but the paper is too delicate and sometimes comes off the machine where you've had something on a machine for an hour, printing—

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: —and then have a little white dot in it because the print—the ink didn't hit that particular part of the paper. And it's a pristine print other than a tiny, tiny—

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

BOB WEINGARTEN: —white dot, like a speck of dust—

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: —that small.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: But you can't correct it.

SHANNON PERICH: So, what do you want to do?

BOB WEINGARTEN: To anybody's—I reprint it.

SHANNON PERICH: You do? Wow.

BOB WEINGARTEN: I reprint it.

SHANNON PERICH: Wow.

BOB WEINGARTEN: But we've checked about, you know—

SHANNON PERICH: Yeah.

BOB WEINGARTEN: —can you correct this? Is there something you can do? And nobody seems to know. I mean, everybody has an idea, but they don't really, really, truly know [00:08:02].

SHANNON PERICH: That's interesting. I hadn't thought about spotting—

BOB WEINGARTEN: Yeah.

SHANNON PERICH: —digital output material. How do you—since we're winding up here, these questions are going to seem disjointed. But how do you keep things interesting for yourself? You mentioned—you showed me that fantastic piece that was in a Nobel laureate idea, and you talked about the closing bell, which was another project idea you had. How do you keep it interesting?

BOB WEINGARTEN: Well, first of all, I don't pursue the ideas that aren't good.

SHANNON PERICH: Right.

[They laugh.]

BOB WEINGARTEN: So, I start them, and then if I think that they're not going to be interesting or not going to be—you know, not going to produce the best art that I can produce, I stop, you know. So—and while I'm—it's always interesting for me, because while I'm working on a project—I won't work on a project that I'm not passionate about. Right? So, while I'm working on a project that I'm passionate about, obviously it's always interesting. And I've had some fascinating times not only in working alone with my work, but the people that I've met over the last number of years—because two of the projects involved other people.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: The Palettes, so I met the greatest living painters. The icons, so I met all these fabulous people who accomplished so much in our society. So, that's a very exciting thing in and of itself, and then all the things I do in the art to move myself along and advance and learn and keep learning and keep advancing. So, that's very exciting. And then when you complete a project, I'm very excited about the quiet time in between where you can sit back and really think about what you want to do next and experiment and maybe start something, and it doesn't work, and you start something else, or it doesn't work, and then you lock in to what you're going to do [00:10:05]. And I find that time exciting also, and satisfying. So, I'm—I can't remember, except before I ever picked up a camera, a time in my life when I wasn't excited about photography and doing something with it.

SHANNON PERICH: Great. When did you move from New York to California?

BOB WEINGARTEN: I moved in 1983.

SHANNON PERICH: And when did you open your studio here in Cross Creek—on Cross Creek Road?

BOB WEINGARTEN: Well, I had a studio right across the street from here for a little while—

SHANNON PERICH: Oh, okay.

BOB WEINGARTEN: —and then I—I'd say that I've had a studio in Malibu separate from my home the last seven years, and I had a darkroom on my property for—prior to that for about—well, I came in '83. I built the darkroom right thereafter. So, from '83 to '96 I had a darkroom on my property, and so—and space to work—

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: —and so on. So, that was sort of an in-home studio thing. From 1996 to 2000, I did the photographic work out of my home, and then from 2000 on, I've had a separate studio off property.

SHANNON PERICH: Okay. Did being a pilot influence your perspective and the way that you see things, you see the world, you see images?

BOB WEINGARTEN: In a way, I think, in a way that people wouldn't ordinarily think about. [00:12:00]. One might think, well, you have this aerial perspective. You know, you see things—you see abstraction in the ground, and we all do that. I don't think you have to be a pilot. You look out an airplane window, and you see different patterns, and you see different things, and sometimes you're flying over, you know, certain areas of the country, and you say, "Oh, this is a really interesting abstract." Right? And I think a lot of people who are visually conscious do that. What—the other aspect that one wouldn't ordinarily think of is not what—from your perspective in the air. It's your perspective on the ground, and that is that pilots tend to look at the sky to figure out, "Well, is it going to be bumpy [laughs], you know, when I'm taking off? What are the cloud formations like? Is there a lot of wind aloft?" You know, this and that, just in looking—

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: —you know. You know, not an important thing. You're getting—you're professionally getting the weather and everything else from flight services, but—

SHANNON PERICH: Perhaps it influences—

BOB WEINGARTEN: But it—

SHANNON PERICH: —your sensitivity—

BOB WEINGARTEN: —influences—

SHANNON PERICH: —to atmosphere.

BOB WEINGARTEN: —my sensitivity to atmosphere; it taught me a lot about clouds. Right? Because that's part of what you study when you learn to be a pilot. Right? Even in the initial—very initial stages of that. But it's been helpful in landscape, because I'm more sensitive to what's going on in the sky and the direction that the clouds are moving and how rapidly they're moving and what the pattern is behind where I'm looking. So, if you look at—I'll give you an example of an image. It's—there's a tree image in Tuscany, and if you look at that image, you'll see that it's an unusual tree, and it curves to the right and droops [00:14:07]. The top of the tree curves to the right and droops. And I was there when the sky was sort of an interesting sky, and I saw cloud patterns way out to my left that reminded me of the way the tree was shaped—the top of the tree was shaped. And I knew, based on the way the wind was blowing and where those clouds were, that eventually that would come over the tree, so I stood there with the tripod, and I waited for that cloud to come over the tree to get that

shot. All right? And it's a perfect composition for that—

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: —you know.

SHANNON PERICH: Because it echoes the shape.

BOB WEINGARTEN: Because it echoes the shape of the tree. Right? Now, I don't know, I might have been sensitive to it, just being a photographic artist. I doubt that I would have been that keenly aware of what was going on in the sky and when it would change and which direction it was going in and all that—

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BOB WEINGARTEN: —if I hadn't been so sensitive to that all the years that I flew airplanes.

SHANNON PERICH: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I think that was all of my—I think you covered many, many questions that I had—

BOB WEINGARTEN: [laughs] I sure have.

SHANNON PERICH: —and then some. Is there anything over the course of the last few days that you've thought about that you want to make sure that we know about you or your work?

BOB WEINGARTEN: Not that I can think of.

SHANNON PERICH: All right, Bob, I have one last question actually. If your granddaughters wanted to go into photography and be photographers, what advice would you give them?

[They laugh.]

BOB WEINGARTEN: Make sure you have enough money [laughs] to be able to pursue it, so that you don't starve —

SHANNON PERICH: [laughs]

BOB WEINGARTEN: —right?

SHANNON PERICH: Just like the same advice you got from the doctor—

BOB WEINGARTEN: [Inaudible].

SHANNON PERICH: —when you were in high school [00:16:01].

BOB WEINGARTEN: And never do photography you're not passionate about. Never—and the reason I mention the money thing first is because if you do it because, you know, people are directing you to do this or do that—I've met photographers who were miserable because they can't do their photography. You know, they're working with art directors or magazines. They're working with this, they're working with that, and they're not happy doing it. So, I think that it's a wonderful art form, I think it's an exciting art form, but I think you have to —there's a certain level at which you can do it and enjoy it, and there's a level at which you can be perfectly miserable doing it if you're not doing your own work. So, my advice to them is if you think you can do your own work and really enjoy it, then do it, and if not, don't. Do it as a hobby.

SHANNON PERICH: Great. Thank you, Bob. I really have enjoyed my time with you—

BOB WEINGARTEN: Me too.

SHANNON PERICH: —and I'm glad to have done this on behalf of the Archives of American Art. So, thank you.

BOB WEINGARTEN: It's a privilege and a pleasure.

SHANNON PERICH: Thank you.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]