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Oral history interview with Christina
Bothwell, 2010 June 17-18

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Christina Bothwell on June 17 and 18, 2010. The interview took place in Stillwater, Pennsylvania, and was conducted by Mija Riedel for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Christina Bothwell has reviewed the transcript. Her corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Christina Bothwell at the artist's home and studio in Stillwater, Pennsylvania, on June seventeenth, 2010, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is disc number one. Good morning.

CHRISTINA BOTHWELL: Good morning.

MS. RIEDEL: So, Christina, let's just start at the beginning. Where and when were you born?

MS. BOTHWELL: I was born in Manhattan in 1960, December first, 1960. My mom was an artist—a stay-at-home mom but an artist. And her father had been a successful artist in Santa Fe.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. What was your mom's name?

MS. BOTHWELL: Rosemary Bothwell.

MS. RIEDEL: Rosemary Bothwell, okay. And what sort of work did she do?

MS. BOTHWELL: Mostly very, very tight, beautiful portraits and landscapes.

MS. RIEDEL: Oil, watercolor?

MS. BOTHWELL: Colored pencil mostly. I have some of the kits that she's done here.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, okay. And you said her father was an artist as well?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, he was a pretty successful artist. But when you see pictures of him in art books, it's usually, he was described as "the dashing artist Musgrave." I think he was a character and very handsome and flamboyant, and it was more who he was as a whole person rather than so much emphasis on the art.

MS. RIEDEL: I see. And what sort of work did he do?

MS. BOTHWELL: Well, he was in Santa Fe, and he did kind of a lot of landscapes, seascapes, and yes.

MS. RIEDEL: He would have been—

MS. BOTHWELL: He was born in 1888.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. So Southwest landscapes sort of things?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And your father?

MS. BOTHWELL: He was a therapist.

MS. RIEDEL: A therapist, okay. And what was his name?

MS. BOTHWELL: James Bothwell.

MS. RIEDEL: James Bothwell, okay. And what was your mom's maiden name?

MS. BOTHWELL: Musgrave.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Just checking. And do you have siblings?

MS. BOTHWELL: I have one. I have a brother named Arthur.

MS. RIEDEL: And where in New York did you grow up?

MS. BOTHWELL: Around Columbia [University] where my dad was a student. So 120th and Morningside Drive.

MS. RIEDEL: And what was childhood like? Did you spend a lot of time at the MET [Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC]? Were you in and out of museums?

MS. BOTHWELL: Not so much, but there was no television.

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting.

MS. BOTHWELL: My grandfather always sent my mom boxes of pastels that I could play with. And so she taught me a lot. I mean she—I had an awareness at a very, very young age about perspective. We'd stand on the streets of New York, and she'd say, "Look at the top of the street. Notice how at the top of the street, the two sides of the street come together in a point. And if you draw that on a piece of paper, you will be able to show exactly what the street looks like as it's moving away in distance." And she'd kind of hold her fingers up to show people getting smaller as they went further away. So when I was around four, I kind of learned about perspective. And I remember waking up one night when I was about four, in the middle of the night, and realizing that there were no lines. Like in a line drawing, but there were no lines in real life. Like something it's just space coming right up against the object. So she had me thinking as an artist from the beginning, I think.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely. It sounds like it. And no television. That is really interesting, because that was the heyday of television. And that was something—was that fine by you?

MS. BOTHWELL: Well, I didn't know anything different.

MS. RIEDEL: You didn't know anything different.

MS. BOTHWELL: But, you know, my parents were obsessed with books. I mean, their house was like the Collier Brothers. It still is. Where you had to kind of walk through these narrow, teetering corridors between seven-foot piles of books everywhere. Because they'd drive down the street, and they'd see a house where a whole garage full of books was being sold, and they'd buy the whole garage.

MS. RIEDEL: Really!

MS. BOTHWELL: And sometimes they'd never even read them. But there were just all these books. And they'd take me out of school. My mom would write elaborate sick—"Christina's been vomiting green pus profusely for the last 24 hours." And the whole purpose was just so we could drive for three hours to go to a new used bookstore that was opening up.

MS. RIEDEL: Really!

MS. BOTHWELL: So I was always taken out of school for bookstores and—yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So a lot of books, a lot of art.

MS. BOTHWELL: A lot of art.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you look at a lot of art as well?

MS. BOTHWELL: I did because my mom had two obsessions, and she still is obsessed with how minorities have been mistreated. So I didn't get read to as a kid. Instead, she would turn the lights off and we'd pretend that we were escaping slaves. And in our imaginations we'd be looking for what side of the trees the moss grew on, because that's how you always knew you were going in the direction of the north. So I would start writing books. I wrote a lot of books when I was a kid. And I just remember in the first or second grade the teacher saying, "You know, why did the slaves all get caught at the end and hung and lynched?" And I'd say, "Well, that's what really happened to a lot of them." So that was one of the things that my mom really stressed instead of reading books to me at night was the whole treatment of minorities.

But the other was that she had all these books of early American artists because she'd gone to the Art Students League and studied with George Grosz, so we had a lot of books of that kind of art. And at night I would look through these books, and we'd make up stories about the paintings. And that was really my earliest

influence for some of these paintings by John Sloan and, you know, George Grosz, because I saw these paintings night after night. And we'd go into the paintings, and we'd be the characters, and we'd talk about where they were going. And I'd fall asleep envisioning what was going to happen in this painting with the starving cow in the middle of the desert? Was it that someone was going to bring him water or food? [Laughs.] Were these people going to get underneath the ground before the tornado hit? You know, just all these early American paintings.

MS. RIEDEL: How extraordinary!

MS. BOTHWELL: I guess. You know it was just of normal the way—you know it was the sixties.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: My mom was a hippie.

MS. RIEDEL: So there was a house full of books, but nobody was reading books. You were actively imagining.

MS. BOTHWELL: Well, I learned to read early. So I read books to myself. There were always books, you know. And I just think that—I know that when I learned how to read, my main incentive was that people would only read me a chapter at a time. And then I never—I couldn't bear waiting to find out what happened. So that was the incentive to just read so I could— You know if I was read to in school, the teacher would read a chapter a week. I could just take the book out of the library and find out what happened. And it was pretty much the same thing with reading. It just became more gratifying to do the reading.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: So I could find out what happened.

MS. RIEDEL: That's—but how fascinating, and what an interesting way to cultivate imagination in a child from the start, it seems.

MS. BOTHWELL: I guess.

MS. RIEDEL: To put yourself in the middle of a painting and imagine what was going to happen. And for your mother to turn off the lights and just set a scenario and then let the imagination. And children can go that direction, I think, if they're given the proper motivation or launching point.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And it seems it was extremely successful.

MS. BOTHWELL: Well, it was interesting because, you know, it was right when Martin Luther King was assassinated and all the riots. And then at night, you know, we'd be escaping slaves. So I grew up with this awareness of how people were not treated fairly. And it was just so vivid and alive to me because that was my mother's passion.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. Interesting. That's really fascinating. So were you in New York public schools?

MS. BOTHWELL: Well, we moved when I was five. We moved to Bryn Athyn [PA], which was this little town outside of Philadelphia, which was very interesting because it was founded on—it was based on Emanuel Swedenborg, who was a mystic, I think in the 1600s. And my parents were atheists. So we were actually asked to leave Bryn Athyn, because they felt that my mother was a really bad influence on the teenagers. The teenagers would come over and burn their draft cards and get high and drink beer and sit and play guitar. And my mom would have nude models and drawing classes for the teenagers. And eventually they asked us, you know, to leave. But my parents were not part of the Swedenborg religion or the religion on which that town was pretty much centered on. And my dad was getting his doctorate in New York, so he wasn't around very much at that time. He'd come home on the weekends. So it was sort of—it was an eccentric childhood, I think.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes, it sounds it. But it sounds like it was—was it a happy time of exploring?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, yes. There were so many interesting people, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: And children, I think, it's easy to get off on those imaginative journeys if you feel someplace safe where that's encouraged.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. I mean my parents had—my mom had a teenage girl that would come over, and she was schizophrenic. But she was an amazing painter, and she would do these paintings that were like Escher,

you know, but in color. And I remember looking at that thinking, " I wish I could do that, I wish I could make art like that." And I don't know whatever happened to that girl or, you know, what the paintings were really like.

MS. RIEDEL: So how long were you in this town?

MS. BOSWELL: About five years.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MS. BOSWELL: And then we moved to another little town outside of Philadelphia, and that's where I went to high school.

MS. RIEDEL: So Bryn Athyn was for elementary school.

MS. BOSWELL: Yes, 'til about third grade.

MS. RIEDEL: 'Til about third grade. And were there art classes?

MS. BOSWELL: No, well my mother had art classes because she'd gone to the Art Students League, and she loved to draw. So she'd draw these teenagers. They'd come over. They'd drop out of high school, and they'd come over and smoke pot or kick acid. And she would just draw them. And there were just people in and out of the house, you know, doing all kinds of things. You know, I have this one vivid memory of a guy coming over, and he'd always bring guns. And so my mom and my brother and I would just lie on the floor, and he would knock, knock, and knock for hours, and we would pretend we weren't home because she didn't want to let him in. But it was very kind of unstructured.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes. So what was the second town then that you moved to?

MS. BOTHWELL: That was a little suburb called Jenkintown.

MS. RIEDEL: Jenkintown, okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And this then was junior high or middle school?

MS. BOTHWELL: No, starting about end of third grade I moved there. And I just stayed there until I went to the art school.

MS. RIEDEL: And was school something that you enjoyed?

MS. BOTHWELL: Some of it was kind of boring.

MS. RIEDEL: It sounds it. [Laughs.] How could it possibly keep up?

MS. BOTHWELL: You know what I mean? And then just peer pressure and just wanting to fit in and not really. And you know. I lived next door to the most beautiful, popular girl in the school. So because of propinquity, I had a certain kind of allure because I had access to this girl. But that's who I grew up next to. But her family was so different than mine. You know, I'd go over to her house, and her mother would say, "Chrissie, can you find out where your mother gets her curtains cleaned?" And I said, "Oh, I don't think my mother cleans curtains, gets her curtains cleaned." "Oh, I'm sure she does, Chrissie. Can you find out?" And I'd go home, and I'd say, "Mom, Mrs. Ball wants to know where we get our curtains—" My mother, "Oh, Lovey, don't get into that bullshit. We just don't do that kind of thing." [IRiedel laughs.] So it was just like two different worlds.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Fascinating. Did your brother go into the arts as well?

MS. BOTHWELL: He's mentally ill. So he lives at home with my mom. And he's kind of very shut down and quiet.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, okay. Does your mother still paint?

MS. BOTHWELL: She got back into it after my dad died. She does drawings but not on like a professional — She did have a gallery in New York for a while in the eighties.

MS. RIEDEL: So she must have been very encouraging of your work, though, from the start?

MS. BOTHWELL: She was very encouraging about me embracing creativity.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: You know, making a living not so much, because she didn't think it was possible. So that she and my dad were very—not so supportive of that.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Interesting.

MS. BOTHWELL: I think because it never really happened for her, it was threatening for her that I thought that it could happen for me. So there was a lot of tension when I decided I wanted to go off to art school. Even though she had made that choice, too. It wasn't something that she—I think she felt very conflicted and maybe competitive, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Back—one more question when you were younger: You said you were writing a lot of books. Do you remember what you were writing about?

MS. BOTHWELL: I do remember writing one. I wrote a lot of books—this sounds strange—but I wrote a lot of books about heaven. I wrote a book about a man dying that almost got published actually. Viking Press was interested when I was about—my first-grade teacher sent this book. I kept in touch with her, and she sent this book to Viking. And there was an editor that wanted me to do some rewrites and things like that. But nothing ever came to it. So I don't know if anyone was— But it was basically about a man living in New York City who died from the effects of pollution. And he gets to heaven, and it's so polluted that he has to kind of clean it. And he gets a second chance to come back to earth if he's able to clean up heaven. So that was something. And then I did another one about Jesus and Martin Luther King being best friends in heaven or something. [Laughs]

MS. RIEDEL: That's extraordinary!

MS. BOTHWELL: It was strange. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Was this in elementary school or junior high?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, in elementary school. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow! Did you title them?

MS. BOTHWELL: I don't remember. And then I did one about, a story about a raindrop that was afraid to fall to earth, because it was afraid of leaving its familiar domain. But then having it explained that if it came to earth, it could help plants grow and the earth nurturing even though it would change eventually; it would go to a river and come to the ocean. And eventually be back to where it started from.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: I wrote that like in the third grade. I remember being, you know, because I read so much.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: That was like the first art form I was really mostly exposed to.

MS. RIEDEL: Were you interested in building things? Did you work with clay or with wood at all?

MS. BOTHWELL: Not too much. Except, when I was a kid, I was obsessed with fossils. And I knew that it took 10,000 years to make fossils. But I thought that if I pressed leaves and ferns under earth and put a lot of bricks on them, that maybe it would just take a couple of weeks for me. [Interviewer laughs.] So I would do that. And then I would check every day to see if the fossil— So I think that was maybe my first, you know sculpting.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. That's interesting. That's interesting. I'll have to think about that a little bit. That's actually really compelling. You drew?

MS. BOTHWELL: I drew all the time. I carried sketchpads around all the time. Yes, I drew all the time.

MS. RIEDEL: Junior high and all through high school.

MS. BOTHWELL: All through high school. And I wanted to be an artist. I remember getting really, really depressed when I turned 13, because I would no longer be a—I knew that my chance of ever being a child prodigy was just shot. [They laugh.] Because I would look at—I had all these books of the Old Masters and, you know, Dürer's self-portrait. And, you know, I wanted to be doing that kind of work.

MS. RIEDEL: And it hadn't happened yet.

MS. BOTHWELL: And no, and just once I turned 13, it was like, okay, that's not going to happen. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: Were you painting as well?

MS. BOTHWELL: Not too much. I started painting, I guess, in high school. I didn't really know what I was doing, but I went to this classical Greek school on the weekends in Philadelphia with a girl that I'd met. And I sort of learned—I can show you. I found one of the paintings that I did when I was in high school. And it was just nude paintings. But they taught the whole classical way of layering, the transparent colors and, you know, that kind of thing.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, so you did learn that.

MS. BOTHWELL: I learned that, yes, as a senior; I was a senior in high school. And also sculpting that way, too, with measuring all the features with calipers and studying the anatomy. It actually put me off sculpture for a while because it was so strenuous and tedious. And yet the people that taught there had this attitude that this was the only real art. And I knew I could never do that. And so it just put me off of that for a long time, and I went and studied painting instead.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MS. BOTHWELL: But I was always attracted to sculpture.

MS. RIEDEL: And so this Greek school was strictly on the weekends?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think it was pretty much for anyone who wanted to go whenever. But since I was in high school, that's when I went.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. And high school was general public high school?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. So Jenkintown High School?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. The art classes consisted mostly of, my teacher was taking EST [Erhard Seminars Training]. So he would talk about his own personal growth, and all the kids would make pot pipes.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs] Oh, dear. Oh, dear. Sounds like [inaudible].

MS. BOTHWELL: I loved him. I loved him, but, you know, I would do paintings with the glow-in-the-dark paint. And people would steal them. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, my! Do you remember what you were interested in drawing or painting?

MS. BOTHWELL: I just loved people. I always loved figures. I just always loved how faces were so different. And you know, you always hear you can't judge a book by its cover. But I always felt that you really could. That you really could get a sense of a person from the first few minutes of meeting them, just looking at them and being around them. And I was always interested in trying to capture that individuality somehow. But, you know, my mom was a classically trained artist. So, you know, she always had drawing classes. I had a certain amount of popularity in grade school, because there were all these nude models. And I could bring kids home from school, and we could look at the nude ladies and [laughs] look at the nude men walking around the house. So that was my upbringing, that kind of classical, you know, background.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And complete comfort with that.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: It was just the normal way of operating.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. That's really a very unusual—the way you're describing it, it sounds really wonderful and exciting childhood.

MS. BOTHWELL: It was fun. It was—yes. It was fun. My mom was kind of—had an inconsistent personality, which is hard. But I could always escape into books. And when you live in a house of people—and I wasn't

terribly like my parents. My parents were intellectuals, and very ruled by that and very judgmental toward anyone that was not an intellectual, that was not classically trained or educated. And, you know, they'd always talk about people in terms of their degrees: You know he has a doctorate, he has his medical degree. And anyone that had any kind of a spiritual life or leaning in that direction was really ridiculed. So, you know, there was always kind of that disparity between living with people that were so open in one sense and so closed in the other.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MS. BOTHWELL: But I always had to kind of from an early age be on guard around them a little bit.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. That's interesting. So it was clear to you from the start that you had some ideas that maybe wouldn't fit with what they thought.

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, definitely. Because I would have experiences. When I was a kid, I could sense when people were going to die. And I would say that, I'd say, "You know, that person's going to die, and we're not going to see him again." And my mother would say, "That is so negative," you know, and then the person would die. But my parents got very angry about that kind of thing. So I had to kind of keep that part of me hidden.

MS. RIEDEL: So any intuitive sense was not something that was welcome.

MS. BOTHWELL: If I expressed any intuitive things, that was really—yes, I was very chastened by that.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. So everything had sort of a scientific rationale.

MS. BOTHWELL: Definitely. Definitely. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, it's an interesting sort of contrast with all this artistic freedom.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: And at the same time this real intellectual rigor and not a lot of interest in intuitively seeing the world.

MS. BOTHWELL: But at the same time, I think, because my mother had had religious fanatics as parents.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah.

MS. BOTHWELL: And her mother went to church every day and was just like a dictator. So my mom felt a little bit of guilt. Like she taught us how to say grace just so that when my grandmother would visit. And then we went to a different church every— My mom—Every month we'd go to a different religion. You know, we'd go to a synagogue for a month; we'd go to a Catholic church for a month, the Unitarian church. And I guess just so that when my grandparents checked in, my mother could let them know that she was doing the right thing. But she didn't believe in any of that kind of thing.

MS. RIEDEL: It sounds like almost an educational experience. This is what some people believe in; this is another way of seeing the world, etc., etc.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. But we don't believe any of this.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Fascinating. So early on you didn't necessarily have any interest in clay or glass because of what your—

MS. BOTHWELL: I didn't have access to it.

MS. RIEDEL: Glass, I would think not.

MS. BOTHWELL: You know I went to a fantastic art camp when I was 14; that's where I met my husband.

MS. RIEDEL: Really!

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. And it's called Appel Farm. And it was just this rundown [A-P-P-E-L] in Elmer, New Jersey. I would love to send my children there, but since the time I went there in the seventies, now it's like \$5,000 for a month to send one of your children. So I told my husband we're going to be the oldest counselors there. [They laugh.] That's the only way you can get your children to go for free. But it was such a great place. It was an international art camp. So the counselors were from all over the world. And even though I went there for

painting, in the art barn there was sculpture on the first floor. And I had always wanted a dollhouse, you know, one of those really elaborate, like miniature. And so I made my own that summer out of clay. I mean mine was not—mine was a very much clumsy thing. But I loved working with the clay. I just never thought in terms of making real art with it.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: I could see making toys.

MS. RIEDEL: And what was the house like, do you remember?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, it was just a piece of wood that someone there had nailed together for me with, you know, like a couple—so it was like two stories. But I made a little toilet and sink, and it was fun.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: So that was really my first exposure to clay. We didn't have it at home.

MS. RIEDEL: And this was when you were 14?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And you went for a month or for the whole summer?

MS. BOTHWELL: Went for a month, yes. And then I went the following year.

MS. RIEDEL: And did you focus specifically on clay? Were you able to choose a variety of media [inaudible]?

MS. BOTHWELL: I was. You kind of had to focus on what your major thing was.

MS. RIEDEL: And your major thing was—

MS. BOTHWELL: Was painting.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: But then I just kept finding myself down there with the clay. And that's where Robert was, and we were friends. And so we would just do clay together. And then eventually I was just down there all the time.

MS. RIEDEL: Uh-huh. And what was it about the clay that drew you rather than the painting?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think with painting for me it was always about impressing people, because I'd had that classical training from my mother. It was always the way I could get approval from people. People would say: "Oh, you're really talented. Oh, you can do this." It was a way that I could kind of stand apart from people. And with clay there was none of that judgment. It was all about the process. None of it was about— I didn't really enjoy painting, but I liked the attention I got for the end result. And with sculpting, with clay, it was just making stuff. It was like making mud pies. It was being a kid. And that was just so much fun. But I never in a million years thought of it as a way to make art for me.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right. That's fascinating. I'm glad we talked about that, because that sounds like that is the first real exposure to clay and three-dimensional work.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. You enjoy it as opposed to the busts at the Greek school.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. Mm-hmm.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you remember the name of the Greek school?

MS. BOTHWELL: It was called the Frudakis Academy [of Fine Arts] because his family were the Frudakises. I don't know if it's still around or not.

MS. RIEDEL: Let's see. So what year did you graduate high school?

MS. BOTHWELL: 'Seventy-nine.

MS. RIEDEL: Nineteen seventy-nine. And how did you decide on Pennsylvania Academy of Art?

MS. BOTHWELL: I was looking at Rhode Island School of Design [Providence], and I was looking at Carnegie Mellon [University, Pittsburgh, PA] and even Wesleyan [University] in [Middletown,] Connecticut. But none of them allowed you to just to focus completely on painting until you were a junior. And I just wanted to be, like, a classical painter. I wanted to paint like Velásquez or Goya or these artists whose work I loved. And I guess because the Frudakis Academy, where I took these weekend classes, was right across the street from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, I went in and saw a student art show. And the student art—the paintings—were so unbelievable. And I thought, "I just want to go here." And my mother said, Well—my parents said, "Well, you won't get a college degree. It's just an art school." I said, "I don't care. I want to learn how to do that. I want to paint like that." So that's how I ended up going to the academy.

MS. RIEDEL: And they agreed.

MS. BOTHWELL: They agreed reluctantly, but they agreed. They said, you know, you go, but you're on your own if you do it. Okay for tuition, but other than that, you know, you're on your own.

MS. RIEDEL: And was there anything else that was in the least interesting to you? Or you had really decided from the start that art was your sole interest?

MS. BOTHWELL: It's pretty much art was my sole interest. Yes. Because it was like the one way that I was happy, was making art.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Did you have a sense of a narrative from the start? I was thinking about you writing books so young. It seems that—yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: I think so, yes. I think I always did. I always wanted to make a story with the pieces. Always.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Just from the way you're describing childhood, it sounds like there's always been some sort of narrative.

MS. BOTHWELL: I'd always set up scenes to paint or, you know—

MS. RIEDEL: Also that exercise with your mother looking at the paintings and describing a story that was actually happening, that seems to have started you.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. I couldn't have escaped that.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Exactly. [Laughs.] There was a sense of narrative from the beginning.

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, and I loved literature. You know, I just loved reading so much. And that was always

MS. RIEDEL: Were there favorite books or favorite authors?

MS. BOTHWELL: I was obsessed with [Vladimir] Nabokov. Had to read everything. I just loved Nabokov. And Gabriel Garcia Marquez. And [Jorge Luis] Borges and all the magic realists. Even now, even [Haruki] Murakami; not the painter but the Japanese writer.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: And Neil Gaiman. I just love it. It's so much fun to read something and just think, "Wow! I wish I'd thought of that."

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

MS. BOTHWELL: You know. So that kind of writing always really—it was a major influence for me. Probably more than any art. It was always literature, you know, books.

MS. RIEDEL: That makes sense. That makes sense. I can see that certainly in some of the pieces. Let's talk a little bit about art school, who was teaching and what the experience was like for you because you went to study painting.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. I loved it. Well, I got to be friendly with Will Barnet; he was pretty much my mentor. He's about 99 now. He was a doll. Sidney Goodman taught there then. Bruce Samuelson, Jody Pinto. It was great. It was very nurturing.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. How many students?

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, maybe 150. It's a small—

MS. RIEDEL: And was it a two-year—

MS. BOTHWELL: Four-year.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. And you would graduate with an MA, or it would be a BA?

MS. BOTHWELL: No, nothing, just a certificate. Now it's—It was accredited, but they didn't— Now they offer a MFA's and that. They offer that now, but they didn't have that then.

MS. RIEDEL: So after four years you'd have a certificate that you'd graduated from art school.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. And then I had the option of trying to, you know, get into University of Penn[sylvania] or going somewhere for a degree, but—

MS. RIEDEL: So was it completely studio art?

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

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. No art history, no other things?

MS. BOTHWELL: No, there was. There was art history. There was some of that. But it wasn't—no term papers or, you know, anything like that.

MS. RIEDEL: And so what was the experience like for you?

MS. BOTHWELL: It was great. It was very interesting. It was very nurturing. And it was an interesting student body because, since they didn't offer degrees, most of the students were older. Most had gone elsewhere, gotten a degree, and then decided they really wanted to come there. And they also accepted—I guess, in order to get funding—they needed to accept a certain amount of people that had mental instability issues. So there was a large percentage of people that just were really off the wall.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MS. BOTHWELL: So that was kind of, you know, neat. And all different kinds of work. But, you know, it was interesting that people that became the most commercially successful from when I went to school, painted very traditional. You know, Vince Desiderio, Bo Bartlett, Brett Bigbee. They're probably the three most successful artists, you know, that were in school when I was. And they all paint beautiful realistic paintings. Super, super realistic paintings. Classical type.

MS. RIEDEL: And is that what you were working on, too?

MS. BOTHWELL: It was. But you know, it's funny, because after about the first year, it just didn't hold me.

MS. RIEDEL: Hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: I remember taking a class trip to Washington, D.C., and I really wanted to see this painter [R. B.] Kitaj's paintings. And instead I spent the whole time in the Hirshhorn Museum doing sketches of all the sculptures. And it was almost as if I was in this altered state. And I got back on the bus, and everyone said, "How did you like the painting show?" And I realized I'd missed it. But I'd gone all the way. And my friends were saying, "Why? You don't even like sculpture." And I had no answer for them.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. So what did you say?

MS. BOTHWELL: I said, "I have no idea. I have no idea, but they were so beautiful." So it was you know—

MS. RIEDEL: And do you remember what you saw at the Hirshhorn that was so compelling?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think Marino Marini.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: I remember Germaine Richier? I think that's her name. People that I'd never heard of and never thought about that I couldn't stop thinking about it.

MS. RIEDEL: A lot of figurative work?

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, yes, and abstract and yes. But it's just, you know—

MS. RIEDEL: Metal, stone, clay?

MS. BOTHWELL: All of that.

MS. RIEDEL: All of that. And you were just [inaudible] by it.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And did that change your course of study in school?

MS. BOTHWELL: A little bit, but I still had this whole classical training behind me. So basically, when I got burned out with the painting and really bored, I'd just do little sculptures of dogs for myself.

MS. RIEDEL: That's right.

MS. BOTHWELL: You know I didn't think anyone would see or like and, you know—And it wasn't until I really got out of art school, that I—there was always a conflict within me, because I had so much more fun making things than I did painting. But I felt the painting was my identity, and painting was going to be how I made a living if I pushed and tried really, really, really hard. And, you know, I'd go to the lectures at art school. And the teachers would say, one out of a million artists really makes it. And they never said what that meant. Does one out of a million mean that you get to be a Picasso, or one out of a million makes a living? But it was a terrifying thing to hear. And you'd hear these really limiting thoughts: If you're a woman, it's probably less likely. If you're over 30, it's definitely not going to happen. So you have to have all your ducks in line by the time you're 30. Can't get married and have children. That's just out of the question. So I really felt that, you know, I can't be deterred. I can't go do something that's fun, like sculpture. I can't waste any time. I have to just do the painting, because that's what I'm going at and that's what I've gotten attention for, and that's what I've won prizes for in school. And that's who I am.

MS. RIEDEL: And what were your paintings like in college? What were you focusing on? Or who would you say as major influences?

MS. BOTHWELL: I guess the classics: you know like Goya and Velázquez. And then I loved Gregory Gillespie and Balthus. And I'd pore over their paintings.

MS. RIEDEL: So you graduated from the academy in 1983.

MS. BOTHWELL: With no skills or ability to make a living in anything. [Interviewer laughs.] No preparation.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right. Yes. That must have been a scary time.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, scary. Yes, I was a nude model for a while, and that wasn't, like, terribly fun. And then I worked in a bookstore, which paid nothing.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: And you know.

MS. RIEDEL: And you tried to do your own work at that time?

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, yes, yes. And I was frustrated. The work wasn't very good, because once I got out of art school, I realized I didn't have the vision as an artist. I knew the other visions of artists whose work I loved. But I didn't have my own sense. And it was scary.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: You know.

MS. RIEDEL: How long did you stay in Pennsylvania, and when did you move to New York?

MS. BOTHWELL: I went to New York pretty soon after I graduated. I think, because that's where you had to be. That's what I had been told. You have to go to the openings. You have to meet the right people. You have to meet the right curators and critics. And insinuate yourself into this environment where you can find a good gallery and make things happen. And you have to do it before you're 30 if you're a woman.

MS. RIEDEL: So the pressure was on.

MS. BOTHWELL: The pressure was on, you know. And I was just like whoa! Totally set adrift in this, you know, world where I just was not prepared to cope.

MS. RIEDEL: So when did you move to New York? Do you remember?

MS. BOTHWELL: That was 1984.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. And describe, if you would, the first few years there, what you were working on.

MS. BOTHWELL: It was scary. Well, I liked working from—I loved the figure, but I couldn't hire models, because the kind of figure—I was really attracted to the grotesque. I think all that structural upbringing, all the strictness that I had, it was like my way of rebelling. I didn't want to do paintings of beautiful, skinny, attractive models. I wanted, like, big, obese, you know, kind of like—I love Joel-Peter Witkin, the photographer. I discovered his work around then. And you can't find models like that, and I wouldn't have wanted them where I lived anyway. So I found this pornographic magazine called *Adam*, where they had a wide personal ad section with photographs of people that just you can't believe they would even take their clothes off, with very queasy lighting. And that's what I copied from those photographs for paintings. And then I did some sculptures from papier-mâché with real hair. And you know, I wasn't happy, though, living in New York. I got a job, a very nice, prestigious job, teaching art at a private school to children of the rich and famous.

MS. RIEDEL: And that school?

MS. BOTHWELL: Diller-Quaile. In *The Nanny Diaries* they make—that book *The Nanny Diaries*—they make fun of that school.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh. And you were teaching art there.

MS. BOTHWELL: I taught art. Well, art consisted of: "Okay. Precious jewels don't go in our noses." You know. [They laugh.] That was pretty much, you know. And then at night I'd try to come home—I'd be exhausted—but I'd come home and I'd try to do my own work. And then I'd try to go to openings. And I'd go up to groups of people that I didn't know and go "Hi! The work looks really good, doesn't it?" And people would just look at me and walk away, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: So. Well, actually let's pause this for a second.

[Audio Break.]

MS. BOTHWELL: And it's funny, because I would go into—

MS. RIEDEL: We're talking now about—this painting was done roughly when?

MS. BOTHWELL: Maybe '82 or '83, '84.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, and it's a painting—do you remember the title of this work?

MS. BOTHWELL: No.

MS. RIEDEL: But it's a figurative painting. It's your first painting on glass.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And it was taken from—the image was taken from the porno magazine you were talking about.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. Yes. It was embarrassing because the first gallery that I got into, these two very elegant women came over to interview me for this gallery. And I had one of those magazines open with the personal ads circled that I was planning to use for my artwork. [Interviewer laughs.] And they didn't say anything, but I excused myself to go to the bathroom. And I came back, and they were suddenly very tense and wanted to get out of there. And I realized that my coffee table was covered with these magazines. I don't know what they thought. But every time I thought about that for the next couple of years, I just inwardly cringed; it was so embarrassing.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I can imagine. [They laugh.] Completely misinterpreted.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: But this piece is interesting because it was your first experience with paint on glass.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And you were saying that that was something that you really responded to.

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, it was great.

MS. RIEDEL: What about it in particular did you—

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, because it just was so easy. It just painted itself, it was so effortless and fun. And the imagery was fun.

MS. RIEDEL: And was there a quality of light already that you were responding to?

MS. BOTHWELL: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: No. That didn't—that kind of thing I just did for myself. I didn't think a gallery would ever be interested in that. It was sort of like I was divided. And maybe that's why I was so fascinated with conjoined twins, because I had this, it was like I had this divided energy: where I was—the one part of me that I wanted to be and was putting all my energy into being and pursuing; but then there was this other part that was like these irrepressible dogs that pee on your feet when you see them. You know, like there was that part of me, too, that I was really in denial about and hiding, and that would come out in that sort of thing. I just would have to burst out sometimes.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. That's interesting. I mean that makes a lot of sense. It's actually very insightful. So let's see. It's the early eighties.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, I lived in an apartment that was about the size of half this room. And so I'd just do paintings on found metal that were very, very little. I think those were the metal tops of paint jars, the five-gallon paint containers. I'd find those in the street, and I'd just do these little realistic paintings on those. Because there was no room really to do anything more.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. So you were painting. You didn't have a studio. You were painting in your apartment.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right next to the bed.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: Sitting on the bed and painting, it was so teeny. And I lived there for four years.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh.

MS. BOTHWELL: But it was in Manhattan, where I wanted to be—I had to be there. Right. And I did little—I did drawings, too. That was sort of that period of just trying to find my way. And that was really me in New York. That's how I felt.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you remember what this piece was called?

MS. BOTHWELL: I'd have to look it up. But it was a line that I got out of the *New York Times Book Review*. It was the title of a book, but it was like—"Despite his intentions, he was still a good person." Or something. And I just thought it was funny to show a Peeping Tom, you know. Because I think that's what my experience of living in New York at the time. It was just of complete vulnerability. You know.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. So how did the transition from painting come about then to clay. What was the [inaudible] factor?

MS. BOTHWELL: Well, basically Will Barnet called me up, and I had loved him so much in school. And I just didn't see him that often after school. And he called me up, and he said, "I've been asked to go do a session at the Vermont Studio School [Johnson, VT]. And you can have a full scholarship if you want to come out and hang out with me. And there'll be some time we can spend together." And I was just so excited about that chance, even though I didn't know if I would be very good in a residency kind of situation because I'm so easily—thrown off and over-stimulated, and thrown off by people around me. So I packed up all my paintings, and I went out there. And he had a heart attack, where he had like a pacemaker. So he wasn't there. And I was there, and I had these paintings. And by then I was 31. And the people that were there were mostly 19 or 20 years old, or

else they were little old ladies. And I was kind of right in between. And these critics would come into my studio. There were no locks on the doors. And they would just barge open— And they would do a critique with all these students taking notes, watching. And I couldn't do anything. I'd started these paintings.

At this point, I think, I was really trying to figure out how to incorporate sculpture with the paintings, because I was making these really sculptural textures on canvas. And I had covered these canvases with banana fiber, the refuse from bananas. So they were just like brown and lumpy surfaces. I was planning on still doing these realistic paintings on top of them, but they were drying. And I'd only been there for a day, and this visiting critic came in. Probably one of the people that had substituted for Will Barnet. And he came in with about six students, and he did this whole critique of my canvases. And he's like, "And you know, the texture—I see that you're really trying to push yourself, go beyond the picture plane. But frankly it's not working." And I just thought, "This is all such bullshit. What the hell am I doing? I have no idea what I'm doing." He said, "What do you have to say for yourself? What is different about your paintings that's ever been done?" And I said, "Nothing. There's nothing unusual about my painting." So for the rest of the time that I was there I just thought, what the hell am I doing?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Like, what am I doing? So I want to make a living, and I want to be a painter? Why? I don't even enjoy this. I don't even—there's nothing I'm even saying. I don't even have my own vision. And it was really a crisis. And I went home, and I just— I remember sitting—and I had applied for a Pollock-Krasner Grant from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation with painting. And I just remember my sitting on the floor of my apartment and just thinking, I can't do this anymore. I can't put every ounce of my energy, live my life around something that I don't enjoy. Even if it something that I'm good at or I have gotten attention from in the past, it's all crumbled around me. There's no foundation to it. I don't enjoy painting. I don't have anything to say. I can copy all these different painters whose work I like and try to get elements of what I like in their paintings in my work. But it's just not enough.

And I had to really sit there and think, you know, why did I ever want to become an artist? And I remembered that as a small child, it's because it was fun. And I just thought, you know what? I might never ever make a living. I might never get into a gallery. And it's so embarrassing, because I won all these traveling scholarships when I went to art school. And I saw myself as that one out of a million that is going to make it. And I'm clearly not, because there's just nothing, there's nothing left. And I guess it was like a prayer. It was like, just show me where I can go? What can I do with myself? Because this isn't working. And I don't ever want to ever do this again, if it's going to make me so unhappy. And I just thought, from now I'm only going to make artwork because it's fun. And if it sucks, then that's just how it is. And if I have nothing to say and I'm not doing anything unique, then that's just what it is. And if I'm not, you know, I'll have to find a living doing something. And I'm teaching. And I'm maybe not very good at teaching, but maybe I'll just find something. It was like I just let everything go. And then I didn't know what to do with myself at all.

MS. RIEDEL: How long was the residency? How long were you there in Vermont?

MS. BOTHWELL: It was about a month, and it was hell.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, it sounds like that. [Inaudible.]

MS. BOTHWELL: It was sheer hell. It was horrible. The main thing I remember is—it's so funny because, you know, you can interpret your dreams as symbols for where you are, what's going on. But you can also interpret your life and the events of your life and the things you perceive as symbols of what's going on with you, as a person. And what I remember from that residency is these birds that would fly in through the windows. And they would get stuck in the studio, and they would try to get out. And they would smash and hurtle their bodies against these glass windows. And there'd be a little opening at the bottom, but they wouldn't see it. And none of the other students—they would just laugh at these birds. And I was just so obsessed, upset about these birds breaking their necks and dying, and trying to get the birds out. And I just feel like that was so symbolic of where I was, just smashing my head against everything. So when I was at the Vermont Studio School, there were people that were working with wax. And so I started making dogs. And I just made some dogs. And people would—the visiting critics and students—would come in and go, "Well, what are you doing?" And I'd go, "I have no idea, because I'm not a sculptor." And they'd go, "Oh." And everyone left me alone. And it was just great. And so I got home, and Robert said, "Are you going to be tracking wax all through the house?" Because I was just sort of sculpting these things. And they'd melt. And there was no sense of permanence about them. But it was fun. So about a month after I decided to start doing these wax things, I got this grant from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation.

MS. RIEDEL: How did that come about? How had you decided to apply? And what would the grant enable you to do?

MS. BOTHWELL: I had applied. I was showing my work at this first gallery that I showed with in Philadelphia called Creative Artists Network. Now it's called the Center for Emerging Artists. And it was a fantastic—a fantastic environment for young artists. It was run by this woman named Bebe Benoliel, who was just such a visionary. She was one of those people that, I really think that who I am today as an artist is because of her. Because when I applied there, it was because of Will Barnet's recommendation. He just said, "You should apply." And I was kind of embarrassed, because most of the artists that showed there had gone to school with me, and they were all showing in galleries, and a lot of them were making a living. And I just felt like such a failure. But this woman came out and saw my work, and she just was very pulled together. But she had that quality that Susan Cummins had. But when she looked at me, she saw—or she treated me—as if she saw my full potential. And she didn't see any of the insecurity or any of the lack of direction or any of it. And she said, "You have so much talent, and you belong here, and you need to apply for a Pollock-Krasner, and you need to win this, and you to show in New York."

And I wasn't ready for any of that. None of it was together. But she saw me as having this potential. And even though I felt like such a loser, I could hold onto the fact that she saw me as having this potential. So I think it's because of her. I think she went to New York, and she sat down with the head of the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, and she said, "Look, this artist doesn't have it together at all. But you need to give her a grant, because she has potential." And I think it's because of her. I think I had nothing to do with the grant really. I really think that was one of the situations where it's who you know. But I'm so grateful. So we moved out here.

MS. RIEDEL: Now you're living in Pennsylvania.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. I came and visited someone that lived out here, and she had this huge barn that she turned into a studio. And I had to sit down, I was so overcome with jealousy. [Interviewer laughs.] And I had no desire to live in the country. But I had had this experience several weeks before where I'd gone to the Greenmarket on 14th Street. And there was a man who lived in Upstate New York who sold honey from his bees. And he was talking to somebody, a customer. And all of a sudden it was like I was overcome with, like, consumer lust or something. But my knees gave out, and I clutched onto the table. It was like I was about to burst into tears. And he stopped, and he said, "You have to live in the country." And I said, "What are you talking about? I don't want to live in the country." And he said, "That's how it started for me." He said, "I know exactly what you're feeling right now." I said, "I don't know what you're talking about." And he said, "I was a stockbroker in New York, and I hated it." And he said, "You live here, right?" And I said, "Yes." But I said, "I'm an artist and I have to be here because this is where I need to be to have a career." He said, "You belong in the country." So I thought, "You're crazy, and I'm not going to go live in the country. That's so boring, and what am I going to do?"

But I had that longing. So I came up to visit this friend. And she said, "You're paying like \$1,600 a month for this tiny apartment. You could put \$10,000 down on a house and own it, and pay \$500 a month mortgage, and you wouldn't have to have a job you hated, and you could do your art." So suddenly I became obsessed with that idea, and it had nothing to do with any kind of logic, because I didn't have a way to make a living out here.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: I didn't have a job. I didn't have any friends. I didn't have any reason to be out here. But we started looking for a place, and it just took over. I tell people today that it was like having—being a 40 watt bulb with about 1500 watts of electrical current coming through me. I just had to come out here.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MS. BOTHWELL: So I got that grant from the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, and it was to produce a body of work. And I had a gallery in New York.

MS. RIEDEL: What was the gallery?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think it was called Steven Gang Gallery, I think, and I think he was a drug dealer.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MS. BOTHWELL: And I was supposed to do these paintings, and we went to— And meanwhile I'd had this crisis where I couldn't do painting anymore.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh.

MS. BOTHWELL: But I'd got this grant, where I had to do paintings. And I had a show scheduled, I had this gallery. So we came out here, and we started going to auctions to look for furniture, and I found that tiny kiln I told you about. I saw this kiln. And Robert said, "You should get the kiln."

MS. RIEDEL: I don't think we've talked about this on disc yet. So [inaudible].

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, okay. Went to—because moving from a tiny one-room apartment to this big house, we didn't have furniture. So we went to this auction, and there was a little kiln.

MS. RIEDEL: A little electric kiln?

MS. BOTHWELL: A little electric kiln. And Robert said, "I think you should get that. I think you might have fun doing clay, playing with clay." And I said, "Okay. Well, how much do you think it's going to cost?" And he said, "I don't know, maybe, like \$200." And I said, "Well, can we afford that?" And he said, "I think it's important." He said, "Let's just do it." And so when you wave at an auction, the consumer lust builds. And I was just ready to kill anyone that was going to bid against me. [Interviewer laughs.] And I was saying to Robert, "Okay, if it's \$400, we just won't eat. We won't go to any movies. We won't go out to eat. But I really want the kiln." And I had to keep going into the port-o-potty to breathe, [interviewer laughs] to compose myself, because I was like shaking. I had to have this kiln. And nobody bid against us, and I got the kiln for \$10. And then, it was the weirdest feeling, because I came back, and it was like I'd been married to painting, and I was having this cheap affair with clay. And I just fell in love with clay. And I didn't know what I was doing. Everything I made exploded in the kiln. [They laugh.] I had no idea. And so I'd say to Robert, "Okay, I'm going to do clay for four hours. And then I'm going to do painting for four hours," because I have to do the paintings for, you know—

MS. RIEDEL: Right, your career.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. And so the gallery folded, the one that I was showing with. And I started sending out slides of these clay things. And then I got a different gallery in New York, and then I got a show. And that's how it started.

MS. RIEDEL: And so what happened with the Pollock-Krasner exhibition, because the gallery folded?

MS. BOTHWELL: I had to write a very apologetic letter. I said, "I'm so sorry, but I was going to have the show in this gallery, and it's just—do you want your money back?" And they were so nice. They said, "You know, that's like having a miscarriage. It's like planning a pregnancy, and it's not your fault. And you'll get another gallery. And we believe in you. And don't worry." And so they let me off the hook. And I said, "Oh, by the way, I'm kind of doing sculpture now, you know." And they said, "Whatever, it's fine. It's fine." They were so nice.

MS. RIEDEL: Extraordinary! And how much is that grant?

MS. BOTHWELL: That was for \$20,000. That was nice. I was able to live on it for about a year.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely. That's—especially at that age at that juncture in your career.

MS. BOTHWELL: It was just like an answer to prayers. Just great.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: That was just great.

MS. RIEDEL: So how did this—how did the clay work begin to evolve now? You've moved to the country. It's what, the early nineties?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. And so I did the clay, and I had a show in Upstate New York at a place called RCCA, Rensselaer County Council for the Arts. What I did was—

MS. RIEDEL: These were pit-fired, is that correct?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: And what I did in terms of trying to find a gallery—because I live out here, there was no more going to art openings to try to meet the right people and try to get contacts; I lived out here now. And everyone said, "Oh"—And even Will Barnet. He said, "It's a big mistake, honey. You move out there, you're never going to make a living as an artist." But I was beyond caring at that point. I just knew I wanted to feel good. And I wasn't. And it seemed like this—this was a chance to feel good even if it meant living my life in a

completely different way. So I was out here. And I was doing clay. And the pit firing made everything look alive. And I was finding these old dolls at auctions. And the old dolls were kind of scary. They were like ghosts or dead children. Or whatever. And nobody wanted them. And I think that they resonated with me. They maybe reminded me of that abandoned part of myself or that part that I had never nurtured, that my family had never nurtured. And I identified with it. But there was a quality about those dolls that I wanted to recreate in clay. And I found out when I pit-fired things, I could get that feeling.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] That kind of ghostly half there, half not.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. Because of pit-firing, I was making work that looked like they could have just been dug out of the ground. It didn't have to—I wasn't concerned with whether the work was contemporary or, you know. I was teaching myself. So I didn't even really know about—I didn't know. A friend of mine who was a figurative artist had to tell me that pit-firing was very passé and out of style, and nobody did it anymore. I shouldn't do it, [they laugh] and you know. But what I did in terms of galleries is I started amassing a lot of work. And every year the *Art in America* has an *Art in America Guide* that comes out in August that lists all the galleries in the country and all the artists that show at them. And there was a really great book—I can't remember the name of the woman that wrote it—but I think it was called *The Artist's Way*.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, yes, yes, yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Carol Something.

MS. RIEDEL: Something along that—yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: And I contacted her, because it was all about how to— And I said, "Do you ever teach people how to make a living?" Because when I went to art school, none of the teachers really did make a living at their art except for Will Barnet and Sidney Goodman, the people that came in lots and lots for critiques. But the teachers that were really there as teachers didn't make a living as artists. They were teachers.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Exactly.

MS. BOTHWELL: So they didn't really teach the business of art. There was none of that. And I didn't— And she said, "What you need to do is find about \$1,000 and make a brochure with three images of your work and send it to every single gallery in the country." And I did that.

MS. RIEDEL: She gave you that advice just over the phone?

MS. BOTHWELL: No, I went to New York where she lived, and I spent \$60, and I had a session, a therapy session with her. And she said this is what you need to do. And it was interesting. I got a lot of letters back, letters saying, you know, "We show turn-of-the-century prints. So we're puzzled as to why you would send us your art. But thank you." [Interviewer laughs.] You know. So anyway, but I noticed that with the annual *Art in America Guide* that it listed all my favorite artists and where they showed. And I thought, well, if the artists whose work I really like show in these galleries, and these galleries like those artists, then perhaps, since I like the artists that work in this way, my work might have some similar qualities. And the dealers that like those artists' work might also respond to my work. And that's how I ended up showing at Susan Cummins Gallery [Mill Valley, CA].

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: Because she showed Fred Stonehouse, and I loved his paintings.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: And paintings always have been much more of a source of inspiration to me in a way than sculpture. I loved following Fred. I applied to every gallery that showed Fred Stonehouse. And that's how I started showing at—there's another gallery, Marti Koplin, in Los Angeles. And she showed some of my sculptures. And that's pretty much what I tell people or students. I say just—you don't have to get to know these artists. You can now through the Internet. You can write them a fan letter, and if they're open they'll become friends with you. But just look and see where they show. Because I always thought, you know, it doesn't—people will say you can't copy other artists; you can't be too influenced by other artists. But I disagree. Fats Waller always said that that's how you find yourself, is by looking at the artists whose work you love, because it resonates with parts of you that you haven't discovered yet. And if you pursue that, it'll lead you right to who you are.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Interesting.

MS. BOTHWELL: So you know, so anyway. So that's—

MS. RIEDEL: So you mentioned Fred Stonehouse. Who else was really significant to you at the time? Who else did you love?

MS. BOTHWELL: [Inaudible.] Well, those are the painters. But when I started doing sculpture, I would go to galleries when I still lived in New York, and even when I lived out here, I'd try to go into New York once a month just to go to galleries and look for inspiration. And I guess the major turning point for me in terms of sculpture was one day I was—it was a snowstorm. It was a blizzard. And I went down to Canal Street so I could go to Pearl Paint. And I got off at the wrong subway stop. And I was in Tribeca, and I saw a little tiny gallery—or a sign for a gallery. And I was really studying the galleries. And I loved Marlborough Gallery. I felt like, if you're going to be a success, you need to show at Marlborough. And one of the guys I'd gone to school with, Vince Desiderio, did show and still does at Marlborough. So that was my goal. And I knew that the director there's name was Tom Cugliani.

So I passed—I got off at the wrong stop, and I went down the wrong street. I have a horrible sense of direction. I was trying to find Pearl Paint. It was a snowstorm, so I could only see a couple of feet in front of me, and there was this sign in a window that said "Tom Cugliani Art." And I thought, "I wonder what that's about?" And it said "Open." And I went in. And there were the most unbelievable sculptures I've ever seen in my life. It was this little teeny room about half the size of this kitchen. And there were these torsos in brown clay, and they weren't perfect. There were holes in the clay and cracks in these sculptures. But it was like they were breathing. And I almost had an out-of-body experience looking at them, because I didn't know that anything could make me feel that way. And, you know, the dealer came out, and he saw that I was like in my drowned—like a drowned rat with my torn jeans, and I wanted to buy one of these sculptures. They were \$600, and they were by Daisy Youngblood.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, of course. Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: I think his gallery closed, and she went on to show on 57th Street later. But I remember looking at them and thinking, "I want to do that. I can do that." I didn't mean that I can—like when I looked at them, I didn't mean, oh, I can make her sculptures. But I thought, "I want to make something that can make me feel that way."

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: Because I felt so strongly. I felt something that I'd never felt looking at anything—any art or any books or anything. It was like this energy coming out of those pieces that hit me. I just wanted to eat that work, you know. And I think that that's what made me turn, and think maybe I could do sculpture. Maybe I could do something like this.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: That possibility had never been open to me before that. Because they weren't perfect, they weren't academic and classical. But they were so alive. So that was like a major thing for me. Just that getting off at the wrong subway stop.

MS. RIEDEL: [They laugh.] That's a wonderful story. That's a wonderful story. It seems like there are those serendipitous moments that have helped define your career throughout.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: No, that's definitely one of them. I wish I could—I know she lives in Costa Rica now, so I'll probably never meet her. But I always want to thank her.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Yes. Maybe someday she'll read this. You'll have the opportunity.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, maybe.

MS. RIEDEL: Life is long. C'est la vie.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: So you saw Daisy Youngblood. Were you already living out here in Pennsylvania at the time? Or were you still in New York?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think I was still in New York.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: But that just like burned a hole in my brain, Daisy Youngblood. Maybe I was living out here by then, because that just kind of threw me upside down. And then it was funny, because then a couple of years later she had a show at her gallery on 57th Street, the McKee Gallery? I can't remember if that's the name of the gallery. And there was a catalog of her work. And her work was all about her spiritual experiences. And I remember reading the essay and being suffused with embarrassment. Like, "You don't talk about these things. No one's going to take your art seriously if you talk. You can't admit this. You can't talk about this." She was talking about her chakras and all this kind of stuff. And I was thinking, "No, no. She shouldn't be talking about this," you know. It was so funny. This reaction reading about it. Because I completely agreed with everything she said, but it was so private to me. It was something that you don't—you know, you keep that hidden.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And it's interesting, too, when I think about your interest in both words early on as a child, and then you're interested in art. And here she first saw that from her artwork from before. Now you're having a similar sense with her words and being that open.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: And that alive and revealing.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. And that's where it was coming from. And I think that's what I responded to, because I think that part of us, it's part of all of us. But it's not emphasized that much unless it's in a traditional church setting. And if you're not raised with that, then where do you put it?

MS. RIEDEL: So how did that affect your work?

MS. BOTHWELL: That part of me?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Or did it?

MS. BOTHWELL: It didn't for a long time until I had children. Then I think, once again, when I decided to have children, I had another complete, like, breakdown. I had to completely be willing to let go of everything that I was: as an artist, as a person. Because I always had this thought that if I had children, I would die. It was this, like, very strong belief: either the child would die or I would die. And it was, like, this physical, like tangible feeling. So I think that was part of why I just didn't— And plus, I thought, well, you can't have children and be an artist, even though Daisy Youngblood did. But it didn't seem possible generally. You know. And things weren't really happening for me career-wise. So why wreck it further by having children. But then once I got to that point where I decided that I had to do that, I was willing to let everything else go, because I really wanted to then have a child. And we were told it wasn't going to happen for us very easily because we had a lot of infertility issues. And by then I was close to 40. But then, once I made that decision, then that whole other side of my life that had been hidden kind of came to the forefront and broke open and took over. And then my artwork became all about that. I couldn't hide that in my work anymore.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. We'll get to that point. [Brief aside with Robert.] So early on we were talking about the ceramic figures and a sense of layering or transparency that comes into the work. And I'll just mention a few of the figures: There's a ceramic figure with a gauze hoop skirt and birds inside. This is the mid-nineties; '96, I think. And then another one with a box body that made me think of Joseph Cornell. A third ceramic figure with actually drawing on the body. And then a fourth with a wire body and shoes—different shoes hanging inside. That made me think that layering and transparency became an issue for you fairly early on. And that's something you've continued to explore now more through glass. But would you talk about how that came about? What was the motivation for that? Or were you thinking about it that way?

MS. BOTHWELL: I was thinking about it that way. I love the idea of trying to make the clay, which was so heavy and earthbound, lighter.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: And I think, as I allowed myself to incorporate this spiritual side of my life more into my regular life, I began exploring that more and more, because that became a major interest to me that began finding its way into my work. Just a whole different—different ways of experiencing life, the different ways of perception and studying the way consciousness works. And, you know, different paradigms. You know the way you can look at things from different points of view, experience things, and how to tie that all together. I think I was trying to do that in the work.

MS. RIEDEL: Did that coincide with the birth of your first child? Did it coincide [inaudible]?

MS. BOTHWELL: [Inaudible] before.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Were you studying this? Or was it coming intuitively—

MS. BOTHWELL: Kind of. I think both.

MS. RIEDEL: —with the move to the country perhaps?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, I think it was both. And also dreams have always been a major—

[END DISC 1.]

MS. BOTHWELL: —influence for me. And I would have a lot of these strange dreams that were kind of spiritual in nature, where I was taught things or things would be explained to me about the nature of reality or the nature of consciousness. So I was interested in reading books about people who made it their life work to really explore their dreams in terms of out-of-body experiences: Robert Monroe and things like, you know. There's a guy named Dr. David Hawkins who, an enlightened person who lives out in Arizona. And I became interested in his teachings. And I think because my work has always been narrative and autobiographical—you know, that my work couldn't help but be about those things that I was thinking about.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And yet at the same time there was always a back and forth—or has been an ongoing back and forth—between dogs and animals in human forms.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. Yes, I'm fascinated with animals and that whole, how we relate to animals, and how they're not really that different from us, I think.

MS. RIEDEL: And there also seem to be—you became interested also in assembling groups of figures. I'm thinking of an installation around this time, I think '98, called *I Remember Your Voice*.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: That was a whole series.

MS. BOTHWELL: I would love to do that more. It's just that the glass, everything takes so long. And having my children, I just, you know, that's something I'm kind of aspiring to, is to start doing groups of figures again. Because I like that kind of feeling where you're walking between sculptures, and they're all relating to each other. And then you become part of that environment, that feeling.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right. I know Akio Takamori does that a lot.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, I love his work.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I do, too.

MS. BOTHWELL: I think if I could just—if I worked just primarily in clay, it's much faster, because I can do a clay piece in a day or so. But with the glass it sometimes takes a year for me to do a piece.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MS. BOTHWELL: So the time element. And then with children.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. So around the time you began to work in clay, it sounds like you also really begin to change the focus of the work and went much more inward.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And it became much more about—

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, intuitive process.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And in the working process, are you also actively figuring things out as you go? Or when you went into the studio to work, did you have a very clear sense of what you wanted to end up with?

MS. BOTHWELL: No, I get a vague sense. Sometimes I'll—the easiest pieces are the ones that come in a dream. Or I'll dream that I walk into a museum, and I'll see the most amazing piece. And then I'll wake up, and I'll think, "Well, I could actually do that because it was my dream. It's not stealing." [They laugh.] Those are like presents. And those pieces just happen. But the other pieces are—

MS. RIEDEL: Can you give a couple of examples? Or does one or two come to mind?

MS. BOTHWELL: I'll have to think about it. But there—I'll have to think about it. I think some of the upside-down pieces, I think, you know, were—

MS. RIEDEL: Like *Balance*.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, some of those pieces, it's just like I've seen those already. And so—and it's funny, because even as a kid I would dream of looking at sculptures that were completely clear, different color and completely clear. And then I'd think that's so strange. And now I'm actually doing that work. I didn't realize in those dreams that it was glass or whatever. But I would see these images. But a lot of times the work—

MS. RIEDEL: As just a child you dreamed that, and you remember that.

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting.

MS. BOTHWELL: But it's funny, because a lot of the pieces just have a mind of their own. And I'll have a certain idea. And then the piece will crack, or it'll get damaged, or else it'll just not look the way I had intended it to look, or it'll take so long that I'll forget what my original incentive was, and then the pieces will just kind of change and morph. So that's part of the fun of it too, is that not having it be predictable. Having the pieces just kind of dictate themselves as I go along.

MS. RIEDEL: One of the earliest and most significant series that I can think of is CONJOINED TWINS. Was that really the first major series in clay?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think it really was. I think I— I've always been kind of obsessed with medical, you know. I collect old medical encyclopedias. And I was always fascinated— I was fascinated—I've always been just obsessed with twins, because—and conjoined twins. It just seemed like such a great argument for immortality, because you've got two souls in the same body. So in Philadelphia there's a great medical library that was very close to where I went to school, called the Mutter Museum, a museum for physicians. And you can research beautiful books from the 17[00s] and 1800s on parchment. And you can take these out, and they'll Xerox any images for you, these hand engravings. I thought, you know, you always see dolls. But when I was growing up, I never saw conjoined twin dolls. [Laughs.] So I always wanted to do a whole series of conjoined twin dolls, which people took very—were very offended by. People thought that they were in very poor taste. And I had a piece thrown out of the Smithsonian that was a—

MS. RIEDEL: Really!

MS. BOTHWELL: —Conjoined twin doll. The director thought I was making fun of people that couldn't have children—after it had been acquired, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: It was acquired and then—

MS. BOTHWELL: It was acquired and then it was—

MS. RIEDEL: De-accessioned.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. She thought it was—she said, "I don't want it even in the basement. I don't want it. It's so offensive to me, I don't want it taking up any space." So people were offended by the pieces. But I think my original incentive was trying to integrate those different parts of myself. And also just the whole amazing mystery of twins.

MS. RIEDEL: And I think also, when I think about those pieces, because they're also pit-fired, there's—I can see why those are difficult for people to look at.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. And I didn't realize that before I—

MS. RIEDEL: Well, you feel the fire and the burning from the pit-firing. And so I think they are, they're just really, they're strikingly unusual.

MS. BOTHWELL: I didn't realize that until I went to have my own children. Because when I had my first

miscarriage, I remember sitting at the hospital and the doctor saying, "You know, it's really for the best. I mean, you wouldn't have wanted to have conjoined twins." And I thought, well, if anyone were to have conjoined twins, I think I could have made a go of it." [They laugh.] I didn't say that to him.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: But, you know, then after that I suddenly had an awareness, like, oh, this is how people look at them. People are looking at them from their own personal standpoint. And I can even understand then how the woman from the Smithsonian had reacted.

MS. RIEDEL: And it had never occurred to you to look at them like that?

MS. BOTHWELL: No. To me they were like mermaids. Something unearthly, kind of like a gift, like something magical and, you know. Like there was a little girl born with, I think, four arms and four legs in India, and everyone just worshipped her as one of the gods, because one of the Indian gods does have all those limbs. And that's pretty much where I was coming from when I made mine. It wasn't like I was trying to exploit.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. No, no, no.

MS. BOTHWELL: I mean I had the whole series in a show in New York, and there's these double-decker red bus tours that would go through New York and look at the World Trade Towers, look at the Statue of Liberty, and for some reason my show became part of this tour. And the man would come in, and he'd stand in front of my display of conjoined twin dolls, and he'd say, "This work is the result of severe—severe—childhood trauma." And afterward all the little ladies in their Chanel suits and pearls would go up to the desk and say, "Is the artist disabled?" And they'd say, "No, she's not." And they'd say, "Does she have a disabled child?" And they'd say, "No, she doesn't have any children." And they'd say, "Oh, can I use the ladies' room?" And this was like every day it was the same thing. [Laughs.] So I guess it had a certain appeal in terms of shock value. But that wasn't my—I never did those pieces for exploitation.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. It came out of an intuitive sense of exploration from yourself. Those were not dream-related were they?

MS. BOTHWELL: Not really, no.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And that series—I remember that. How many pieces were in that series?

MS. BOTHWELL: There were a lot.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, it was a significant series. I remember there were chairs, there were chairs for conjoined twins.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, I still have that up in the studio.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. I mean, I was really obsessed with it.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Once in a while I still do a little bit of that, but I've got it under control.

MS. RIEDEL: How did the glass become part of the work?

MS. BOTHWELL: Well, after I started making a living at the clay, my dealers would call up—and I was showing at about five galleries across the country. And galleries would call up and go, "Listen, people find the work very disturbing. So what I want is a whole show of just monkeys. Or if you could just do dogs, dogs bouncing on balls, dogs doing tricks, dogs are okay. Just do dogs." And having, being told what to make was very depressing. And I started feeling self-conscious, and I was recreating pieces. And I was suddenly making pieces, hoping I'd make money for them. And it stopped being fun again. And I just thought, "Oh, boy, now I'm in a real bind because I'm living out here. I don't have a way to make a living. I can't just go teach at the university without a master's degree. And what am I going to do?" So I just stopped doing art for a couple of months altogether. And I, you know, did whatever I could do to try to get myself started again. I took an Indian cooking class at the Indian restaurant in town. And I took a paper-making class at Dieu Donneé in New York, which is a very nice place.

And then someone said, "Well, you know, you're about two hours away from Corning." And I said, "No, I

don't like glass. Glass artists are shiny. [Dale] Chihuly, and I don't care for, you know, William Morris, all that stuff, it's not for me." But I thought, you know, maybe I should just go and just be like a little old lady taking a class. And I went and it was really fun. It was really fun except I didn't realize that I was going to love it. I suddenly realized that glass could do all the things clay could, except I had no idea how to do it. And it's so technical.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: And the teacher, who was a very nice, patient guy named Mark Appelgard, and he would sit there, and most of the other students taking the class were studying glass already. So they were just sort of bored and twiddling their thumbs and doodling. And I would sit there very excitedly going, you know: "Okay! So then the ON button means the kiln is on!" He'd go, "Yes, Christina. I'll give you my notes when I'm done." And then I got home, and I thought, I have to do this, and I have no idea how. And then I was like a private detective for a couple of years, because I had to figure out how to buy all this equipment. And it wasn't like, you know, being a painter. You can go to Pearl Paint, you can get the paint brushes, the paint, you know, everything you need in one store. And with glass there are all these different companies. And none of the glass is compatible with any of the glass sold in any other companies, and you have to get the mold-making materials from one place and the grinding tools from another place. And you have to kind of find the glues and what kind of glues are the best. And you have to be a detective, if you haven't gone to school for it. I think it's much easier if you've gone to school.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Well, it strikes me as a parallel path to your one with ceramics, because it's the same thing: You weren't trained. You had to figure it out yourself. Though I think it was much more difficult.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. It was so much fun.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: But it was so much fun. And then I suddenly could figure out a way to have color in the work without it looking really cheap and cheesy. Because with clay, it just always, the glaze is just—I didn't like it.

MS. RIEDEL: So that's one of the primary things it brought first, was it brought the potential for color? Was that one of the things [inaudible]?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think for transparency, because I thought it can do all that clay can, but it transmits light. So it's alive. But clay always seemed kind of dead.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: You know. But the thing with clay, though, is you can really see what you've sculpted. So if you make a face or you make a form, you can see it. And with glass it's like that maple syrup candy that you get at Christmas when you're a kid. So it's kind of blurry. Everything's soft and blurry. So you can't get as much detail unless—you know, if you're doing casting.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: And casting is what I wanted, because it wasn't shiny, and it could still look as though it had been dug up and could have been thousands of years old. It didn't have to—I didn't want anything modern or shiny-looking. I just wanted to keep doing—I wanted an extension of what I was already doing. I just wanted to expand.

MS. RIEDEL: And what was the class at Corning that you had taken?

MS. BOTHWELL: It was basic glass-casting.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. So it was glass-casting. You were clear from the start that that's what you wanted to do.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Or what you wanted to explore.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, what I wanted to explore. And then there was an artist working out in Canada.

MS. RIEDEL: Sorry, one more question. Do you remember what year that was?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think that was '98.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: And then the following year—I didn't like most glass art that I saw, and I still don't, really. But there was an artist working in Canada, and she had some interesting textures on her work. And I didn't have children yet. So I said to Robert, "Let's drive out to Canada and take a road trip and go visit this artist." Her name was Irene Frolic, and she was very nice. [Laughs.] And she showed me around her studio. And I think she was a little puzzled that I would drive, like, 15 hours to go see her work. And, you know, once I got there, I really had nothing to say to her. And she realized I had no training. But the following year she called me up, and she said, "I've been invited to teach a class on glass-casting at Pilchuck [Glass School, WA], and I'm allowed to pick someone who's not a glass artist to give a scholarship to. The class is about \$3,000. So it would be for free. Do you want to take it?" So I said sure.

MS. RIEDEL: How extraordinary!

MS. BOTHWELL: So that was great. I got to go out there for free. And the thing about her class was she was teaching the inner form, how to make some kind of space on the inside of the glass show through. And that I really, really, really wanted to learn more than anything. And so, I have a hideous time at residencies. I don't fit in. I'm not a good learner. I get very, very slow when someone's trying to explain some things. So she really, I think, regretted her decision as soon as I was there, because she made dumb blonde jokes constantly. And she would go, "Well, you know Christina. You tell her to go over there and get a box, and she's doing to come back with a teacup, you know." She was so irritated at me.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, dear.

MS. BOTHWELL: Because I learn best in an apprentice situation where someone physically shows me how to do something. And then by the hundredth time I get it. So I was like all wrong. But I did learn that technique. So I'm so happy, because that's what my work is all about, is showing what's on the inside. So I'm really happy that I took that class.

MS. RIEDEL: Two questions: Have you ever had an apprenticeship? Have you ever done an apprenticeship?

MS. BOTHWELL: No. But I just think because of the way I learn. Like they say there are different ways people learn. One is hearing something explained, that doesn't work for me. Another is being shown something explained. That doesn't work for me. But if somebody physically can take me through something.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, that experiential sense of learning.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: They say people retain the most, I think, through that experiential way of learning.

MS. BOTHWELL: And two weeks, it just wasn't enough time for me to grasp everything. And we just had personality conflicts, too, because she taught one day, she said, "Okay, well, all of you are going to—" Most of the people were, again, students. They were in their early twenties. And I was about 40. And she said, "What you need to do, is when a gallery that you like is having an opening, you need to march in with your slides and show them." And I said, "Well, excuse me, but I've been showing my work now for ten years, and that's the worst way to get a gallery to look at your slides, because at an opening—" She was bothered by that. I didn't stay in my place. So I don't think she liked me very much. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: When you think back on the time at the Philadelphia Fine Arts Academy, you think of Pilchuck, you think of—

MS. BOTHWELL: Corning.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Is there a single experience that stands out as the most rewarding educational experience?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think it's funny. I think that probably the technique that I learned the most was from that summer school program, Frudakis. Just learning how to really work for hours and hours and hours at a time and know that the results can come really, really slowly, and not to expect immediate gratification. And I think that was an important lesson for me to learn. So I think that was really valuable. And then just the technique at Pilchuck, those two and a half weeks. I think that taught me more than just about anything. But I think basically just doing it, and doing it and being in an environment with other artists was nice, even though I don't have that now.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. And it seems that, really, one of the ways, from what you've said so far, that you seem to learn best is often just experimenting on your own.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So this experience at Pilchuck seems to have been very much of a significant change in the work. It enabled you to do things that you couldn't have done before.

MS. BOTHWELL: Because I learned. Yes, yes. And that was just fantastic.

MS. RIEDEL: So what immediate effect did that have on the work?

MS. BOTHWELL: Well, I was able to start showing what's going on underneath the surface. And I always felt like that was such a major part of who I was, that I kept so much of myself hidden.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: So I always felt that, for me, much of who I was, was below the surface. And so I wanted to kind of show that in my work, that we exist on so many different levels. I always loved that play, *The Great God Brown* [1926] by Eugene O'Neill.

MS. RIEDEL: I don't know that.

MS. BOTHWELL: It's basically about people that are afraid to show who they are. And so they get these masks that they wear to show who they want to be, to the public. And then at the end of the play, they can't get the masks off because they've become this version. And that really resonated with me.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. That makes sense. What was the name of the play?

MS. BOTHWELL: *The Great God Brown*, I think. I think for me the whole thing with making art, it's just about a process of accepting who I am. Allowing myself to be who I really am and accept that. And let it come through in the art. And the more I've accepted myself for who I am and just been honest in the work, regardless of what's going on in terms of the historical importance of art and trends and what's, you know, popular, and *Art Magazine* is getting all the reviews, as long as I really just stayed true to myself, that's made the work more honest and stronger, I think. So I kind of carved a path out for myself that's off the beaten track.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: I was looking through the questions before, and, you know, "What do you think about art criticism and the way"— It's like, I'm apart from that, because most of my inspiration doesn't come from contemporary craft. It doesn't come from what's going on in the glass world or the clay world or any of those magazines, because I like outsider art. And so the magazines I look at are low-brow paintings like juxtaposed in *Hi-Fructose Magazine*. And *Blab*. Magazines that are not really concerned with serious art, you know. And those are probably my biggest influence and the things that inspire me. I just kind of have to follow the inspiration.

MS. RIEDEL: And where does the inspiration come from?

MS. BOTHWELL: That comes from other artists, but not artists that work in the same medium as me.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. What artists come to mind?

MS. BOTHWELL: Okay, well, it's so great that I've been able to become friends with a lot of the artists whose work I like. I love the painter Irene Hardwicke Olivieri. She's having a show right now at the Ace Gallery. And I love the painter Anne Siems. Do you know Anne Siems's work?

MS. RIEDEL: I don't.

MS. BOTHWELL: Okay. Siems, S-I-E-M-S. And they're both friends with me. And I do really love the glass artist Sibylle Peretti. Do you know her work?

MS. RIEDEL: I don't.

MS. BOTHWELL: Sybille. Oh, beautiful work.

MS. RIEDEL: And what about each of these artists, what about the work is speaking to you?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think because it's all so—it seems like they really followed their intuition and dreams. And it really resonates—there's similarities, I guess, in the work. You know, the work resonates. But I love

outsider art, too. I love the Clayton Brothers. And I love, you know, Fred Stonehouse, as I said before. And I love the children's book illustrator Henrik Drescher.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Do you love him, too?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Most people have never heard of him.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: I love him. And when I see work like that or certain—

MS. RIEDEL: Do you know Patte Loper? I would think you would like her, too.

MS. BOTHWELL: I don't know that work. I'll have to write that down.

MS. RIEDEL: I think you would like her.

MS. BOTHWELL: That's the kind of thing I really love looking at and so.

MS. RIEDEL: I want to talk a little bit also about the animals in the work. Some of them—some of the animals have very much of a circus feeling. Does that come to mind at all?

MS. BOTHWELL: Performing. I never even thought of that, really. Huh.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MS. BOTHWELL: I find that they're all, I think, I kind of try for humor. I'm always attracted to the unexpected. So it's always animals that are just trying to cope with whatever situation they find themselves in, kind of.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And they do seem like something you come back to again and again and again. It seems—

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, it kind of grounds me, I think.

MS. RIEDEL: It was the dogs at first—well, the dogs reoccur time and time again. And then fish. See those fishtails began to appear.

MS. BOTHWELL: I've always been attracted to mermaids. I think it's more that whole conjoined twin—hybrids are fascinating to me, because I feel like they kind of straddle that border between the linear world and the nonlinear, you know, where anything's possible.

MS. RIEDEL: That makes a lot of sense. Yes. How and when did the taxidermy become part of the work?

MS. BOTHWELL: It's so beautiful, though, isn't it? I mean, it's kind of scary and depressing also, because it is such a representation of death. But yet they're so beautiful.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, death is a big part of your work.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Back in when you were talking about straddling that hybrid space.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: It seems like you're constantly straddling that hybrid space between life and death and between sleeping and waking.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. So with taxidermy I wanted to do a series of mermaids. And it just seemed like what better way than to get vintage fish and actually incorporate real fish and make these, you know, glass. And then

I got arsenic poisoning from doing that. So I had to back off from that. And recently I found an artist named Serena Brewer. And she is a rogue taxidermist.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: She's getting a lot of acclaim right now for her work, which is great. She's fantastic. But she sells parts. She only taxidermies from road kill. But she sells parts on eBay.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs] Oh, dear.

MS. BOTHWELL: And so she—

MS. RIEDEL: And so you can get [inaudible].

MS. BOTHWELL: I can get little things like ears or feet. I don't need a lot. Just something to suggest. What I like most in any kind of art is when I look at something and I don't get the whole picture at once. I look at something, and then there's something about it that makes me want to look the second time and see something different. So I just like incorporating a little tiny bit of taxidermy here and there.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: Like I love the idea of just a figure, like a beautiful woman sitting there, but just have like cat paws coming out of her dress or, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: The one you're working on right now, the [inaudible].

MS. BOTHWELL: The goose, yes. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Goose feet.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Webbed feet.

MS. BOTHWELL: She sent me those as a present. She said, "Would you like some taxidermied goose feet?" And I said, "Well, I don't know, because it's a conflict of interest since I have family members, you know, that are geese." [They laugh.] But then when they came, she sent me a couple of sets of deer feet—I mean, of goose feet. And I was like, "Oh, these are beautiful, aren't they?"

MS. RIEDEL: Where did the ideas from your—how did the ideas from your work evolve? Do they come strictly through dreams? Are they part of the working process? How do these evolve.

MS. BOTHWELL: I think so. I think also some of them are autobiographical, and some of them come from literature. I pretty much just go with whatever resonates. And I have ideas that I would love to do. Like, I would love to do groupings of figures interacting with each other. But because I have such limited time with having children, I have to just pick a piece that the idea is so personal to me or compelling that I know I will be able to stick with it for as long as it takes. And I will be able to use the very limited amount of time I have, to have enough interest in that idea. So, you know, when I was first pregnant with Sophie, my older daughter, I started having these out-of-body experiences where I'd wake up. I'd feel this vibration, and then I'd wake up and leave my body and see myself sleeping there. And have these different experiences. And that was so compelling to me that I wanted to kind of process that experience or those dreams. And, you know, people said to me, "Oh, it's nice that you have those fantasies." But to me they have felt so real that I've wanted to make some kind of art from them and, you know. And people will say to me, "Oh, your ideas are so weird, and no one's going to want them." But I find that for myself, if I'm really fascinated with something, those are the pieces that do sell. Yes.

Because my friend Irene, that painter I was telling you about, sent me an article about a woman—I think I mentioned at that lecture—that had a dog that gave birth. And she herself had a six-month-old baby, and the dog had a heart condition. Then the dog died, and one by one her puppies started dying despite the puppy milk replacer. So the woman began breastfeeding her puppies, and they all made it. There were like eight that survived. And I thought, "I have to do a piece about that." And my dealer at the time just said, "That's the most disgusting thing I've ever heard. No one will buy that." But I ended up doing a piece, and it sold. And about four or five other people wanted that sculpture. So I just never question. If I have a really strong incentive, and idea, to do something, it seems that someone at some point will buy the piece. I mean, that's a kind of naïve way of looking at selling, the commercial aspect of things [laughs]. But it's held truth for me so far.

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting. And I think people, I'm sure, respond to that work on a metaphorical level, too. And somehow there's a tenderness perhaps in that image that they could relate to it metaphorically

as opposed to conjoined twins, which people just [inaudible].

MS. BOTHWELL: Right, really can't relate to.

MS. RIEDEL: They had a hard time getting beyond that, seeing that metaphoric thing.

MS. BOTHWELL: But I like— I feel that so much of my life I'm sleepwalking. I'm walking around in a daze. I'm not really experiencing things in the moment. I'm either thinking about things that have happened, or thinking about the work. I'm thinking and worrying about my children, or whatever. And I like those moments that make me wake up and jolt me awake and make me have, like, an awareness of, you know, some kind of extra perception of that moment. And those are the kind of ideas that attract me most in the work: the idea of a person breastfeeding an animal. You know what I mean? The idea of your spirit leaving your body, whether it's in the death process. Or, you know, the idea of a person giving birth. Those are the moments where, they're so vivid and you're so alive and so focused. And those are the things that I have the most juice for in making my own work.

MS. RIEDEL: Let's talk a little bit about the working process, because something you mentioned a few moments ago in passing is that it can take up to a year to make a piece, and it can take two months to fire a piece. We were looking out there at your studio before we started talking and looking at pieces that crack in the kiln and have to be thrown away because there's nothing that can be done with them. So would you describe— would you walk us through a [inaudible].

MS. BOTHWELL: This is where, if I'm at a party and someone says, "How do you make your work?" after about ten seconds they look at me and say, "I'm just going to get a drink, and I'll be right back." [Interviewer laughs.] It's basically the lost wax process. Well, first I make the ins— A lot of times I'll start the piece with what's going to be on the inside of the figure. If it's the person's soul that I'm trying to express or a baby, like a pregnancy, or it's some kind of a scene that's supposed to, like, suggest a person's inner life, I'll start with that first, because that's sort of like the basis of the piece. That's the major part of the piece for me. So I'll do that inside piece. And then I'll make a mold of it out of silicon caulking gel. So what I'll do is I'll fire that piece. I'll make it out of clay. I'll fire it. I'll cover it with a thin layer of beeswax, and then burn most of it off so there's just like a slight slick surface so that the mold-making material won't stick to it.

And then once it has a slight layer of wax on it, I'll press silicon caulking gel all over that, and then let that dry for, like, eight hours. And every day I'll add another layer for about eight days, until I have a mold. And then I'll take that mold, and I'll take the sculpture out of it, I'll have the anti-mold, and I'll fill it with a combination of plaster and talc and silica. And I'll put some refractory blanket, like insulation blanket, inside that, because with glass, a lot of times the cracking happens because, in cooling, the glass is expanding and contracting. And it needs to contract in a certain way. And if I have something on the inside of it, if it's not pulling at the same rate, the glass you're going to have cracking. So if I put a little piece of blanket in there, the blanket retains the heat, and also it allows the plaster to kind of shrink a little bit along with the glass, so there's more leeway.

MS. RIEDEL: Got you.

MS. BOTHWELL: So it's more forgiving.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: So I'll make a mold with this stuff, and I'll have a big long screw or two sticking out of it. And then I'll bring that back down to the house, and I'll heat beeswax up in a crockpot. And then when it's like silly putty, I'll sculpt on top of that, and that piece is going to be the innards. And I'll make my sculpture of the figure or whatever. And then when that's all finished—

MS. RIEDEL: And that's made out of beeswax.

MS. BOTHWELL: That's made out of beeswax. And usually, if I have like a clay head—usually I make the heads out of clay so you can really read them—I make that first, too. So that I build—because the clay shrinks about 10 percent, and glass shrinks 1 percent. So if I make the head after, the head'll shrink too much, and it'll look like a pinhead. [They laugh.] Just, you know. So I have to do those parts first. So I make the wax part. And then I'll take that wax part that has that inner plaster silica thing sticking out of it, and I'll take that up. And then what I'll basically have is this wax shape with big screws sticking out of it from the inside piece. And then I'll make another mold around that whole thing out of plaster talc, talc, talc and silica. And if it's a big piece, the mold will take all day, four or five hours. And then when I finish it, I put a layer of refractory cement around that. Then that needs to dry for 48 hours. And then when that's all done, usually the piece is too heavy for me to lift. And I'll get Robert or my neighbor, and we'll life it up onto bricks. And then I have a pressure cooker outfitted with a hose and like the lost wax process, I'll stick that up, boil water, and the water will steam out the wax on the inside.

So I'll end up with an empty mold that, floating in the middle of it, anchored by these screws to the outer mold, we'll have this object made out of plaster on the inside. And then, once that's dry for a couple of days, I'll fill that with cold glass. And then I'll heat that up in the mold. And then as it gets up to around 1,500 degrees, the glass shrinks down, and the mold will be half-empty. And then I'll have to put on my fireman's suit, open up the kiln, fill it with more glass, and do that for about—you know, sometimes that can be, like, 12 hours of feeding the glass, allowing it to melt off, until the glass comes up to the level of the mold. Then I cover the mold with refractory blanket, because the important thing in cooling down in a firing is that all parts of the glass have to cool at the same time. And if they have a big wide opening at the top, that's going to cool down first, and that's going to crack. So I cover that with refractory blanket. And then bring the temperature of the kiln down really, really fast, because glass is like water. The molecules—if it freezes really fast, water, it'll be so clear because the molecules haven't had a chance to organize themselves in these geometric— And so because it's unorganized, it's very clear. So you want to bring the temperature for glass down really, really fast; it's very similar to water.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MS. BOTHWELL: So if you bring it down really fast, the glass will be clear. If you bring it down, the temperature down, really, really, really slowly, the glass will be completely opaque like cement, and you won't be able to see through it.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MS. BOTHWELL: I need as much clarity as possible, so you can see the object on the inside. And then, you have to cool it down—

MS. RIEDEL: But that also risks a lot of cracking to do it that way [inaudible].

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. You bring it down to about 7[00] or 800 degrees, kind of the cracking area, and then it just has to sit there, depending on the quarter-inch-per thickness of glass. And it has to sit there, depending if it's, you know, something like three or four weeks, sometimes— And then if the power goes out, you lose the piece. You have to start all over, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: You know, I always think— Sorry, go ahead.

MS. BOTHWELL: It has to cool down for about three weeks to get incrementally down to room temperature. Then I break the mold up. When it's completely cool, I'll break the mold off with a couple of big hammers. And I have to break it off very carefully because I find little delicate tendrils or things like that, that can just snap right off. And then they come off with all kinds of—you know, I have to have feeding tubes. Because as the glass goes down into a mold, the air needs to rise out.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: So if I have, like, undercuttings, a lot of undercuttings, there won't be any room for that air to escape. And then I'll have big air pockets. So when the glass comes out, I have these big glass tubes coming out, which are all my air-feeding tubes, which are filled up with glass. So I have to saw that off and carve all that off. And that usually takes a few days, to smooth everything and take away all the evidence of the firing. And then when that's all done, you know, polish it up so that you can see all the clarity. And then I glue together all the parts that I have: the clay parts. And then I have to grind again to get the glue, because the glue will be lumpy or misshapen. I want it to kind of blend it as nicely as possible. And then when that's all done, then I bring it down. And then I do what my neighbor calls ornamentation, which is I like to paint. "Yup, you have to add some more ornamentation there."

And then I find that's nice, because I love doing—I started doing painting when the glass cracked, and I had to hide the imperfections. Or else I'd have big chunks of plaster floating in the molds. I've gotten a little bit better over the years, so I can avoid the cracking; most of the time I can avoid cracking, and most of the time I can avoid big chunks of plaster. I can grind them out and fill them with glue. But I'll paint then, you know, the oil painting on the surface, which is what I was trained for. So that's easy, and that's fun. And then that kind of ties the clay together with the glass so it's more—

MS. RIEDEL: [Inaudible] opacity.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. And then I take it to my woodworker to kind of figure out a hanging device or some kind of a professional base because, you know, I'm not good at that whole professional-looking aspect of it. So my woodworker will make a nice sturdy base that won't scratch up somebody's floor, and the piece won't crash over.

MS. RIEDEL: And does he run a screw through? How are they—

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, sometimes we have to work on that. We have to figure out what would be the best thing. And so he'll say, "Well, how about"—I'll say, "How about if you have a screw anchoring this?" Because every time I make a piece, I have to think in terms of how it's going to be shipped. Because most of the breakage happens in shipping.

MS. RIEDEL: I would think.

MS. BOTHWELL: So I'll say, "I have this big, huge piece. Can you make a base and then make like a little cup around the top of the base so I can glue that into the bottom of the inside of my piece so that the piece can come apart from the base for shipping. So I don't have to have a nine-foot-long box."

MS. RIEDEL: Right. And pieces like the octopus piece, the octopus pieces, though, when you're taking those out of the mold—

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, I usually make, like, three or four extra arms, because I know I'm going to lose some.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Because I'll lop off an arm, or even an arm will have a crack in it because any— It's like clay. If you make a sculpture with clay and you have different thicknesses, you're going to get cracking. Well, with glass it's even more.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: So the cracking just can happen. And there are things you can do to disguise it. It's just easier just to remove. Like the piece up there, the tall, skinny piece of a woman that has a lot going on in her hair, and she's like a—both arms had cracks in them, so I just cut them off.

MS. RIEDEL: And then you add the clay on.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. I had glass arms, but I decided I don't want to deal with the cracking. And then even if I try to repair it, and shipping it, it could break, or a collector could have it, and the arms could just fall. I don't need to deal with it, so—

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: So that's sort of how the piece has a mind of its own.

MS. RIEDEL: So technically they're phenomenal actually.

MS. BOTHWELL: And I'm not a technical person at all. So it's sheer hell sometimes for me. I wish I was. And I think if I'd gone to school for this, it would be a lot easier, because I'd know what I was dealing with.

MS. RIEDEL: Either that, or you would never have gotten into it, right. [They laugh.]

MS. BOTHWELL: It's such an unforgiving medium, it really is. But it's so rewarding when it comes together, because sometimes the pieces end up looking better than I expected them to. And, you know, I don't mind them looking rough, because that's what—I'm attracted to that quality in art. And a lot of glass art is all about technical perfection. A lot of glass art, you look at it, and it doesn't look like human hands had anything to do with it. But mine, I like them looking pitted and rough and like someone really sweat over them, because that's the kind of quality that inspires me when I see it in art.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Good.

[END DISC 2, TRACK 1.]

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. So you wanted to mention that it's not impossible to be an artist and have children.

MS. BOTHWELL: I was always told when I was in art school that you can either be an artist, or have children. But if you're going to have children, then you really can never do more than just look as your art as a hobby. And that was really, you know, I had that stressed by— My mother, when I was growing up, said, "I could have been a great artist if I hadn't had you." And that was something that really kept me from wanting to have children, because I didn't want to put that burden on them. And then hearing in art school, constantly hearing, you know, "If you have children, you have to put your energy into children. You can't do both. And look, there are no women famous artists in history except for Mary Cassatt or Berthe Morisot, and neither of them had children, or blah blah blah." And you grow up feeling like that is true. And that would have been such a major

regret for me if I hadn't had children.

And I finally had to be willing to let go of being an artist in order to have children. And I really think that would have been such a major regret for me had I not. And I really didn't have a whole lot of role models. It doesn't seem like there are that many artists that have more than one children—one child. And yet it wasn't until having children that my work, I think, really came alive and really had content and really had meaning. And I wasn't really able to make a living before having children. So for me it was the very best thing that could have ever happened to my career and to my art.

And I love being asked to go speak at universities, because I love going and saying, "I have three children, and I'm doing art, and I never stopped doing art. And I don't think they suffered for it. I nursed my twins until they were three. You know. And my children will grow up knowing that they have a mother that was passionate about something and followed her dreams." I do know a lot of women artists that get very cagey when you say, "Well, how come, you know, you don't—did you ever want to have children?" "Oh, oh, I really wanted to be an artist, so I knew I had to give that up." And I don't think you have to give that up. I don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: Your experience has been actually just the opposite.

MS. BOTHWELL: My experience has been the opposite. And so it's something I feel passionate about.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Well, it's really valuable to have that information available to people as your authentic experience.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: Good.

[END DISC 2.]

MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Christina Bothwell at the artist's home and studio in Stillwater, Pennsylvania, on June seventeenth, 2010, for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, disc number two. Let's start this disc with a conversation about the travels that you just were mentioning that have been significant to your work. There were early residencies or early travel grants?

MS. BOTHWELL: Well, one of the advantages of going to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts was they had funding to send a small number of students—it was a competition-based thing—to pretty much anywhere you wanted to go to focus on work. So when I was—

MS. RIEDEL: How wonderful!

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. When I was 21, I spent three months in Europe just going around to museums and galleries, and that was nice. And then when I was 22, I spent four months in Mexico. Mexico was nice. I went primarily to—I wanted to see the work of Tamayo [Rufino Tamayo], the painter, you know Tamayo.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: But instead I really saw a lot of Cycladic sculpture, which really inspired me.

MS. RIEDEL: In Mexico?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, there was a lot of—there was just some, I guess, in the museum in Mexico City. There was an exhibit, and that was kind of interesting.

MS. RIEDEL: And you were based in Mexico City?

MS. BOTHWELL: No, I was just traveling all over the place.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. And you saw a lot of Cycladic sculptures in Mexico.

MS. BOTHWELL: These little teeny [inaudible] figures and fertility figures.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: I don't know what it was an exhibit for.

MS. RIEDEL: That makes a lot of sense. Was that a rotating—that was an [inaudible] collection?

MS. BOTHWELL: It was a visiting collection.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes. And where else were you in Mexico?

MS. BOTHWELL: All over the place. I got really sick. I got very sick with amoebic dysentery and salmonella. So that kind of colored the experience. [Laughs.] It's a very good weight-loss program. Thirty pounds in two or three months, right? So that was nice. I think that influenced me later, because it got me thinking a lot about [inaudible].

MS. RIEDEL: [Inaudible] the Day of the Dead.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, a lot of that, going to cemeteries and things like that. So, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And masks and the skulls and, yes. A lot of the folk art?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, I love folk art. I've always loved folk art and outsider art. So, yes, I guess that probably more than anything.

MS. RIEDEL: And which parts of Mexico were you in? I think of the mummies.

MS. BOTHWELL: I loved the mummy museum in Guanajuato. I spent about a week there just drawing.

MS. RIEDEL: I know exactly where that is.

MS. BOTHWELL: You spend about 30 cents to go in and out of that in about ten seconds. And I spend about seven hours a day and just drove the guards crazy. But, you know, my whole obsession with death, and the figures were just like sculptures. They were so beautiful. And that probably made more of an impact on me than any other part of the trip, the three or four months.

MS. RIEDEL: And so you were sketching.

MS. BOTHWELL: Just—yes. I drew every single mummy that was displayed in that museum. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Wow! I'd love to see those.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you still have them?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think I have images.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. That's interesting. That's really interesting.

MS. BOTHWELL: Because they were so beautiful. They had a quality about them that was so like sculpture. I wasn't doing sculpture then at all. But they were like beautiful sculptures. I'd never seen mummies before, not like that, you know. So that probably more than anything.

MS. RIEDEL: And where were you in Europe, and what was significant about that?

MS. BOTHWELL: I just went to pretty much every city that I could think of.

MS. RIEDEL: Were you in France and Italy and Germany?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, all of it, and Denmark. No, went to all of it. Germany has some great contemporary art museums, artists I'd never heard of. I remember being in one museum in Munich [laughs], and there was Conceptual painting, which was not my kind of thing at all. But there was this very working-class, downtrodden woman just staring, mesmerized at that painting. So it made me stop and give it—I was thinking, "Well, she really likes it; I should try to get some more out of it." And I looked more at it, and I thought, "Nah, I still don't get anything out of it." Went and looked at the rest of the museum for a couple of hours and came back, and she was still looking at it. And I thought—and I didn't realize she was a Duane Hanson sculpture. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: That is funny. That is funny. So it seems as if you were exposed to just a broad range of work, and you were just taking it all in.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, yes. That's a good way to describe it.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And was there anything of special significance during the European trip that you brought home with you or that—

MS. BOTHWELL: Just the Giotto paintings. I loved those.

MS. RIEDEL: And what in particular?

MS. BOTHWELL: I don't know. They had a similar quality to Balthus paintings too, where the figures are sort of simplified but kind of clumsy, too, like not anatomically perfect. So in that, very personal. And unique—and just beautiful.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. And so both of these trips were while you were still a student.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So it's your junior and senior years, something like that?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, just going in the summers.

MS. RIEDEL: That's an extraordinary program.

MS. BOTHWELL: That was a lovely thing that they have.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Any other trips that have been significant?

MS. BOTHWELL: In terms of art?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, or just having an impact on your life or your work? Certainly we've mentioned the Pilchuck residency. We mentioned Corning. And the relocation from New York.

MS. BOTHWELL: I really enjoyed knowing— My brother-in-law did the movie *Anna and the King* about ten years ago. And he gave Robert and I tickets to go over to Malaysia, because they couldn't film the movie in Thailand because it was disrespectful to the king, it was considered. And just the beautiful mosques and the Buddhas, the statues outside. Just the public art, really. These buildings that are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years old. And that was just amazing to see that. You know, I would just stop and do sketches of these, you know, like, unbelievable things that you don't see anywhere in this country. So that was amazing.

MS. RIEDEL: Is sketching a regular part of your working process, or is it something you do independently when you travel?

MS. BOTHWELL: You know, it's funny. Before I had children, I really did spend a lot of time doing very detailed drawings. And then after having children, they got a lot smaller.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: And then, you know, I have a couple around here I can show you that I've done of the children. And then, now I just—I have sketchpads, because I get ideas that are so fleeting. I'll get an idea, and I think, "That'll be so perfect for me to do as an idea." And if I don't write it down right away, all I can remember is the feeling. The next day, and I'll think, "Oh, I had an idea for a piece, and it was such a great idea." But I will lose it, and I don't retain the images. So now it's just pretty much a device for memory keeping.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Do you sketch the pieces out before you starting working on it often?

MS. RIEDEL: All of them?

MS. BOTHWELL: Very roughly. Well, ideas, just the idea. I'll jot down the ideas, and then I don't really look at them because they're just so minimal. I can show you, but they're not, you know. But when I travel, I always keep a journal and take notes and do drawings of things, because I find that you can look at a drawing, like, that you've done years and years and years ago, and you can remember the smell in the air and what you ate that day. And it just, you know. Nabokov talks about that in his memoir *Invitation of a Memory*, how it's all still in there. You can step off a bus and suddenly it's like you're back to being seven years old, and you can remember—you know?

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: And it's so true. But it seems like taking photographs doesn't do the same thing as doing a little sketch. So, I used to draw a lot more. And I was thinking, that was one of my regrets about having you come now, because it would be so much fun to have just drawings hang all over the place, because I used to do wonderful drawings. You know, and working drawings and figuring out things on paper as I went along. And now it's just—I don't afford myself the time, because I have to pick and choose what I'm going to do, because time is to limited.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Let's talk a little bit about exhibition—your exhibitions over time. And what the first ones were like and how that has changed for you, who you began showing with. What the flavor of those shows were like, and how that's evolved over time? The relationship with dealers: If they've been mostly positive, if they've been mixed.

MS. BOTHWELL: I really think it's just like dating, I really do. [Laughs.] I really make that analogy all the time. And there are bad boyfriends and good boyfriends. And I know you're not supposed to burn bridges, because you never know what gallery owner might be an important curator or critic later. But there are just some ex-boyfriend art dealers that have been so hideous, that when students write to me and say, "I'm just getting out of Alfred, and could you recommend"—I always say, "Please! Stay away from this one dealer, because he will seduce you with compliments, and then he's horrible." So I've had couple that were not so great. I find that the one bit of advice that I can give somebody is don't let greed override your intuition, because you can generally, if you're at all in touch with your feelings, you can get a sense. Just like in a dating situation, you can get a sense of whether something's going to be— If it looks perfect and it feels perfect and it sounds incredible and you know it's going to look great on your resume but you feel, like, sick to your stomach and you want to throw up, it's generally going to be a horrible experience no matter what it looks like.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: And that's really proven to be true for me. And earlier on, I just couldn't stand up for myself. And so I would do pieces that were composed of several different segments. And I'd go to a gallery, and the gallery would be displaying one part. And I'd say, "But this was actually only a part of the piece." And they'd say, "Yes, but we only want to show this part." And I wouldn't feel that I had any right to say, "Well, actually no. That's my—" Because I'd would feel like, well, I haven't shown that much, and I want to keep showing here. And I don't want to get this person mad at me so they don't want to show me. So now I stand up for myself a lot more because.

MS. RIEDEL: So would this be a piece that was composed of multiple elements, or this would be something—okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And they would just show a single part of it, and the rest—

MS. BOTHWELL: And I would feel that I didn't really have any right to stand up for myself because I was so grateful to be showing, you know. Like in New York, it's, like, I'm so grateful, I don't want to— And, you know, then later there are situations that can come up, just like in any relationship, where someone can take advantage of you if you don't stand up for yourself.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: And I've learned now. I had a situation with one of my galleries. Usually the problems come up for me in terms of breakage, things that happen to my pieces in transit.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MS. BOTHWELL: And then who pays for that. Because I pay for my work to get out to the gallery. And then the gallery is in charge of paying for the shipping of the piece to the collector. Or if the piece can't sell, to get the piece back to me.

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

MS. BOTHWELL: So I had an incident where I sold a piece, and it was a big figure. And it got out to the gallery. And I think the head broke off. And it probably was my fault, because I wasn't very experienced with gluing things on. Now I have big, extensive internal structures so that that won't happen. But back then I didn't. So the gallery—it cost me about \$300 to get this piece out to the gallery. So they sent it back to me and charged me for it. And I said, "But, excuse me." I had to call them up, and I said, "But I thought that we had this understanding that you would pay for the work." And they said, "Yes, I know. But we had a client that wants to buy it, but you have to pay for it." So I said, "So I'm paying for the work to get out to you, then it comes back from the gallery, and I'm paying for it. And then you want me to pay for it again to get out to you. So that's \$1,500, and the piece is a \$3,000 piece. So that takes out my whole profit." And she said, "Well, you know, maybe we'll try—" It was like something— So I took the piece to my gallery in New York—fixed it—took it to the place in New York, and they sold it for like, they added an extra thousand dollars onto it and sold it for more. So then when the gallery, original gallery, called me up and said, "Have you fixed that piece yet, because we really have a client that's interested." I just said, "You know what? If you can't stick to the agreement that we had where you pay for the work to get shipped back to me, then it's not worth it to me. So I sold the piece to my New

York gallery. I'm sorry." Then she went, "Oh, oh." And so she hasn't tried that again.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: But if I hadn't stood up for myself, it would have been like the camel's nose under the tent, you know. You let the camel's nose under the tent, then you have the whole camel under there, and there's no tent standing and you're stuck with the camel.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: You know what I mean?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Like it would just be all the time. So sometimes, in certain situations, you have to really watch for things, because unless it's spelled out really clearly whose responsibility is what, you know. So the two galleries that I work with treat me very nicely. I show at Heller in New York and Habitat in Chicago. And I've been working with each of them for about seven or eight years. So that's worked out really well. And I just recently started working with a new gallery in California. And like a dating situation, I don't know anything about this dealer except he started sending me letters of inquiry about three or four years ago, saying that he was interested. And I just thought, "I can't take on another gallery because I work so slowly, it won't work for me."

But every time I go to his Web site, I just love the work he shows. It's unconventional, and he shows artists—figurative mostly—artists that I really like, not craft-oriented necessarily. All different genres and mediums. But he also shows old weird stuff like artist's mannequins from the 1700s with glass eyes and real teeth. And old architectural models of steps just going up to nowhere. And bizarre, strange things. And I get so inspired by looking at his pieces that I finally had to write to him and say, "Listen, I'm doing whole bodies of work based on being inspired from your Web site. I feel like I should give you some work." So I finally decided to show with him. And I thought, well, I just feel so energized when I talk to him. So that's got to be a good sign. But I still decided I had to be practical. And I looked up a bunch of the artists he showed with. And he showed with this woman that now I'm friends with, Anne Siems. And I wrote to her and I said, "Listen, what is it like working with him? Does he pay you on time? Does he stick to his agreement? Is he trustworthy?" It's good to get a sense from other artists.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: If you can at all, because otherwise you can get screwed. I had a show in Paris about five years ago. And the woman saw my work in a magazine. She called me. And I wanted to have a show in France.

MS. RIEDEL: Of course.

MS. BOTHWELL: And so I took the show, even though I had a bad feeling about it. And it got a very nice review in an art magazine and all that. But then I never heard from her again. It turned out the gallery had closed, gone out of business, and she had all the work. And I had no way of getting it back. That was just a very horrible experience.

MS. RIEDEL: What happened?

MS. BOTHWELL: I was able to track down one of the artists that she shows who had given me a good recommendation in the first place. And he contacted her and he got her to send the work back. But what she did was she clumped, like, eight pieces. I have to double-box my pieces and have eight inches of space on each side. And she put all the pieces in one box without any bubbles. So every single piece just came back. I was able to recycle a head, I think. But it was a good lesson, because my instincts said— So now when people say, "Oh, don't you want to show in Europe?" I just think, "Well, not really. Not unless the New York gallery or the Chicago gallery is in charge. If they handle everything, and they get the pieces over there, and they make sure the work gets sold and I get paid. And I don't have to deal with it. But other than that, no."

MS. RIEDEL: That's awful.

MS. BOTHWELL: But typical, you know. I mean everybody I know has had an experience like that.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely. And what's the name of the Venice [CA] gallery?

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, Obsolete.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: A friend of mine recently said, "Why would you want to show there? You know, it's so off the beaten track. It's, like, not even considered—going to be considered as anything serious in the glass world or whatever." And I think, well, you know, it's a whole different market, because he's got the whole Hollywood music and movie business, which has not been that affected by the economy as much. So it's a different market for me.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely.

MS. BOTHWELL: And, you know, they're selling the work.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Have your galleries made efforts to get your work into museum collections?

MS. BOTHWELL: The New York gallery's gotten my work into about five museums. The Chicago gallery, no. But they've been good about getting my work shown in museums. But just as far as the museum acquisition thing, I don't know why that is.

MS. RIEDEL: And what do you look for when you say—for a good gallery? Paying you on time.

MS. BOTHWELL: A gallery that has a good reputation. I want to see—I like to look at the artists and see where their careers are at, and how often the shows get reviewed. Whether they put ads in papers. Whether they will pay for ads in magazines. How they are in terms of promoting artists. I like to find out from the artists how quickly they pay. If they discount without telling you, behind your back. Because I had a gallery in Michigan that would sell my pieces for 40 percent, and I'd get this tiny check. And I'd say, "Well, listen, you know, I sold this collector two or three pieces by this other artist, and I threw yours in as a bonus, and I know you're happy to get the sale." But it was never asked for my permission. So I stopped working with them.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: I mean they were nice.

MS. RIEDEL: That's slightly outrageous really.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. So at least, you know, worked it out ahead of time that I need to know that the work's not going to be discounted more than 10 percent. That you and I will split that 10 percent. And if you give them a discount above that, that comes out of your side. And, you know, and I'm fine with that.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. And were these lessons that were hard learned? Or did you—

MS. BOTHWELL: I think so. It's like dating. [Ms. Riedel laughs.] You know what I mean? Like at the beginning when you first date, you don't really know what you should ask for for yourself? And then after a while, you're just so sick of the bullshit. It's like, this is what I'll put up with and this is what I won't. And if you're not going to go along with it, than I don't want to waste my time.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MS. BOTHWELL: So you know.

MS. RIEDEL: We talked a little bit about teaching. You said you haven't done much teaching because primarily you've got three small children right now. But it's something you might be interested in doing in the future with one residency here and there?

MS. BOTHWELL: I love when I'm asked to go to speak to schools and be around the young kids and see their work and talk to them. And it's inspiring.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. What do you try to convey to them? Do you develop sort of a—I heard the talk at Oakland, which was really fun. Is that fairly—is that a good example of what you try to convey when you're giving a lecture?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think pretty much, just because I want to get the message across that you don't have to just follow the rules that you're given. And I don't, you know, because I didn't— The schools where I'm asked to speak, it's usually now glass departments or clay departments or craft. And I didn't go to school for that. So I don't really know what they're taught, because I had a fine art background. But there were so many limiting things I was told. So I just really try to get the message across that you have to follow your heart, and you have to do what you want because this is your life. And you know. What's the point if you're not going to be happy?

MS. RIEDEL: And that actually, I think, leads nicely into a question about what differences or similarities

you see between an artist that's learned his art or craft in a university and one that's learned outside of a university? You've done both. You went to school for fine arts, but you're really primarily self-taught in clay and mostly in glass as well. So do you see advantages or disadvantages one way or the other?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think one advantage to going to art school, especially for, like, a craft medium, is that any art form that's craft-based, there's so much technique involved. So if you can learn that technique, then you're just overcoming a huge hurdle from the very beginning. And then it's also nice just in terms of mentoring and connections. And you know, usually the teachers are showing somewhere, and, you know, you're instantly part of an art community, or you can be, you have that choice, you know. So that's the advantage, I think. And I think the disadvantage is that you're going to be taught other people's belief systems: what you can do and what you can't do. And I think one advantage of being self-taught is that there's no one telling you, "Oh, you can't build something like that out of clay; that won't survive. Or you can't do that with glass; no," you know. And when I first took my work to Heller Gallery in New York, I had done these dog sculptures that I had gone to this store in New York called Plastics, down near um—And so I got all these fake plastic tools, and I glued them all over the surface. They said, "So what is that on the surface of these pieces?" I said, "Oh, that's plastic." And all the people working there went, "[gasp]" [They laugh.] So you're not told what you can't do if you're just doing your own thing." But you know, that can limit you too.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: Because I think my work would probably sell better and get more press if it fit more in with what's expected of my field. You know.

MS. RIEDEL: And you straddle fields.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: I mean you straddle the clay and the glass fields, too.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: So that's got to add a little bit more of a complication.

MS. BOTHWELL: So I think that makes it a little bit harder in terms of making a living. I mean, I'm so lucky that people like the work. And I think that people that like the work have a quirky sense, because sometimes some people that buy my work are not glass collectors.

MS. RIEDEL: I would think.

MS. BOTHWELL: So I try to kind of push that part of myself, because that's the part that really is the most satisfying to me anyway. But I hope that the work can have enough appeal, to, you know, so that the people that primarily shop at my galleries will find my work of interest too, even though—. I mean, I think that's the only reason why my galleries like my work is because it's not exactly like everything else. It's a little different.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: Because it's certainly not—they're not, they haven't chosen my work because of how well made it is, because it's not. You know. Because, like, you can see all the flaws and imperfections and all this glaring.

MS. RIEDEL: But that's part of it.

MS. BOTHWELL: I think that's part of it. So, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: And it suits the content of the work.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So have you done any work at all other than the scholarship with Pilchuck, have you done anything with Pilchuck or Penland's [Penland School of Crafts], none of that at this point?

MS. BOTHWELL: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Perhaps in the future.

MS. BOTHWELL: That would be great, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: How have you seen the market for your work in particular, craft in general, change over the past ten or 15 years. Have you noticed anything in particular?

MS. BOTHWELL: Well, when I was a clay artist, it seems like there was a big market for my work in the mid-1990s. And then all of a sudden it just dried up. And the galleries all started closing and going out of business. And suddenly nobody was buying the work. And maybe because glass is so beautiful, there is a market for glass. So I don't know why, but I've been able to do much better in terms of glass. And I think that glass has picked up a momentum. It seems like it's taken more and more seriously over the last ten years just in terms of magazine articles and, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MS. BOTHWELL: It seems like it. It seems like it. I still don't really—I'm so out of the loop that I don't know for sure. And when I do see other artists, you know, it seems that clay artists have been having a harder time over the last few years than glass artists, you know. And some of my glass artist friends, too, had a real hard time, because their work became so successful and their pieces were going for 30, 40 thousand dollars. And then suddenly that kind of work isn't selling as much. I think the economy has had an effect. And everyone keeps saying it's getting better, and I hope that's true. I've pretty much held steady. I think the work has sold about a third less over the last year, which has been hard for me. But it's still selling, which is great. So grateful.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And that's again with Heller and Habitat and Obsolete.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. I've just started selling—I've just started showing with Obsolete, in like the last couple of months. But he sold two pieces, so that's nice.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, yes. That's great. Is there a community that's been important to your development as an artist?

MS. BOTHWELL: It's really neat, because even though I am so isolated out here, I feel like I am part of the community. I feel like, you know, with these peers that I have that are artists that are, you know, kind of my age and they're all over the country, some of them—I've never met, but we keep in touch by email and Facebook and that sort of thing. And I feel like they're my friends. And when I hear about one of them having won a big grant or having a museum show or an acquisition, instead of being jealous, I'm like "Yahoo, good for them! That's my buddy." You know, it makes me feel like I'm part of something. I feel like I'm connected. And if I have a question or problem technically, or something's going wrong career-wise, I can write to one of my friends and say, "You know, boy! Isn't it such a pain in the neck [Telephone rings.] to have all these scheduled and not be able to take a breather."

[Audio Break.]

MS. RIEDEL: So you're talking about the community in touch via email.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, emailing and

MS. RIEDEL: Anybody in particular you'd like to mention?

MS. BOTHWELL: Well, the glass artist Robin Grebe. She's been a great support for me just technically. And also she's a mother. So when I first met her, I had no idea how she made her work. And I wrote her a little email, and we became friends that way. She's given me parenting advice because her daughter's about five years older. And has a daughter with a similar temperament to my older daughter. So that's been really great. And we show in the same galleries. And that's been nice. And then my friend Irene Olivieri and now Anne Siems. And Tim Tate in Washington, D.C.

MS. RIEDEL: So it sounds like there's a generous exchange of information and technique.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. And Sybille Peretti. She's like a new friend. But it's so much fun. It feels so good to love somebody's work and then get to be able to be friends with them. And find out that when you get to know them, that you really like them as a person, too.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: It's just such a great feeling.

MS. RIEDEL: Not always the case.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. [They laugh.] That's true.

MS. RIEDEL: It works when it works.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. I would feel really cut off living out here without a computer.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. And by the time you moved here, there was already the Internet. And that was all

MS. BOTHWELL: I didn't have it.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: I didn't have it, and we couldn't afford long-distance calls, so I wrote letters. But people don't write back. [They laugh.] I wrote a lot of letters, and I'd get like a postcard: Loved your letter! Love, So and so. Oh, okay.

MS. RIEDEL: So one of the questions is how technology has or has not affected your work. But it seems like one of the main things it may have done is put you in touch with a community of artists—

MS. BOTHWELL: That's a really good point.

MS. RIEDEL: —that are important.

MS. BOTHWELL: And also technology for glass-casting.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: Because before the computerized kilns, you couldn't really cast huge pieces, because there was no way to program those, you know, slow incremental—

MS. RIEDEL: [Inaudible]?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. So I think that's why you don't really hear too much about cast glass before the 1960s. I don't think there was very much.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: So I couldn't do this work without that.

MS. RIEDEL: The computerized kiln.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Have you had much involvement with national craft groups, NCECA [National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts] or GAS [Glass Art Society] or anything like that?

MS. BOTHWELL: Not too much. I mean, occasionally someone will ask me to be in a show that they're doing with NCECA. But not too much.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. It sounds like right now you have to focus on the work and the children.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. You know, the kids get much less energy than I would like to give them. And art gets so much less energy, too. And it's just—I just have to tell myself, like my husband was saying, "Oh, every day there's so little time to do the work." And I said, "You know, a better way to look at it is just to think, I get done what I need to." Because you can make yourself absolutely crazy with saying I don't have enough time, because then that's all I focus on. But I don't have enough time, I don't have enough time, and the pieces take forever. But I tell myself every day, "I will get everything done that I need to, I always make my deadlines, I always am able to fulfill my obligations and my commitments. And I always get the work done, you know. And I get to do all the pieces that I'm really inspired by." Then that keeps me calm. Because when I panic about not having any time, it just seems to make there be less time.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: So sometimes when I panic, I always say, "That's okay, because even if I only have an hour for it, today I'm going to get so much more done in that hour." And that's just where I am right now. So it's how it has to be.

MS. RIEDEL: And it looks like you're getting, from the works in the studio, it looks like there's a lot going on.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. I was going to ask about writers that have been significant in American craft or American art, art in general, to you. Anyone in particular? You mentioned, I think—

MS. BOTHWELL: —oh, James Yu. I mean, people that have written about me—

MS. RIEDEL: Or in general. Anybody whose writing has been informative or inspirational or seminal.

MS. BOTHWELL: The book *The Artist's Spirit* [*The Art Spirit*. Basic Books, 1984] by Robert Henri, when I was in high school. When I read that book, I just thought, "I want to be an artist. I can do that." And there are certain books that you read or memoirs, the things that you read and suddenly it makes the world accessible in a way.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. And that book did that?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. And Annie Lamott, who lives in San Francisco, she wrote a book called *Operating Instructions* [*A Journal of My Son's First Year*. Pantheon, 1993]. And I read that and I thought, "I could have—I think I could have a child."

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: I think, if she can do it, I certainly can. [They laugh.] But that was very influential, you know. That sort of thing. So that's not probably what you meant.

MS. RIEDEL: No—but it's meant to be an open-ended question. So you can answer it however makes sense for you.

MS. BOTHWELL: Mm-hmm.

MS. RIEDEL: And we were talking about periodicals, too, specific to the medium, *American Craft*, glass periodicals, glass quarterlies, *American Ceramics*.

MS. BOTHWELL: They're all wonderful magazines. Are there any that I feel inspire me a lot? I get panicky when my subscriptions run out. I think—I don't relate to a lot of glasswork. And I don't even relate to a lot of craftwork. I mean, I read the magazines, and I do subscribe to them. But more just as a sense to see what's going on, to see if any of my friends are being written about, or, you know, that kind of thing. But it's not so much for inspiration really as much.

MS. RIEDEL: You mentioned that there were other publications perhaps about outsider art?

MS. BOTHWELL: Lowbrow art. I like *Hi-Fructose Magazine*. And *Blab*, when *Blab* comes out once a year, I like that. And *Juxtapose*. [Laughs.] I don't know if they'd be considered serious art magazines, but—

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, I think some would say "absolutely." So, you know, it just depends.

MS. BOTHWELL: I'd be happy if they wrote about my work.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: I like reading *New Yorker*.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah.

MS. BOTHWELL: When I get a chance to. There's too much pressure when I subscribe to it, because it comes every week.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: And it's just too much read, and I got panicky. But there's someone at my gym that drops off copies. And then I can read them as I—I like reading the art reviews and the articles about the artists.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, they do a nice job, I think. They have some really good profiles, yes. Are there qualities to your working environment that are really important? You've got a lot of equipment out there.

MS. BOTHWELL: I have a lot of equipment.

MS. RIEDEL: And so you need a fair amount of space.

MS. BOTHWELL: And I need to live in a place that's kind of a redneck countryside where there's no regulations. So I can burn my work without getting tickets.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: I mean, every time I think about moving somewhere, I think, "Where would I pit-fire?" That would be a really big problem for me. And also I get so much—I have so much used investment material. When I break the molds off, I can dump them in the woods, and it's just like clean landfill. But where could I— You know my friends that live in cities, they have to pack up their old used mold-making material and put it into big gigantic 25-pound empty dog food bags. And then take it to the dump.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow.

MS. BOTHWELL: Because how else are they going to get rid of it? You know.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: So that's not a problem that I have to deal with. I'm lucky I've got so much space out here. That's great. And I like a lot of light, and I like a lot of solitude. I can't really work with people around me too much.

MS. RIEDEL: And there is a lot of machinery; you work both inside and outside. There's a fair amount of ventilation there.

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, yes, you have to have a lot of ventilation. I've got about seven different kinds of respirators [laughs]: I have respirators for the glues, respirators for my mold-making materials; I have several different. Then I have respirators with glass visors so that I don't breathe in the dust when I'm grinding the glass outside or blind myself with a shard of glass flying up. So I have a lot of safety equipment.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And it's a big space, and there are very compartmentalized areas where different processes happen. So it seems like you really—you've got that outdoor pit-firing kiln. You've got the outdoor area where you sandblast.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Have you done any commissions, and what are your thoughts about them?

MS. BOTHWELL: I get a little defensive when I talk about commissions, because I just haven't had great experiences with them. I think because—

MS. RIEDEL: You're in good company. [Laughs.]

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, is that true?

MS. RIEDEL: I don't think you have any reason for defensiveness, yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: It's just, I think when somebody wants a commission, they want a copy of a piece I've already done. And by the time I've done a piece, it's sometimes a year—once it's exhibited—it's sometimes a year after the original idea that I've been inspired by, and I've moved on.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: So the gallery calls and says, "Listen, you know, we have this client that loved this piece. Could you do something like that?" Then I'm doing it for them, and I'm not doing it for myself. So it's like I'm copying, I'm pretending to be inspired. And I'm pretending to be inspired because I want to get the money. And then generally, I think because my heart's not in it, no matter how hard I try, they tend not to like the pieces. So it just hasn't— You know, my gallery in Chicago hesitates to ask me.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: And I had one recently, which turned out fine. I just couldn't turn this couple down. I think that they'd had a lot of infertility—I can't remember. It's either that the woman had ovarian cancer and was told she was going to die, and then she was cured miraculously and she had a baby. And she was so happy. They wanted to celebrate the baby with one of my pieces. So how could I turn that down?

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: So I did this piece. But then afterward they kept thinking that they saw cracks in it. And so I kept getting, you know, these emails from the gallery, like, "I'm sorry, but here's the photograph of it." And it's just that when I used this one yellow glass when it melts into the clear glass, there's always a divide in the glass that from certain angles can look like a crack. And I had to explain that. And I can't remember. There was some big problem that ended up being a big pain in the neck. I think it shipped out, and somehow it broke. I think Robert wanted to put it in a slightly smaller box to save money, and it wasn't enough packing. And so the piece broke. And so then I had to—even though they were paying to get the piece out there, because it broke, I had to cover that expense. But then since I had already billed it to them and the gallery said, "Oh, Christina will cover it," it wasn't quite communicated back to me. So FedEx started going after them and sending letters from the business.

So the gallery was saying, you know, "Christina, you know these are very good clients. And we don't want to alienate them. And yet FedEx keeps harassing them. And I don't know what to do." So there was a lot of, like, tracking numbers and trying to call and get all that taken care of. And then after that they thought they saw additional breakage or cracking. And the part that had broken was the clay, and I just recreated the whole thing; I didn't even attempt to fix it. So after that I said, "I really don't care for—please, please don't give me any more commissions." [Laughs.] But before that I did commissions, and people didn't like them. So the sale never went through anyway. So it just isn't worth it for me. I don't get more money for them. So I'd rather just do pieces I'm inspired by and have them sell.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. It sounds like the inspiration is really the operational thing there. If it's not authentically there, then, yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. Sometimes I guess if I'm very desperate for money and the couple—or the people—commissioning me are such good collectors or so interesting or I really want to be in the collection, I would do it, you know. But it's always kind of burdensome.

MS. RIEDEL: So not something that you care to repeat if you have the choice.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, unless it was, like, a commission from a museum or something. [Laughs.] But then the incentive would be different, so.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Let's talk in the little bit of time we have left today about the pieces so far in the earlier stages of your work that you feel have been really significant. That have been pivotal pieces that have either steered the work in a new direction or been the beginning of a significant new series. You were mentioning the hoop skirts.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, I did this one piece called *Dreams of Flying*, and it's a woman, the skirt's up in the air, and she's holding on a swing, and there's a baby in the swing. I think it's on the cover of that old catalog that I did. Yes, that one.

MS. RIEDEL: And what's this one called?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think it was called *Dreams of Flying*.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: And I had actually had a dream, sort of like a dream where I was watching—I don't know, it sounds crazy—but it was like the transmigration of souls, souls coming in and souls leaving. And it was like seeing this whole cycle.

MS. RIEDEL: You have really an extraordinary dream life.

MS. BOTHWELL: And it made a really big impression on me, and I did that piece. But that was, like, one of those pieces where I really allowed myself to kind of recreate a feeling from a dream where I might have felt hesitant or protective to do so before. And that piece was well received. And it felt so good to do it. And I think that that theme's come up again or similar, you know, direction in later, more recent work.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. In what recent work? Because I'm trying to think of—

MS. BOTHWELL: Well, not so much as just bringing soul in, I'm always trying to portray the soul in the recent pieces by showing figures under the surface or having like these inset, these environments going on inside a person's head or hair or bodies or whatever. So I think that that pretty much started from that piece, that kind of direction.

MS. RIEDEL: That's an interesting comment, too, because I've thought about that in relation to your work: the body as the environment.

MS. BOTHWELL: Mm-hmm.

MS. RIEDEL: And that seems to be something that you have really developed over time.

MS. BOTHWELL: And I really want to push it more and more.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Would you talk a little bit about how that has developed and where you're interested in taking it?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think that it might have come from when I got pregnant with Sophie, because we had gone through in vitro. You know, we had to go through high-tech, scientific measures to get pregnant. And I had three miscarriages. And the last time, after the last one, the hospital we were with said, "We can't take you anymore. This isn't going to work. You're not going to get pregnant. We don't want to take your money." So we found another place to go through in vitro for the last time. And when they put the embryos back into me, they said, "Just rest here, and we'll come back in a couple of hours." And as I was lying there in the bed, I felt this bolt energy go whooo right into me. And it was not me. But it was similar in feeling to being on an elevator that drops really fast. And that had never happened before. And I thought, "I'm pregnant." And my husband came back into the room. And I said, "This time I'm not going to have a miscarriage. It's going to work." And he said, "Oh, honey. I hope so.". So you could see he just thought she's off her loop. [Interviewer laughs.] But it felt was like it was proof of life before life. You know what I mean? I felt like that was Sophie's soul putting a claim on my body.

MS. RIEDEL: That's extraordinary!

MS. BOTHWELL: And so, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: So that's the sense of this energy moving into the body.

MS. BOTHWELL: I think so. Yes, the whole idea of us. And also when you go through in vitro, you see your children under the microscope as these little cells, these little blastocyst cells, you know. And whether there are just a couple like eight-celled organisms or four. And they become whole people from that. So it's just, like, such an amazing thing to see that. And it makes you really think. Then with our twins, our twins were frozen embryos. And we weren't planning on having any more children, because Sophie had died when she was born even though she was later revived. It was just such a scary thing. Because I'd always had this fear if I had a baby I would die or she would die, and we came so close. If we hadn't been in the hospital when it happened, we both would have died. And so I didn't really want to go through that again. But then I had this dream where I was lost. I think I said that when I spoke at the lecture. I had this dream, and it became a lucid dream. You ever have those, where you suddenly become aware that you're dreaming, and so you're awake within the dream?

MS. RIEDEL: I don't think so.

MS. BOTHWELL: Well, in the dream I was bicycling, and I knew I was close to home, but I couldn't get my orientation. And it started snowing, and I thought, "I've got to get directions because I'm lost." And so there was a little church. And so I parked my bike, and I went into the church. And it was this big open room, and there was a man standing there with very clear, blue eyes. And I said, "I'm so lost." And he said, "You're actually going in the right direction." And he pulled out this hologram, and he said, "This is your physical form, and these are your weaknesses. You lungs are your weakest, you know, system in your body. These are the things that you fear. These are your strengths, and you're going to be giving birth in a year." And I said, "But I'm 44." And then I thought, "Oh, my God! I'm dreaming." I thought, "I'm having this dream, and I'm standing there talking to you," and I woke up. And I said, "Robert, I've just had this dream." And he went, "Oh, God!" But we had these frozen embryos. And we were going to go—and I didn't want to do anything with them. And the doctor said, "You only have a couple. They're probably not going to work. Most people that have frozen embryos are 25 years old, and these are from when you were 40. And they're probably not viable. Most of the time when you defrost an embryo, there's only a 30 percent chance it will survive the thaw, and no chance it will implant or even become a viable embryo. Very unlikely unless you had five or ten of them."

So we started looking into adoption. But overseas adoptions are like \$30,000. And after we were doing that for a couple of months and looking into all that, Robert said, "Well, maybe we should just see about those frozen embryos." And so we called the doctor, and she said, "Are you crazy?" And she said, "It's probably not going to work, and you're going to have to take tons of drugs because you're 44." And I thought, "Good. It's probably not going to work, because I don't really want it to work." But I had this dream. So I feel like there's a reason for the dream. So even if it was just a fantasy and it's just some part of me, my own unconscious, there must be another part of me that really wants to have a child or whatever. And maybe there's a child that's meant to be in our lives in order for me to have this child. I took the dream seriously, because I don't have dreams like that that often. But when I do, they are kind of life-changing. You can't ignore them. And so both embryos defrosted. And she said, "Want to give it a try?" And I said, "Yes." Because I'd taken all these drugs and

kind of wanted to. But before I went to try it, it was like, I went out for a walk in the woods, and the air was so perfect. It felt like a flying dream. And I thought, "It doesn't matter if it works, because my whole life is pregnant." And I just felt so wonderful. It felt like either way I had no attachment to the outcome. But it did work, and I became pregnant with twins at 44. And it was such a strange feeling to be lying on bed rest and having gained 70 pounds, not knowing if I was going to give birth to vegetables because of my advanced maternal years. And just thinking, my whole reality is based on this dream I had. It's crazy, but that started—that really informed my work after that. Like, I thought, "I don't know if I'm going to have children that are going to be in special needs." I mean, I was still traumatized after Sophie's birth.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MS. BOTHWELL: And I was thinking, "This is crazy, and I don't know if I'm even going to be able to do my art again or anything. But this is where I'm going." You know, it's like heading into a big wave. You just have to kind of go with it. But having children, being pregnant, especially with twins, it's like having a condominium with lodgers. [Ms. Riedel laughs.] You know what I mean? Like they're kicking all the time. You feel it. You know, they're always moving around. You feel so unwell, especially with twins. So it was like this whole idea, like my body—not just being a vessel—but my body is like an apartment building for all these tenants. [They laugh.] You know?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Like I just couldn't go through that experience and have it not affect my work, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: The work, especially after that story, it's so helpful. It's very insightful.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. And it just seemed like, because of that dream, it sort of shattered my sense of reality, because I know that most people don't live like that. Most people don't have a dream and then suddenly their whole life is changed because of it. And then when I was about six weeks' pregnant, I had another dream, because I was so scared out of my mind that I was going to have children that I wasn't going to be equipped to take care of. I was just thinking, "Oh my God, I'm already so old. I have this one child already. Suppose I have two children with cerebral palsy that I can't take care of." And it could easily happen. I mean, I hear the statistics. We talked to the genetic counselors. You know, it's really scary.

But then I had another lucid dream, where I woke up and I saw myself lying in the bed with Sophie. And I looked out the window and there was ocean outside of my window, and you see there's no ocean. And there was this elderly couple standing on the beach. And I went down to them, and they said, "Do you know who we are?" And I said, "I think you're going to be my twins." And they were an elderly couple. And they talked. I said, "So you're coming in as twins into my life, like, this is so significant. Is there a reason for your being twins?" And they said, "This is the only way we could come through." And I said, "Well, have I known you before?" And he said, "We've known each other forever." And she said, "Do you remember?" And I said, "No, no. I'm really bad at that kind of thing." [They laugh.] And then he said, "The reason why we've come, is we need to tell you that you have to have some courage, because it'll benefit all of us." And I said, "I can't believe I'm talking to you. And you're grown, and this is so crazy." But then after I had that dream, it was sort of like nothing was ever going to be the same for me, because my whole sense of the linear world being scientific and measured, those things didn't apply to me anymore.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: Because my whole reality was following something else. So it really did change my work, having children.

MS. RIEDEL: And you'd mentioned that in passing before. But this is really insightful as to why the work looks like it does these days.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. I'm still processing all that. So I wake up, and I think "Wait. So I'm how old? and I have how many children? Like what happened?" [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: And this was four years ago the twins were born. Violet and—

MS. BOTHWELL: And Ellis, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Ellis, yes. And a boy and a girl.

MS. BOTHWELL: Mm-hmm. You know, I've always been obsessed with twins. For years and years I was doing sculptures of women pregnant with twins five years before they were born. Robert said it was just too much creative visualization. [They laugh.] Or maybe there's some part of us that senses directions that our lives

are going to go to. And that that art was helping me psychologically prepare. Because I would've never in a million years thought I'd have more than one child.

MS. RIEDEL: And it's interesting how that in your work, the bodies have really over the past few years transformed into landscapes—or transformed into environments is a better word for it—for lives that are unfolding or stories that are unfolding underground or inside [inaudible].

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. And that really is what the work is all about now.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. I want to keep pushing at it.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Great.

[END DISC 3.]

MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Christina Bothwell at the artist's home in Stillwater, Pennsylvania, on June eighteenth, 2010, for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, disc number three. We're going to start this morning with a couple of corrections from yesterday. You wanted to correct the book that had been so inspirational.

MS. BOTHWELL: In terms of getting my career off the ground because I didn't have a single idea as to start, and the book was called *How to Survive and Prosper As an Artist Without Losing Your Soul*. And it's by a woman named Carol Michaels. And she has since, in the last 20 years, written—organized a network called Artist Help Network. So she still can—you know, you can still consult with her and get advice. I just think that's a great organization, because I was not taught the business of self-promotion when I got out of art school. And I don't think many people are.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: You really have no idea how to start or how to find—identify your market and target it, and how to approach dealers if that's the way you're going to go about it. And it's just nice to kind of have someone that can give you that information and step by step how-to.

MS. RIEDEL: Completely different from usually what you learn in art school or even in university, is the business of [inaudible].

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And so this was the woman that you had the consultation with as well, this Carol Michaels.

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

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: And she was great. She was the one that told me to get a brochure. And then after that, I would have phone follow-ups and say, well, this hasn't worked and this has worked. And I think she was the one that suggested I look through *Art in America* and find—and just follow the artists whose work I admired. And then pay attention to the galleries where they showed and become familiar with those galleries.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: And that was a helpful suggestion.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: Because when you're starting out, you're not necessarily approached by galleries.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: You have to do the approaching.

MS. RIEDEL: Good. Well, we've got that corrected now. Anything else? I've got a question then.

MS. BOTHWELL: Okay.

MS. RIEDEL: I was thinking, I was reflecting after our conversation yesterday regarding the impact and

the effect of dreams on your work. And I was wondering if, as a child, given that your father was an analyst?

MS. BOTHWELL: A psychologist, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Psychologist. If there was much attention paid to dreams when you were a child? Were they discussed at home?

MS. BOTHWELL: Not really. I mean, I was always accused of having an overly active imagination and of exaggerating.

MS. RIEDEL: Uh-huh!

MS. BOTHWELL: But my dreams were so vivid that I paid attention to them.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. But there was nobody sat around the dinner table talking about dreams or anything?

MS. BOTHWELL: No, no. It was dismissed. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Really! Interesting. Okay. I also wanted to touch on your life out here, because it seems that you're so—how many acres do you have?

MS. BOTHWELL: Forty-three.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. You've got 43 acres. You're surrounded by wide open space. And you have quite an animal collection: you've got three dogs, three cats, some geese as far as I can tell. And I wonder if there isn't also a sense of observation of animals and how they interact, how they communicate, that does not also—

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, definitely.

MS. RIEDEL: That influences your work.

MS. BOTHWELL: Definitely influences my work. And yes. It's sort of like part of my community, you know. I take the dogs for a walk every day. And that's my version, really, of going to church—

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: —is by going for walks in the woods. And it's just so special when I get to see a bald eagle or pileated woodpeckers. And, you know, sometimes I'll just have these interactions or encounters with animals that, you know— I mean, when I first became pregnant with the twins before I knew I was pregnant, I went for a walk up in the woods, and I sat down in the middle of the woods to meditate. And when I opened my eyes, two baby deer had come up to me. And I thought, "Oh, my God, I'm having twins." And I went down to the house, and I said, "Robert, we're going to have twins." And he said, "What the hell are you talking about?" And I said, "Two baby deer came right up to me within 15 feet while I was meditating in the woods." And he said, "Honey, that is so unscientific." [They laugh.] But it never had happened before, you know. So I take these things as signs. I know it's not scientific. But it makes me feel so alive, you know, like to see animals and see them interacting, you know. Because it makes me feel like I'm actually in a piece of art.

I took the dogs for a walk a couple of weeks ago, and we walked right by a huge groundhog that had climbed up a tree. And there's a big tree that had fallen over, and it was like a bridge going between two other trees. And it was about 15 feet off the ground. And I was within five feet of him. And he just was completely silent because he didn't want the dogs to see him, I guess. But he and I just made eye contact. And I just felt, "Wow, it's like I'm in a piece of art." And then, you know, like this I'm so close to this animal, and we're having this visual communication, you know? And that kind of moment makes me so happy to be an artist. I think that's what it's all about. That's why I'm making art, so I can try to get that feeling that I had into the work somehow.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you read any of Jane Goodall's books or Dian Fossey? Does that intrigue you at all?

MS. BOTHWELL: I have, I have. I like them. You know who I really like is Clarissa Pinkola Estés.

MS. RIEDEL: I know the name, but I don't know the—

MS. BOTHWELL: I think she's most famous for a book called *Women That [Who. Ed.] Run with the Wolves*: *Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*. Ballantine, 1992]. She's sort of like a Jungian who writes a lot about myths, and how myths come to life; and how we go through different stages in our lives, and correlations between animal kingdom and all that kind of thing. So she writes a lot about that kind of thing, symbolically what that means to people, and you know. I find her things interesting.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Have you read much mythology? Does mythology figure into your work in any way?

MS. BOTHWELL: Not too much. I've read more about the saints.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: And so I have a lot of books about, you know, the saints and miracles that have happened after—I think it's very interesting that when you go to Italy, that you can go into a beautiful cathedral, and there'll be a small glass box. And if a person who is a saint has been a great speaker, his tongue did not decay. And so it's on display in the church. Or a person was a healer, and his hands haven't decayed. And you can still see these mementoes, kind of. I think that's fascinating to me. So that's definitely been something that I've made pieces about and thought about and researched and, you know. It's a little bit more gruesome than reading about myths.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: But it's sort of magical and mythical and kind of like fairytales all at once, too.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly. And I actually thought about that, that grotesqueness and how important juxtaposition is to you in your work. And I think there is something about the juxtaposition between the more grotesque or the more grisly and then the incredibly tender and maternal or childlike images that both show up in the work that give it a range.

MS. BOTHWELL: Because that's so, that's like, that's all what life is. I mean, you know?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: I mean, I have a friend right now who's having a horrible time going through cancer treatments. But I have another friend who's going to have—just found out at 41 that she's pregnant. And she's wanted to have a baby for years. So it's like this is all part of life, the horrible things and the wonderful things. That John Waters, you know the filmmaker, once said—and this is a quote that really impressed me when I heard it when I was in art school, and I kind of adopted it as my own—which is: "Beauty is anything that makes you want to look at it for more than 30 seconds."

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: So it could be a sunset. But it could also be a house burning down or it could be—you know what I mean? Like, if you look at something, if you can just observe things without judgment, beauty can be in everything.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: And that's sort of what art is about, too.

MS. RIEDEL: I think that's very insightful into your work, too. But were you about to say something else?

MS. BOTHWELL: No. But I think that's what I'm constantly grappling with, is how wonderful and beautiful life is, but how there are scary elements, too.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: And it's all part of it. It's part of the unpredictability.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly.

MS. BOTHWELL: You know.

MS. RIEDEL: It makes me think of the actual old sort of Grimm's fairytales, which aren't just sweet children's stories, but they're actually sort of frightening.

MS. BOTHWELL: I used to read fairytales until I was in my twenties. My mom would go to different libraries and get— Well, I guess one of my earliest influences was pop-up books.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm!

MS. BOTHWELL: I was always—and so she would get these fairytale books, [laughs] and she said when I was about 22, she got all these children's books to take out for me, because she liked the art—when she liked the art, she'd see art that she liked in children's books, she'd bring it home for me. And the librarian said, "And

how old is your little girl?" My mom said, "Oh, she's 22." And the librarian said, "Oh." [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: That's funny. Yes, yes, that makes sense. Also thinking about myths and fairytales and that sort of thing, it also makes me think of another artist I was just talking with. He was talking about psychology and looking at art in terms of images. But I think there is sometimes images that come either through dreams or that are incorporated in mythological stories that allow both a deeply personal experience and at the same time a very universal experience.

MS. BOTHWELL: Mm-hmm.

MS. RIEDEL: And I wonder if you think about that specifically at all by going into very deeply personal terrain, it also strikes a universal chord.

MS. BOTHWELL: I think so. I think I do. I think—yes. I think that has. And then sometimes I've had ideas which I think, oh, this is about— A lot of times I'll get an idea, and I won't even think it's a personal idea. And then later, years later, when I look at my work, I'll just think, "Oh, I was going through this at that time. And no wonder I would do a piece like that." You know.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Interesting. So you can approach it from not even being aware that it's that.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. Because I kind of feel like I don't need to be conscious of what imagery or what kind of ideas I have or am attracted to. It's just important just to follow that. And then I think about it later.

MS. RIEDEL: I'm not even thinking in terms of your own personal conscious life, but for example, dreams.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: They're very personal dreams. But then they can tap into something more universal.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, yes. Well, I think that some of my pieces with the spirit leaving the body, I think that resonates with everyone, whether people can look at it like, oh, it's an out-of-body experience or it's a dream or it's part of the death process, which all our bodies are going to die, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: So it's something—that is sort of the universal image, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, I was thinking, I think, too, of certain images that you work with. I was thinking of the hoop skirt. And then I was thinking of the piece we were talking about yesterday where the hoop skirt is inverted, and it's almost like a tornado. It's [inaudible] that book. I can't remember what that piece is called.

MS. BOTHWELL: *Dreams of Flying*.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly. But how these forms—literally you're able to turn forms and ideas almost inside out and just use them in different ways. Either as a hoop skirt or as a tornado or something related to flight. And I think that that, over a period of looking at the body of your work, seeing those forms used over and over again in completely different contexts, gives a real continuity to the work, and also adds other layers of depth to the whole body of work.

MS. BOTHWELL: Hmm. I like that. You said some really interesting things about my work. I mean, I was thinking—I hadn't actually thought of my pieces as the body as landscape.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, really!

MS. BOTHWELL: But I love that. And that's so true. I'm thinking that would be a really good title for a show.

MS. RIEDEL: Actually I wanted to talk to you about that. That leads perfectly into my next question about the new work, because with the new big hair pieces, the big hair becomes literally landscapes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: And I do want to do that more in the body. Just have the body basically be like a shell. Like I would love to have like—have the body, steps descending into the abdomen and see the interior of a doll house or woods. Like have it take over much greater parts of the whole interior, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: And that seems like something you had done very early on.

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

MS. RIEDEL: I'm thinking of one of the very early doll pieces with that sort of Cornell boxlike batting. And then the pieces we were looking at out in the studio yesterday. There's one that you're working on right now, the freestanding piece with the recessed niche in the abdomen area.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, I've always been attracted to that inside and outside at the same time. But I really do want to push it more.

MS. RIEDEL: So let's talk about the big hair pieces, because that seems an example—

MS. BOTHWELL: Okay.

MS. RIEDEL: —of where you really are pushing that more. What was the inspiration to start doing that?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think originally I was just looking at some art history books, and, you know, some of the British, the Marie Antoinette paintings and some of the British portraits of the formal ladies with their hands folded, and they had elaborate hair. And I thought that would be interesting to just do some pieces where you can suggest a person's inner life through the hair, which is sort of an extension of their brain or, you know. Because also I've wanted to get more into the clay parts of my pieces. The glass for so long has been so hard for me to master technically that I focused so much on that and just sort of minimized the presence of clay. And yet I love working with clay. And I was thinking, well, that's a way that I can do that more and kind of figure out how to meld the two mediums together.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: So I'm really interested in doing some, like, actual landscapes. So, like, woods and things like that with pools of water in them, because you can fire glass directly onto the clay and it'll crack in a million ways. But it's so beautiful in the cracking that I'm thinking think I want to push that a little bit more, too.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. To use those cracks.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: In any way, yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, because it's almost sort of like a glaze. But you can— So, you know, sort of [inaudible]. I didn't mean to get so carried away with the whole hair pieces, but I'm thinking that, you know, there's more that can be done with it.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: You know.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, it has great potential. I mean, some of them where they're freestanding figures has one set of sort of connotations. And then there's another one you're working on where it's a figure that's reclining and sleeping, and the hair is spilled out almost like a pool.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. And I have a few of those. I have one that's in the gallery in New York. And then I have one of a couple; I've just done the heads so far, where it'll be a woman sitting on a man's lap, and their hair is kind of conjoined. And so, you know, they have bridges and houses and things that are spilling over into each other's hair and that kind of thing.

MS. RIEDEL: And when did the first one of these begin, this series?

MS. BOTHWELL: I guess about a year ago.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: And then it started out with kind of like fruits and flowers and people and found objects in the hair. And then, since I'm working on this collaboration with the video artist, you know, it might be fun to do something involving one of his videos in the hair, too.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, so let's talk about those now as well, those are brand new as well.

MS. BOTHWELL: Pretty much. Yes, yes. Just the last couple of weeks.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, okay. So Tim Tate.

MS. BOTHWELL: Tim Tate is a Washington artist. You'll probably be interviewing him somewhere down the line. He's about the same age as I am. And he's a glass artist who works with video.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: And a very nice fellow. And he suggested, "Why don't we do a collaboration together?" And I've never done a collaboration with anybody, because I'm so—I really like to work by myself, and I don't like a lot of input in the work. And I thought, "This will be a really good opportunity for me to stretch beyond my comfort zone."

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: Because I didn't know what that meant. I didn't know if I was going to be doing little objects for him to use with his work. But he is so open. He said, "You know, whatever you have in mind." So the first idea I had was, there's a portrait competition every three years, a portrait show at the Portrait Gallery at the National Museum of Art in Washington, D.C. [Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery.] And I thought, because he's pretty well known as a Washington, D.C., artist, he's on the board at the Renwick [Gallery, Smithsonian Institution], and he's shown there and has a number of pieces in their collection and all this, I thought I'd like to do a portrait of him, using one of his videos—a video that he could make that would really kind of conjure up how he feels about himself in some way. Something that would be a metaphor for him. And I could—he's had just unbelievable strange, bizarre, interesting experiences that could really lend themselves to a portrait. And I thought I could do something like that. I didn't know—I'm not, like, a very realistic portrait artist. So anything I did of him would be more metaphor for him, or a symbol for him, it wouldn't be quite so literal.

But he was interested in that idea. But then he wanted to get started on a—he didn't want to wait for three years. He said, "Let's just start with something now." So I thought, "Well, I can maybe do some kind of a—something that I've been, one of these big hairpieces of a reclining girl." And then I sent him some images of the piece in wax unfinished. And he said, "Okay, I have the perfect video for that." And so he sent me the video. And then we've just been talking back and forth about where the piece should go and, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: So would you talk a little bit more about that process, how, did you discuss the video and what the video involved?

MS. BOTHWELL: I said, yes. I said— He said, "Well"— He said to me, "It looks like a girl lying on her side, and she's dreaming." And I said, "Yes, that's true." So he said, "Do you have any ideas?" And I said, "Well, if you're contribution is the video, why don't you just pick something?" And he said, "Well, I'll pick three or four and then you can choose." But then he called me up and he said, "I have the perfect video for you." And it was a video that he did of his little next door neighbor running, wearing a cape, pretending she's flying, running around and around the yard. And he has this way of aging his videos so that they look like they're from the early sixties. Or sometimes he even makes them look like the earliest films, like from the early turn of the century, you know. So that they're very, very old-looking. And so he sent that. And he said, "Just try this. And if you don't like it, I'll send you something else." And I thought, "Well, that's perfect for that piece."

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: And then, he said, you know, well, we could—I said, "Robert saw that piece, and he said, you should do a whole show with him." But the problem with the collaboration is that you make no money. Because if a piece sells for, say, \$10,000, and the gallery gets 50 percent, that gallery gets \$5,000 and the artist gets \$5,000. If you're doing collaboration, you each get 2500. So it's more just for the fun of working with someone else and seeing where the work can go.

MS. RIEDEL: What's this piece called? Is it *Dreams of Flying*?

MS. BOTHWELL: His little video was called *Dreams of Flying*. I don't have a title for the piece yet. You know.

MS. RIEDEL: And technically this is very different for you, too, because you had to leave a space for the

video, which isn't that unusual because often you'll have a niche in the abdomen, or you will occasionally. But there's a whole lot of equipment that needs to be—

MS. BOTHWELL: And I have to hide that. So I have to make some kind of a something— And I talked about it with him. He said, "You have to do something, a piece that hangs on the wall, like a tree or something to hide this." And I said, "Well, it may be another figure." And he said, "Well, I think that that would take too much away from the focus." So now I'm thinking of having her on like a hill. And he sculpts these beautiful little cast-glass flowers and things like that. So I said, "Maybe you could send me a whole bunch of those, so it's not just that the whole sculptural part is mine. It makes it more of a collaboration." So he's going to— And he said, "Well, what colors and what sizes?" And he can work so quickly.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MS. BOTHWELL: He said, "I'll send you some right away. I'll just fire them." He runs a glass school out in Washington, D.C.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah, okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: So he can, you know. So suddenly I have the idea. He's open. He said, "Whatever you want. If you want to do more pieces, you know, just tell me." So he's very— His last collaboration was with Marc Petrovic, and it just was acquired by the New York Museum of Arts and Crafts [Museum of Arts and Design].

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: It was in a big show there and written about in the *New York Times*. And he's doing another collaboration with him. So I think that—he likes working with other artists.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, it sounds like it.

MS. BOTHWELL: He's a very generous person.

MS. RIEDEL: And so that's now in the collection of the Museum of Art and Design?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Okay. And how has the collaboration process been for you? Is it something that you're interested in pursuing more? Or is it [inaudible]?

MS. BOTHWELL: I am. I am. And I don't know how this piece is going to come out. And I have a little anxiety that I hope he won't be disappointed. I hope that my contribution will honor his video. And I work so slowly. I only make maybe 12 or 15 pieces a year, and he makes 40 or 50. So, you know, and he doesn't have children. So he'll Facebook me and say, "So what's going on with the piece?" And I know he thinks I'm a slacker. And I'll have to write back and say, "I actually haven't even given it any thought, because I've had these other things going on. And I'm finishing up these other pieces." So, you know, if he can be comfortable with my process taking longer than his, you know. Just sometimes my heads, just sometimes the heads take a few weeks to make, so that they don't look deformed. [Laughs]

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: You know.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: So I can't just whip something out. It's just every single aspect of my pieces is so labor-intensive.

MS. RIEDEL: And do they really evolve in the process? Or do you have a pretty clear idea of exactly what it's going to be when you sit down to sculpt the head?

MS. BOTHWELL: No, I don't usually. Sometimes they just, they kind of turn into whatever they're going to turn into. Because it's hard for me. It's like—Robert doesn't like me to say this because he feels like I'm putting myself down—but I'm not, like, an academically gifted. I have training, academic training. But it doesn't come naturally to me the way it does to some sculptors. You know, like, you can look at some sculptors that—I really am like an outsider artist, you know what I mean? And I heard once that Mozart, when he would write one of his pieces of music, he would do it in 15 or 20 minutes, and he had no need to revise. Whereas Beethoven's process was completely different, where he would labor and labor and work and revise and correct. So both processes are good. But I'm definitely more the latter.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right. And do you find that you'll work on something and then come back the next day and need to change that?

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So constantly revising as you go.

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. So I work on about 11 or 12 pieces at a time.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. That's interesting.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So they're all— And you keep all the clay wet just for as long as you need to?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. And then once it's fired, then that's just the way it is. I can pit-fire over and over again until I get just the right—I mean, even the coloration from the pit-firing. I work—I pit-fire and I'll pit-fire it until I get it as black as I can. And then I'll use a blowtorch and then lighten it as much as I can. And then once I get it to that stage, then I'll work on it with oil paints and pencil on chalk and pastel and, you know. [Inaudible.]

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. I didn't realize that. I didn't realize they were that—

MS. BOTHWELL: I really manipulate them a lot.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. That's really insightful. Another thing I wanted to touch on briefly is the concept of scale and how specifically you think about that in the work. Because it seems there is a—you play with that quite a bit in the figures, in some pieces more than others. But is that something you have given much conscious thought to? Or is it just—

MS. BOTHWELL: I do. Well, some of it is dictated by the limitations of my technical capacity. I mean, until recently I haven't had a big upright kiln. I have a bigger kiln now, so that's kind of opened things up for me in terms of what I can do. But I don't have a hoist. The technical aspect of things has been a challenge for me. So I'm kind of limited by how heavy the molds can be. I can't really do anything more than a couple hundred pounds because then Robert and my neighbor Steve can't pick the pieces up so that we can steam the wax and then let— You know what I mean? Like it gets too heavy. I'm sure if I could get some kind of a hoist situation where I could figure that out—I just haven't done that. But that's a limitation. And also it seems that when I get beyond seven inches of thickness for the glass, I always have cracking.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: I just can't seem to get around that. And I think it might be because the cavities in the pieces can be a problem. Sometimes you can get cracks just because of the thin tubes of glass that I have so that air bubbles can escape. Sometimes that can lead to cracking because those are thinner than the rest. And any kind of thickness or thinness, any variation, can cause cracking. So if I can keep the pieces five inches or less, I'm pretty much trouble-free. But sometimes the pieces just have to be bigger. They really just turn out that way. And so, you know, I'm doing these big octopus people now, and that's just kind of an experiment, [laughs] you know, because I haven't made anything this large before. And it'd be really, really fun to do like a big reclining octopus woman or couple, octopus people embracing, or mothers hold babies and you know. Huge. I'd love to do big, huge things where you really feel the energy of the piece when you're standing in front of it. But again, it's that whole conflict with my technical limitations.

MS. RIEDEL: So it's something that could perhaps be done in sections? And [inaudible].

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, yes. And it does. But then there's the gluing together.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: And you know, a technician can do that in such a way where it's seamless. But with me it's not. So you would see it. So then I have to kind of make the sections be deliberate, make sure that there's some reason visually for the sections. And, you know, something has to do with the content of the piece, and all that kind of thing. And sometimes also the galleries will call up and say, you know, "Small. We went to sell small, small." So, you know, sometimes just for the whole commercial aspect, I'll do smaller pieces, too. And they sometimes take just as long as the big ones.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Yes. But at some point in the future if there's the opportunity for a residency or, say, Pilchuck where you can really work with somebody who could help you [inaudible] how to work.

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, that would be fun. That would be really great.

MS. RIEDEL: That scale, yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: That would be great.

MS. RIEDEL: Because it seems like they are getting larger. I mean, the octopus piece is, what, four feet tall?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, about four feet tall.

MS. RIEDEL: And just all of those random—well, all those independent tentacles.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: It seems like a technical feat, too.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, and it's fun to push myself, to see, you know, what I can accomplish. It feels great, because it's also new territory for me, so it's challenging.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: So I enjoy that. But then it's heartbreaking when the whole piece just fails, you know, because so much time goes into them. And, you know, my electricity bills are like \$400 a month, you know [laughs].

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: And the glass is expensive, so. Kind of have to just take every aspect of it into consideration in making pieces.

MS. RIEDEL: I wanted to talk a little bit about other influences. We mentioned quite a few yesterday. But I know that we didn't talk all about the Brothers Quay, and you wanted to mention that.

MS. BOTHWELL: And I love this woman—naturalists. There are a lot of different naturalists whose work I really like.

MS. RIEDEL: And you're thinking now of—

MS. BOTHWELL: Maria Sibylla Merian?

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. And how did you become familiar with her?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think that I had bought a book of botanic illustrations by another artist. I have that book in my studio and, you know, Amazon so kindly suggested that people that had liked this other person might like this one.

MS. RIEDEL: Uh-huh.

MS. BOTHWELL: And I just love poring over that kind of thing, because it's very labor-intensive and beautiful and personal. And timeless. These illustrations were done in the 1600s. But they could be done today.

MS. RIEDEL: And one of the things that I think was very interesting that we were talking about before we started the tape is that there are these incredibly realistic, naturalist drawings that are beautiful. But that she also was a religious woman. And so there is a—she had a sense of reverence for these things.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: And a sense of the divinity—

MS. BOTHWELL: The angelic in the insects, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: The angelic in the caterpillars and the butterflies and in the odd worms and slugs. And I think that's interesting to think about something that—

MS. BOTHWELL: I feel that way, too, because I feel like they're—insects, they're really an ephemeral kind of, you know, they live for such a short amount of time, and they're so beautiful. And they do suggest the spirit, I think. I mean, if you're going to do a piece about the angelic or spirit, I would use insects anytime, or birds.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: Don't you think?

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. And especially when you look at those drawings. They are—she just has an ability to bring out, to really reveal, a side of them and an aspect through in image that shows them in a whole other light. Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: I love looking through old encyclopedias for—I'll just bring a couple in real quick to show you. Just to show you, like old illustrated dictionaries and— [Brief silence.] Here are things that just really, really inspire me as much or more as—

MS. RIEDEL: What's wonderful as you're running out the yellow Post-It notes are flying.

MS. BOTHWELL: No, it's old pieces of paper [inaudible]. I've got an old picture, an old dictionary. I love old medical dictionaries and picture dictionaries. Things that tell you that formaldehyde was a great way to treat menstrual cramps because it's completely inert and harmless.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs] Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: You can find, like, just beautiful images.

MS. RIEDEL: Illustrations of insects.

MS. BOTHWELL: Or, you know, the human body. So this was—I search for these things.

MS. RIEDEL: Great manuscripts, great manuscripts.

MS. BOTHWELL: Have you heard of this?

MS. RIEDEL: No.

MS. BOTHWELL: See, these are really early European encounters with the Americas.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah.

MS. BOTHWELL: Sir Francis Drake. And just beautiful—

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, incredible renderings and mostly—

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, these are sketchbooks reproduced.

MS. RIEDEL: Flora and— These are the sketchbooks from one of the Drake expeditions?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: How interesting.

MS. BOTHWELL: And I just love how they're, like, beautiful, beautiful folk art.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Incredible renderings of animals.

MS. BOTHWELL: Mosquitoes. [They laugh.] So I find that kind of thing really inspiring.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And it's interesting because they look more mythical than of something they actually saw.

MS. BOTHWELL: They're so interpretive.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: Because, you know, the people are not trained artists, I guess. They're just— And you know, this was another thing that I found at a bookstore in New York, more kind of— So this is the kind of thing that really fires me up, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, it's interesting because they're beautiful old renderings of animals. But at the same time they look as much mythical as they can get as well as realistic.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, they're very interpretive and personal.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: Like nothing looks like something that you'd really see.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: You know, so—

MS. RIEDEL: So it's an interpretation, an expressionistic interpretation of.

MS. BOTHWELL: And that kind of thing inspires me because I just think, well, that's the feeling that I want to get in my work, you know, so I keep these around.

MS. RIEDEL: They're also beautifully—they're just beautifully drawn.

MS. BOTHWELL: They're beautifully drawn.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: But they don't look scientifically accurate.

MS. RIEDEL: No.

MS. BOTHWELL: You know what I mean?

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. But at the same time they're not just fantasy creatures either.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. So over the years this is the kind of thing that really has always been an ongoing source of inspiration, even 20 years ago and ten years ago. Whenever I come across anything like this at an auction or a flea market, you know, or a used bookstore, I get very excited about this kind of thing.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. This is an interesting collection of things. What is this one in particular? We'll mention this.

MS. BOTHWELL: I'm not really sure.

MS. RIEDEL: Petro Bras. Hmm. Well, let's see if we can't look it up.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, there must be more. I haven't looked at this in a few years, but Dutch Brazil documents.

MS. RIEDEL: Documents in the Leiden University library from Rio de Janeiro, 1997. So it's a reproduction of something dating from—

MS. BOTHWELL: That's the question. Let's see, dating from 1647. Which is the same time she was working in a different part of the world.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly, exactly.

MS. BOTHWELL: I'm drawn to that time.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: So anyway, these are just some. I don't know when these were done. Curious.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, Drake, that must have been what?

MS. BOTHWELL: End of the 16th century.

MS. RIEDEL: So, yes, you do have an interest in that era, yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: I didn't even realize it.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: But anyway, aren't they beautiful?

MS. RIEDEL: Trees. Yes, they are exquisite.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, they really do have a mythical feeling about it. Because I've never seen anything like that, have you?

MS. RIEDEL: No, no. Yes, with the stag hanging upside down in a tree. An armadillo sort of .

MS. BOTHWELL: Something. [Inaudible.]

MS. RIEDEL: [Inaudible.] Armadillo/crocodile [armadillo slash crocodile].

MS. BOTHWELL: Anyway, so those are some, speaking of sources of inspiration. Oh, and then I'll show you these. I mean, if that's okay.

MS. RIEDEL: We can mention also the names perhaps just so people—

MS. BOTHWELL: All right. These are just the books that my mother used to show me when I was a kid. Where instead of reading me books at night, she'd show me. This is something that absolutely terrified me. A person dying and then the angels and devil fighting over the soul of the person dying.

MS. RIEDEL: Aha! Yes. John McCrady, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot* [1937].

MS. BOTHWELL: But there are just all kinds of paintings in this book. Unfortunately it's got some water damage. But this one had, like, a skeletal cow here, and this terrified me. And then—

MS. RIEDEL: And so the game was to look at the paintings—

MS. BOTHWELL: Just to think of what would happen and what was going on and what were these people doing and, you know. Smell how old it is.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: This one worried me a lot.

MS. RIEDEL: A family fleeing something.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. John Curry. And that one troubled me, too.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. And there's quite a mix of—

MS. BOTHWELL: Styles.

MS. RIEDEL: Styles and human beings with animals. There's a lot of—yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: This is my real first exposure to art. This, and then this book.

MS. RIEDEL: And what's this book called? *Modern American Painting* [by Peyton Boswell Jr. Dodd, Mead, 1940].

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, my mom worked at a bookstore in New York City before I was born.

MS. RIEDEL: Peyton Boswell, editor of the *Art Digest*. So this is 1940.

MS. BOTHWELL: Okay.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: So she worked before she got— When she met my dad, she was working in a bookstore, and she bought these art books for herself when she was going to the Art Students League. So these were my first exposure to art.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, this is interesting. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: So we would just look at these at night and make up stories about them.

MS. RIEDEL: And the images are very much about saints in this stuff.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. You know. So aren't they beautiful?

MS. RIEDEL: They are. They're beautiful etchings and beautiful paintings.

MS. BOTHWELL: When she bought this book, it was a new bookstore, but someone had already in the library stolen a few of these out, I guess, to take home and frame, because there are several blank pages. But this is just a book that was always at home. And we always talked about it and looked at it. And, you know, when I went to art school, I would study these drawings, because some of them are Leonardo da Vinci and Dürer and, you know. This is kind of what I grew up with, this kind of early influence, I guess, right?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, and that's incredibly—

MS. BOTHWELL: This is a [inaudible] like something my three-year-old did.

MS. RIEDEL: And so they're looking at the book now, too.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: That's great.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: But beautifully drawn, absolutely beautifully drawn and very dramatic imagery.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, but there was always a real— My mother always tried to teach me that the most important thing as an artist was to have a good eye. That and draw all the time. So she always got me art supplies and materials. And, you know, drawing was something that was just taken very seriously. Which I don't — Which is great, you know. I was drawing from a model when I was, like, ten years old or nine years old because there'd be nude— I wasn't very good. But that was in the house. So that was what was around.

MS. RIEDEL: And she would just have a model come, and she would have almost a salon or life drawing classes?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. She just had a lot of—

MS. RIEDEL: Did she teach?

MS. BOTHWELL: Well, sort of. She would have a lot of teenagers from this town. This was this religious town that was very—it was during the Vietnam War [inaudible]. So the teenagers, there were a lot of rebellious teenagers that thought my mom was cool. And she was kind of—she never really had a chance to be a hippie. So she would have these drawing classes. And the teenagers would just take turns posing nude and smoke cigarettes and drink beer and draw each other and laugh and walk around nude, and she'd play guitar. And, you know, I'd sit there drawing. And sometimes it'd be a still-life class. And sometimes it would be a nude lady.

MS. RIEDEL: Very unusual childhood.

MS. BOTHWELL: I guess, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, Robert wasn't raised that way.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Well, when you went to other friends' houses, you must have noticed that it was a completely different environment. [Laughs.]

MS. BOTHWELL: Right, right. And in high school my art teacher had a nude model come in one day, and he was fired. That was the end of his job.

MS. RIEDEL: Really!

MS. BOTHWELL: So you know, I had a sense that certain things were acceptable at home, you know, and certain things not so much around anywhere else. So I was aware that my childhood was eccentric, even as a child.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. But extremely open, it seems.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, that's true.

MS. RIEDEL: And that must have been kind of wonderful.

MS. BOTHWELL: That's nice, yes. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: You also mentioned the—oh, did you want to say anything about the Brothers Quay in particular? Or just mention them in passing?

MS. BOTHWELL: They were— Somebody gave me—I think the director of the first gallery I showed with at New York gave me their film the *Street of Crocodiles* [1986]. And I had just never heard of them. I'd never seen anything like that. And I just—it's, like, I couldn't sleep for about four days. [Laughs.] You know, I just wanted to watch that over and over and over. And find all their other films and, you know. So I'm still a fan, you know. And when I hear that they have another film, I go out and buy it on Amazon.

MS. RIEDEL: That was the first one I saw as well.

MS. BOTHWELL: Wasn't that just unbelievable?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes, it was.

MS. BOTHWELL: Just unbelievable. Yes, because talk about dreams and dolls. Like everything I loved is in their work. And just so magnificently done and so just mysterious and suggested. So there are a lot of really interesting animated art films that I find extremely inspiring. But I think they were the best—still are.

MS. RIEDEL: It's interesting because just listening to you describe that film, makes me think of a quote that James Yu had written about your work, which I jotted down because I thought it was so succinct and accurate. He talked about a "non-narrative stream of consciousness where things become other things." And your work is "allusions to a parallel world."

MS. BOTHWELL: Hmm.

MS. RIEDEL: And that seems just right on.

MS. BOTHWELL: That's perfect. I love that. I couldn't have said that myself.

MS. RIEDEL: He did.

MS. BOTHWELL: [They laugh.] Yes, that was very nice.

MS. RIEDEL: You also mentioned when we were chatting, Käthe Kollwitz as an influence, I think—or an inspiration.

MS. BOTHWELL: Her work is just so powerful.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: You know?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: So much emotion, so genuine. Nothing contrived about that work.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right. Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: It's humbling to see that. And that's what I like about outsider art. There's a museum in Baltimore, the Visionary Art Museum.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I've heard of it.

MS. BOTHWELL: And originally the intention was for artists that had never been trained at art school. And it was very inspiring for me to go in there and just see a drawing that someone had worked on for 30 years, eight hours a day, with no interest in galleries or making money or, you know. Like Howard Finster. A lot of those outsider artists that—and there are so many, you know: Darger [Henry Darger]. Where the work just comes from needing to get it out.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: And I need to see that. Like, once a year I make—I go to Baltimore to go to that museum so I can just remember, like, why I'm doing this. Because it's not about the galleries, it's not about

making the money or the living. It's just, you know, about being really true to feeling I have something to say and wanting to be really pure to that.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: I did a piece about six years ago called *A Heart That's True*. It shows a woman standing upside down. And there's a smaller, childlike version of herself right-side-up inside her abdomen. And it was called *A Heart That's True*. And I feel like that title is sort of like what I try to live by in my work. Just to be true to the work without pretension, like without ambition, without competitive. Just try to do it from the purest place.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Yes, I think that resonates.

MS. BOTHWELL: Oh, good. And I think that's what I'm drawn to in all these other artists that, you know, that are not contemporary big stars or whatever, you know. You can see in the work that that wasn't their motivation.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Well, it comes across as trying to render something incredibly truthfully, incredibly true to itself. But it's not a physical reproduction of being true to itself.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. Exactly.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. To see—

MS. RIEDEL: A reproduction of the essence.

MS. BOTHWELL: And that's, I feel like what my intention in life is. I want to see the essence rather than perception. I want to see the essence of everything and not just the surface. Not just the perception of it, to get beyond that. Like I want that in my spiritual life, in my interactions with people, you know. And in the work, to try to show that.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you think specifically about a spiritual aspect of the work, or is it just part of the whole overall picture.

MS. BOTHWELL: I think it's both.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: But I do definitely think about it, because, you know, I think we're here to evolve. It's our chance, you know, to evolve and to try to love unconditionally and to be true and all that. And so I feel like that standard that I have set to myself, which I fail at every day, but I feel like that it can't not go into the work because it's so much of what my focus is and my intention.

MS. RIEDEL: Has that been true from the start or from the beginning of the clay work, from the beginning of the glass? Was it always true even in the painting?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think that, until I started doing glass, my work was mostly about what I was afraid of. I was mostly trying to confront that within myself and look at the dark side of myself and kind of face that.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: And then I became less afraid. I guess that fear was replaced more with a sense of wonder. And so the work became more about trying to incorporate that into my life or, you know, into the work.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Yes, that makes sense when you say that, because I can see that happening in the work.

MS. BOTHWELL: Good.

MS. RIEDEL: How have your sources of inspiration changed over the years? Or have they not? Have they been fairly consistent?

MS. BOTHWELL: I've always been really inspired by literature and books, you know. And other art, always. There are always new artists that I find that inspire me, make me unable to sleep at night and that kind of thing. Sometimes I'm not really as interested in medical anomalies and, you know, medical books and physical ailments and things [laughs] the way I used to be so obsessed with that. So that's kind of shifted away a little

bit. I'm not as fascinated with babies. I mean, they're still beautiful. I probably can say I've stayed pretty consistent, pretty consistent.

MS. RIEDEL: And what's replaced the medical illustrations and the babies now, if you were going to point to sources of inspiration at this point?

MS. BOTHWELL: That's a good question. I guess nature.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. That makes sense. I'm just thinking of the big hair pieces which became environments.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: And they all seem to be about woods and houses, trees when I'm thinking of the images themselves that we're looking at.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. I guess that's probably more replaced that more. Not landscapes like landscape paintings.

MS. RIEDEL: No, not at all. Right, it's environment.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, yes. Trying to— You know, when you're immersed in that in a beautiful—like, I'm going to drag you up to my favorite place in the woods. But to try to recreate that feeling in the work. I think that's what I'm always trying to put in my work, is I'm trying to express a feeling.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: You know.

MS. RIEDEL: And oftentimes that feeling is associated with a particular place or a certain image.

MS. BOTHWELL: Or a figure because I'm most comfortable with those symbols, I guess.

MS. RIEDEL: Or a juxtaposition of things—

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: —that create that feeling, yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, this is on the list of questions, so I'll ask you this: Do you think of yourself as part of an international tradition or one that's particularly American? Or do you not think about it one way or the other?

MS. BOTHWELL: I don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: I don't think that really applies.

MS. BOTHWELL: Okay.

MS. RIEDEL: Not applicable. I think we've done a really good job, I think, of addressing all these questions. I have a few sort of summary questions and then you can address any final thoughts you may have.

MS. BOTHWELL: All right. Okay.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you want to take a little break first?

[END DISC 4, TRACK 1.]

MS. RIEDEL: So Christina's just brought out one other book, and it's by Tilman—

MS. BOTHWELL: Riemenschneider.

MS. RIEDEL: Riemenschneider. And this is again late 1600s.

MS. BOTHWELL: Fourteen, late 1400s.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, 14.

MS. BOTHWELL: Late 1400s.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. But very religious sculpture.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. I guess that was probably one way that you got funded as an artist. Right? If you were skilled enough. So it's a major influence for me, because I like any kind of art that—where it's not about how good you are, but how *you* you are. You know what I mean? Like Fats Waller. I love listening to Fats Waller, because his music is so personal, and it was so him. And it just is such a good reminder just to be yourself. You don't have to always be thinking—I tell this to myself—I don't have to be thinking how can my work be bigger or more impressive or more contemporary or more, you know, historically important? All I have to offer, warts and all, is just who I am. And that's all I can be. And I feel like, you know, when I look at Tilman Riemenschneider's work, it's a reminder.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: Of just, you know, all I can be is the best of who I am. And I love his work for that. Because I feel like he really—

MS. RIEDEL: Well, it's interesting to me, too, and we were just saying, that on one end of the continuum you have this fascination with exquisite old religious work. And then on the other side it's scientific illustration. And it's an interesting nexus that the science and the religion create.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. I never thought about that before. That's interesting.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, we will make note of him. So a few questions in summary: Over the past 20 years, how has your work been received over time?

MS. BOTHWELL: Better and better. Which is great. I mean, now the last few years have been a little hard in terms of selling. Hopefully because of the economy and not anything else. But, yes, it's just gotten better and better, which is great. I'm so grateful, I'm so appreciative.

MS. RIEDEL: When you look back at your work at this point in your career, and you're 48?

MS. BOTHWELL: Forty-nine, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Forty-nine. So really maybe mid-career, maybe a little younger actually. Do you see your career so far in terms of distinct periods? Or do you see a thread of continuity running through it? Or both?

MS. BOTHWELL: I guess—when I compare myself to other artists, I feel like I've gone off course and in a lot of different directions. But I think that was because I just needed to evolve as a person and to a point where I could really be comfortable with being who I am, with that being enough. And it took a long time for my vision to [inaudible]. I had to kind of get to that point of accepting who I am before the work could really be honest and come together. So I kind of had to go on a lot of these different detours to sort of figure out who I was, because it's sort of like with the clay, that really expressed who I was at that time. And then it no longer—it's been sort of like I was in a small tight box. Like I was a plant where I became root-bound.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: And I see some artists—I mean, I have a friend that I went to art school with; she's the most exquisite painter; her name's Beth Foley. She used to live in California. And her work is pretty much always—you could recognize her early paintings as being by her. I mean, you know, she hasn't really gone away. But for me, for my work, I need to keep changing it in order to stay excited about it. I need to keep learning new things so that the work stays alive to me, and then it's more vital. And then sometimes I get a little envious of people that just knew exactly who they were artistically in terms of their vision from the very beginning. But that hasn't been the case with me. But it's fun to learn. I mean, I would love to learn how to crochet. [They laugh.] I think it would be so much fun to crochet a whole bunch of limp babies hanging on walls that are— And I know other people have done that. But that's like an element. I think the videos are like an interesting kind of an idea. And it's just neat to think that the sky is the limit. That there are so many different ways of expressing yourself through art that are possible, you know. Like, I went to school with this guy who's a very successful painter now. I mentioned him before, Brett Bigbee.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: Well, he'd been a principal dancer for the Philadelphia Ballet. And then I guess he had back problems or hip problems, and he had to stop. So when I went to art school, he was one of the nude models there. And then within ten years, his paintings were just sought after. He had a waiting list, you know, a couple of years long, because— And I thought he was a really interesting symbol to me because he showed that when

you're an artist, when you're a creative person, if your art form you can no longer do it or it gets taken away from you or whatever, you change in some way, you can still put that energy into something else and be just as good at it. Because he's an incredible painter, and he might never have discovered that about himself if he had kept dancing.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MS. BOTHWELL: So I guess I've gone off the point.

MS. RIEDEL: No, no. Actually I think you're right on the point. And it makes me think of something we were talking about yesterday in terms of your technical facility, and something we mentioned this morning before we actually started the disc, was that you've always been able to do pretty much exactly what you wanted in painting. And it seems that maybe one—I have heard other artists say this as well—when you are very technically facile and the skill comes easily or you master it, then it's important to move into another medium, to try something new just to keep yourself challenged and thoroughly engaged.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. I find that that's important for me. And I'm not that drawn to artists whose work is academically—sculptures that are academically perfect, where that's the emphasis, because the work is so literal. And I find that I like work that's not quite so explained.

MS. RIEDEL: A little more ambiguity.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes. Where you put some of yourself into the piece when you're looking at it. I like that, where there's a little more mystery. And I find that when the work is a little bit more clumsy or, you know, when it looks like it's been self-taught, to me that's more interesting because you see the person's personality in the work more than their training.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: So, and when I was a painter, I don't think that there was a lot of me in the paintings. It was mostly my training.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Interesting. Would you discuss what it is about clay and/or glass as media that is really valuable to you? What is the essence of either of those or both of them as media that nothing else can do that draws you to them repeatedly?

MS. BOTHWELL: I think just—I'm such a tactile person. And I think it's just very grounding for me. And it's so satisfying. It just brings me back to being a little kid making mud pies. That feeling of just being completely absorbed and satisfied, you know. I feel like I need to do that every single day. And I feel like sluggish and lethargic and slightly depressed if I can't do it for a while. You know, not about making specific things, but just doing it; it's like the—

MS. RIEDEL: The process itself.

MS. BOTHWELL: It's like getting new blood running through me, you know. So that is valuable for me in that way. And I love to just make things. I love to just get an idea and see my idea and have it like a three-dimensional space. It's fun. It's so much fun in a way that painting wasn't for me, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Is it important that one is opaque and one is transparent?

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, very. Because I love that glass can transmit light. And it can look icy cold or it can look warm. It can look like melting ice cream or ice cubes. You know, just like nature. And then clay, on the other hand, is so earthy, and you can really see the impression of your hands or your fingers. You can really see any kind of detail so clearly in the clay. And I think they work really well together. For me. For my own personal taste, straight glass is a little relentless.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: And it distances me. So the clay kind of draws me in, and then the glass gives me a more expansive feeling. And I hope that's how people feel when they look at the work. Like they feel drawn in, and then they feel something.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. And are there other media that you'd like to try, or right now this is deeply satisfying? Other than the crocheting.

MS. BOTHWELL: I know that sounds crazy. That is something that I would like to learn. I like, you know, when I see quilting or crocheting and I see some of the crafts that are done at weaving, I think that would be really neat

to be able to learn how to do that. I just don't seem to have any time, you know. I mean, there was art that was done at the turn of the century, mostly for memorial pieces for people that had died, where art was made out of hair, weaving hair and hair sculpturing. That's very interesting, too. You know, so there are things that I would love to explore.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, you have used hair in the work.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: And you have used fabric. So they're not things that are completely unfamiliar.

MS. BOTHWELL: I kind of use them as found objects, though, rather than working with them.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Rather than creating them yourself.

MS. BOTHWELL: But there's something really fascinating about these like still lifes and centerpieces made out of hair, fruits, and, you know. Like if a person just had a lot more time. [They laugh.] And I'd love to make work that was kinetic. I have no idea how to do it. But I think it would be neat to see things move. Something about lifting the heavy and making it light is just interesting to me.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, the introduction of the video seems to bring some of that.

MS. BOTHWELL: Yes, yes. There's potential in that. It just means collaborating, because I'm not doing it myself.

MS. RIEDEL: Where do you see yourself and your work fitting into contemporary art? Or do you not think? Or art in general.

MS. BOTHWELL: I hope that it does. I think because I'm a glass caster there's a certain contemporary element just because it wasn't done; there wasn't the technology where it could be done, like, more than 30 years ago. And it seems—this is what I learned from going to an academic school—that if you can do work that people can relate to, that's well made and is representational, it's like good steady stock. People will always buy it. It just seems that that's the case, you know, that people are drawn to figurative work if it's somewhat relatively well made. So, you know, I hope that as long as I'm true to the work and it keeps changing and evolving and staying alive for me, that there'll be a market for it. But I feel that I don't pay attention or follow the current trends. So I can only hope that the work resonates for people that that's important to in some way. I feel like my work fits in more with outsider art mostly. Even though I did go to art school, I still feel like I can identify with the most. Like, when I see outsider art of lowbrow work, I feel, like, this sigh of relief, like, comfortable. Like, this is where my work fits in. Like, I'm not sure why exactly glass artists want to show my work, except I do work with glass it doesn't seem like it fits in with the market as easily as, you know, other. Do you know what I'm saying?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Well, it doesn't look like a lot of contemporary craft glass.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right. Yes. So I don't know if it does fit in. I hope it does, but I don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, one end of a continuum.

MS. BOTHWELL: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: What about the work in particular matters to you?

MS. BOTHWELL: About my personal work? Or anybody else's work? My work matters to me?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: In terms of my own intentions, I think staying true to my intentions and my spiritual path and being true. That's the most thing. I try not to have any falseness in the work.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

MS. BOTHWELL: You know?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Any time I start thinking about other people's approval, like dealers' approval or whether the work is selling or what I can do to get a review or, you know, when is a book going to be made about the work, then I'm getting off the wrong tack because I can feel the resistance. So I feel the most important thing is just to stay true to the course. Just following my inspiration. And I'm so grateful when I get a really good idea. I just

follow that, that path, as much as I can until it's exhausted. And that's my way of being true to myself. You know, because I feel like I've been given a gift. And so I want to make sure that I don't waste it. I want to really use it. Because who knows what happens when life is over. You know what I mean? [Laughs.] I don't want to have any regrets.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MS. BOTHWELL: Is that it?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MS. BOTHWELL: Okay.

MS. RIEDEL: Thank you very much.

[END DISC 4.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]