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Oral history interview with Edward S. Eberle, 2010 June 14-15

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Edward Eberle on June 14 and 15, 2010. The interview took place in Pittsburgh, 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.

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

Interview

MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Edward Eberle at the artist's home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on June 14, 2010, for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. This is Disc No. 1. Good morning.

EDWARD EBERLE: Good morning.

MS. RIEDEL: I'd like to start with some brief biographical background. So would you state your name and where and when you were born?

MR. EBERLE: Sure. I'm Edward Samuel Eberle.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: And I was born in Tarentum. We're in Pittsburgh right now, in the City of Pittsburgh, Squirrel Hill. And I was born in Tarentum, which is 20 miles north on the Allegheny. And sometimes I like to say 20 light years, it's more like it because Tarentum is not very sophisticated. It was a quasi, sort of a halfway mill town.

MS. RIEDEL: Mill town?

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Art was just not part of Tarentum.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: In any way, performing arts, whatever.

MS. RIEDEL: And what date were you born?

MR. EBERLE: 'Forty-four, October 3, 1944.

MS. RIEDEL: And so it was a small town?

MR. EBERLE: Yes. It used to —well, let's see. Maybe around 10,000 when I was born.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, this is a village really.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. But that has dwindled to maybe two or three thousand now.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And were your parents involved with the mill industry, or did they do something else?

MR. EBERLE: No. Well, my mother was a housewife.

MS. RIEDEL: What was her name?

MR. EBERLE: And she didn't work. Helen.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: Helen Wisneski. She was born on the boat coming to Ellis Island from Poland.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah hah!

MR. EBERLE: In 1910. So actually her birth city is New York City.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: But I assume she was—well, no, her father then came to West Virginia to work in the coal mines. And they eventually wound up near here.

MS. RIEDEL: Coal is a big part of Pennsylvania. I didn't realize that, but as I was driving in from New York yesterday, I saw all sorts of signs. "Coal is the solution." [They laugh.]

MR. EBERLE: The one that gets me is "Clean coal."

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. [Laughs] With a big green light bulb.

MR. EBERLE: What a turnaround that is, PR. Clean coal. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: So your mom was a housewife, and what did your father do? What was his name?

MR. EBERLE: Charles David Eberle. And his family was mostly German. And I explained once—well, Ken Ferguson asked me what my father did. And so I told him all the various jobs that he had. And Ken Ferguson being as blunt as he is said, "Oh, okay. He was a ne'er-do-well." [They laugh.] I said, "You're absolutely right." I never thought of it, put that word to him, but he was a ne'er-do-well. He couldn't hold down a job.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah-hah.

MR. EBERLE: And the jobs that I remember him having were as a janitor; he was a janitor. So I don't know. He was a fairly smart fellow.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: But his behavior would get him into trouble. So he would lose a job, and then he'd try to find something else.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, do you remember him being creative in any way with his hands or anything like that? Or your mother, did she sew?

MR. EBERLE: Actually he was. He was a little bit. He had good hands. But by the time I was able to—by the time I hit some sort of dexterousness with my hands, he stopped. He stopped at some point. So I never was a recipient of that. My brother was, though. But I've always admired the things that they made together.

MS. RIEDEL: Hmm. Did they work in wood together, or metal?

MR. EBERLE: Well, we're talking knickknacks and do-dads and train layouts for Christmas.

MS. RIEDEL: Got you.

MR. EBERLE: And you know things like that.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And how many siblings do you have, one brother and—

MR. EBERLE: I have one brother and two sisters. And I'm the youngest. The oldest sister is now 79. She's 14 years older than I. My other sister is 12 years older, and my brother is six years older than I.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So when did you begin to work in the arts? Were there education classes in the elementary schools? Did you just always draw as a child? How did that come about, do you remember?

MR. EBERLE: Certainly—no. Art wasn't a great part of my childhood. No. We relied on whatever curriculum in grade school, whatever curriculum. The art teacher would maybe come around once a month. And in the meantime the teacher would take care of that. Some teachers just weren't—didn't know how to do it, deal with the art thing. So it was busy work is what it was.

MS. RIEDEL: So did you build things as a child? Did you begin building things? Did you spend a lot of time outdoors?

MR. EBERLE: When I was in fifth grade, my father took me down to the lumberyard, and they allowed me to pick through the scrap piles. So I found all of these really nifty—what I thought were nifty—pieces of wood. And I've always had a great reverence for wood and keeping everything. Not always. I finally got rid of that hoarding, hoarding wood. I finally got rid of that when I realized it was just overtaking me.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: And I had my son go in and clean out the woodshop. [Ms. Riedel laughs.] And he said, "Dad, I'm going to go in there, and I'm going to clean it, and don't come in, don't look at what I'm doing." So I did that. It was difficult, but I stayed away. And when I went in, it was clean.

MS. RIEDEL: How long ago was that?

MR. EBERLE: That was maybe ten, 15 years ago.

MS. RIEDEL: Were you horrified or relieved or both?

MR. EBERLE: Both. I started saying, "Where's that piece?" No, it's gone now. [Laughs]

MS. RIEDEL: Did it open up a whole new space of possibilities? Or do you regret it?

MR. EBERLE: No, I don't regret it. It really was not a good thing to keep all that— hoard all that wood.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, especially since you—do you work in wood at all any?

MR. EBERLE: A little bit.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: Just a little. I went to the brutal school of woodworking.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah-hah.

MR. EBERLE: And passed with flying colors. [They laugh.] No, but I love wood and ever since fifth grade. And I took those pieces back to the cellar where we were living and tried to make structures out of them: boats and fanciful things, whatever. Didn't have a lot of hand tools. And whatever hand tools—I remember the saw being so dull it wouldn't even cut through the wood. And I do remember my frustration. But my joy of just having those, that selection of wood just overpowered or took over everything else. I don't know if any objects really came from that. But I do remember that.

MS. RIEDEL: It sounds like very much an experimentation with constructivism and collage from a very young age, especially if you weren't able to form the shapes at all. You had to work with what you found.

MR. EBERLE: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And trying to get them together was a, you know. I don't think we had glue. I didn't have glue. So I'd always be forever trying to pound a nail in.

MS. RIEDEL: That must have been interesting, especially with the odder, thicker pieces of wood, trying to make them all fit together.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, and they split again, they split, split the wood. So anyway.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you spend a fair amount of time as a child doing that? Or was it something that came and went.

MR. EBERLE: During that period every free moment was down there working with that stuff, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And what about it compelled you, do you remember?

MR. EBERLE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. So that went on starting in fifth grade. Did it go on through junior high and high school?

MR. EBERLE: No, it went on for about six months and stopped.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, then it stopped all together. [They laugh.] And was there any more experience with the arts then in junior high or high school? And creative painting or drawing on your own or through an instructor's school program?

MR. EBERLE: A little bit. A little bit. I was trying to recall prior to this. Very little, very little. But I still had an interest in it. My oldest sister actually did go to Indiana State Teachers' College, which is now Indiana University [of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA]. But at the time it was a teachers'—she went for a year. And so she had an interest in art. Now consider, she's 14 years older than I, so her freshman year, I was, what, four or five years old, three or four years old. But I do remember her going. And she made it through one year. I think she was more interested in her boyfriend, so they got married, and that education stopped. But for instance she taught me perspective—

MS. RIEDEL: Really!

MR. EBERLE: —when I was in the third grade. And I understood it.

MS. RIEDEL: Huh!

MR. EBERLE: In order of education, you're not supposed to do that to a third grader. It's much too difficult or something like that.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Did she teach you through drawing exercises? Or how did that work?

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

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. We sat down at the dining room table, and she showed me the basics of perspective. So I've never had a problem with drawing in perspective.

MS. RIEDEL: Were you drawing figures at all?

MR. EBERLE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Landscapes?

MR. EBERLE: No. Again, you know, the art thing for me was very low key. And it was not on the front burner at any time.

MS. RIEDEL: What was on the front burner?

MR. EBERLE: Having fun.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: [Laughs] Having fun. Certainly before puberty, before 12. I had a lot of fun. I ran—I had the run of the neighborhood. And so I ran around with a lot of different people. And we did a lot of different things: shooting basketball, running in the woods. The woods were my favorite, just to be in the woods and in the hills and in the little stream. A wonderful time.

MS. RIEDEL: This area is beautiful for that, the northeast in general. Yes.

MR. EBERLE: And I don't remember what I was talking about. Oh, the art thing. No, so the art, the visual arts, or any arts, was extremely minimal exposure and my output. There are some strings or things that go back. Being in ceramics and throwing on the wheel, you can't help but to be a vessel person. You have to have something in you that wants to go to the vessel. I haven't really been able to explain that in any way except that I am attracted to the vessel for some reason.

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

MR. EBERLE: And I do remember one of my earliest experiences of the vessel form, which was a—what turns out to be a cheap knockoff of Louis XIV kind of cast-metal gold—probably the original was gold—this little like jewelry box that my mother had. And it was up on legs, little legs. And a nice little lid. It was maybe three, three and a half inches wide and a couple of inches deep. And it had a nice lid, and two and a half, three inches high. And I still remember very clearly that was my first realization of form that I loved. Now part of that is maternal-connection. But it was still objectified in that piece. It was mysterious for me, and I just loved it. And she had one other container there that I also loved, too. I don't have that one, but I do have the—

MS. RIEDEL: The jewelry box.

MR. EBERLE: The jewelry box. I do have that. And in fact the legs, aspect of the legs, did finally emerge in my own work in the mid-eighties.

MS. RIEDEL: And it's interesting because that form, that jewelry box, it's not a milk pitcher. It's associated with something special and if not sacred, at least precious.

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

MS. RIEDEL: There's a very clear interior and exterior. So it's interesting to trace it back to that particular piece.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And I was very young. I must have been three or four years old.

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

MR. EBERLE: And I didn't draw anymore or any less than any other child that age. I was allowed to draw, which was good. Some parents don't permit their children to draw for some reason.

MS. RIEDEL: Really!

MR. EBERLE: Yes, I think so. But I don't know that for sure. I remember the first time that I wrote my name correctly, legibly. I don't know, do you remember that?

MS. RIEDEL: No, I have no recollection of that.

MR. EBERLE: I still remember it like it was yesterday, that feeling of communication or whatever it is. I've done it right. [Laughs]

MS. RIEDEL: I remember my brother did a painting, and his name—his signature—took up half of the painting when he was about in third grade. [They laugh.] So I think he must have had a very clear sense of it when he first wrote his name. I remember being impressed by that, wondering why I hadn't done something along those lines. But where was your signature? Where did you—do you remember where it was when you wrote it? Was it on a piece of paper or a school assignment?

MR. EBERLE: No, no, no. I wasn't in school at all. Like I said, I must have been three or four years old.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, very young.

MR. EBERLE: So it was at home. We didn't have kindergarten or preschool. That wasn't invented yet.

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

MR. EBERLE: But, yes, practicing writing my name. I remember the setting and everything. It was vivid—it is vivid—to me.

MS. RIEDEL: Now what about that was significant to you? Can you put it into words?

MR. EBERLE: Well, in that same setting I also recall what we would call now scribbling. And scribbles didn't—although they're important I know in art education; I know the whole scribbling thing is important—but it's hard to, you know, the scribbles don't communicate anything. Now as a three- or four-year-old, I'm not—I'm now analyzing this as an adult, of course. But I think achieving the text or achieving the word, I mean that's solid.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: That's solid stuff. This is me.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Yes.

MR. EBERLE: I'm me here, and I'm also me here.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, it's an at word representation.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. It's undeniably you, your own and no one else. Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Eddy. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: So what were you studying in high school and what were you interested in in high school? What did you think you would study in college? Or was it not that well thought out yet?

MR. EBERLE: It wasn't well thought out at all. Let's see. Even through junior high school, all I had were the requisite art courses once a week or once a month or whatever it was. And didn't do anything with it in junior high school. It's hard to piece together, but one part of me was a juvenile delinquent. That's what we called them in those days. [They laugh.] Today I was just a punk.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. [They laugh.] An auspicious beginning for an artist.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. But at the same time, you know, I was friends with everybody. Yes, I ran around with the bad crowd. But I also got along very well with the smart crowd and the social crowd.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, that's interesting. So there was a real continuum, a real range in your friends and your experiences.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, yes. You know I really loved it. I think back on it, I don't know why, but just was able to do—well, I was able to do it.

MS. RIEDEL: That is interesting, though, because when I think about your work and something we were talking about just this morning, is I think about the incredible diversity and breadth of your work. And it's interesting that even at a young age, you had that range of experience.

MR. EBERLE: There were clues. There were clues at that age, yes. And so anyway, art hadn't really taken hold at all as a possibility. In fact me going into art was kind of—I went in the backdoor. Got into tenth grade world history, and I was very disrespectful to the world history teacher. And he stormed back and beat me up.

MS. RIEDEL: Really!

MR. EBERLE: Well, literally beat me up, chased me out the door, chased me to the office, and yelled that this young man will never be in his classroom again. Well, I don't know if I deserved all of that. But I was disrespectful. I spoke out of turn. But it still didn't— but anyway it turns out to be a good thing because I'm sitting there in the office, and world cultures or whatever it was was important for graduation eventually. But anyway I was out of one of the major courses. So what do they do with me? And the art teacher, he liked everybody. He liked to solve social problems. And so I don't know how long I sat there, whether it was one day or two or three or four days during that period. And finally he said—or told the principal or the secretary—I think maybe you better come down to art. And so I never would have taken art.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. Because it was an elective course.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, I guess it was an elective course. I was in scholar course, if you could—in those days it was loosely that.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] You were in advanced placement.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, that kind of thing.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: But, yes, so that's how I got to be in art. And so I think we were in there every day for an hour.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, that's unusual in high school.

MR. EBERLE: I think it was every day.

MS. RIEDEL: And that started in tenth grade?

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you remember the teacher's name?

MR. EBERLE: Oh, yes. Mr. Salisbury, Mr. Thomas Salisbury, Tom Salisbury. And he was a nice fellow.

MS. RIEDEL: Must have been.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Mm-hmm. And he loved people. He loved people, and that was his claim to fame there, I suppose. As an artist, I'm not sure he ever did much. And he didn't teach very well. But that was okay.

MS. RIEDEL: So were there specific exercises, drawing or painting? Any three-dimensional work?

MR. EBERLE: No three-dimensional work. I had a curiosity about—he did have an Amaco wheel in the art room, one of those two-speed, it's either slow, high, or off. And he didn't have any clay except this Amaco clay in a small bag that you mixed with water. And so you had to make your own clay. He didn't know anything about it.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: And I didn't know anything about it. And so it was a very frustrating first experience, to which I said, I don't think I'm ever going to work with this again.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah-hah. [Laughs]

MR. EBERLE: I did not like the felling of the clay under my fingernails. I didn't like the wheel. I didn't care for it at all.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, especially with the— I know those wheels you're talking about with an on, a slow, and a fast speed, and that's it.

MR. EBERLE: I mean a skilled potter would have a difficult time with that.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly, exactly.

MR. EBERLE: But nobody seemed to, that's just the way materials were then. But I don't think there was a kiln. No, there wasn't.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, that's interesting. [They laugh.] An exercise in frustration.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, I don't think there was. I don't think I made a piece. I did not make a piece. Never got that far. And just as an aside, I'm a firm believer of readiness. And, you know, particularly in art. Art, or in life, you'll do it when you're ready to do it and not before. And some take to the clay very early because they make up somehow that allows them to be ready for it. I wasn't ready for it. But I was in college.

MS. RIEDEL: So just before we move on to college, was there anything formative that happened in these art classes? A sense of drawing? An exposure to artists that you were interested in later?

MR. EBERLE: What happened was the most I remember—I took to lettering, what we called lettering. I took to that very well.

MS. RIEDEL: So like calligraphy or architectural lettering?

MR. EBERLE: Well, yes, calligraphy. But in a high school—at least in my high school—that involved making signs for the PTA [Parent Teacher Association] bake sales, the football team, what do you call it—the cheerleaders, and the pep rallies. The pep rallies, that's what it was, the pep rally signs.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: And all that stuff. And I liked it, and I took to it. And for a long time I hid that I—I didn't discuss that in my early years, what happened with the calligraphy and the lettering. I didn't discuss that in my early art career because I didn't think it was relevant. But it was extremely relevant because there at a very early age I learned about brushes.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah-hah.

MR. EBERLE: Because when you paint signs, you have to have the right brush.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: And you have to know how to use it. And I learned how to do that not by direction, but by trial and error and a need to get it right.

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

MR. EBERLE: So I loved it. I really did. I didn't so much care for a quick, Ed, we need a bake sale sign an hour ago.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: And I didn't appreciate that stuff. But I was pretty good at it. Most of the artwork that I did, I can't remember anything that was not copy work. I think anything I did there was copy work.

MS. RIEDEL: And what in particular did you copy that was significant?

MR. EBERLE: Whatever was in—you know he had a filing cabinet with all sorts of images in it.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Which was popular in those days.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. EBERLE: So the kids and I would go there and find an image that struck our fancy and try to copy that. And that would be pretty much the extent of it.

MS. RIEDEL: Drawing, painting—both?

MR. EBERLE: I think he had provisions, certainly for drawing. He did have them for painting. I had a remarkable student in junior or senior year. As to what I know now, he was haptic in his approach. Haptic is responding from the body as opposed to—I can't remember the other side of the coin. But I would be thinking about what you're doing, where the body isn't much there—visual.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: So the visual and the haptic. And he was entirely haptic. And he would make these paintings like, one a day. I mean he was so prolific. A I never—it took me a long time of reading and studying to figure out, you know, what he was actually doing, and it was very curious to me. And they were not bad paintings.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. And what sort of paintings?

MR. EBERLE: In fact they were pretty good.

MS. RIEDEL: Really. Abstract, representational?

MR. EBERLE: Anything, anything. And I remember he liked to do Jesus a lot. Yes. So there was a religious Jesus thing going on. But I often think of him and what happened to him, if he was allowed to pursue that in later years. I often think of him. But he was wow!

MS. RIEDEL: Do you remember his name?

MR. EBERLE: Now he was a prodigy.

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

MR. EBERLE: No, I don't. I do not.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: He had just moved into town. And so, you know, there was not a big history of growing up with him.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: He just kind of appeared. And I think they disappeared then, too.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting that you had that experience early on of watching somebody be that prolific and working in that fashion.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And recognizing that he was a pretty special fellow.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. And that he was working in a way that was unusual, this haptic.

MR. EBERLE: I didn't understand.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Exactly.

MR. EBERLE: I had no understanding of it. Remember I'm painting signs. I have to be in control. And he was out of control.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: But I liked what he did, you see, anyway.

MS. RIEDEL: So piqued your interest, and it caught your attention even if it wasn't completely understandable.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: And in knowing brushes, I still have one of my first lettering brushes, and I use it on my work.

MS. RIEDEL: That is interesting. I would imagine you would also have to be able to regulate the flow of paint very specifically that way as well.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: The sign painting continued throughout college. That was my student job.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure. How did you come to decide on Edinboro, yes? Edinboro State College [Edinboro, PA]? And what were you going to study there? [Laughs] This looks like it's a good story.

MR. EBERLE: In the unsophisticated years of not really knowing—well, I graduated, and I didn't go to college right away because I was kind of afraid about what it was. I had a fear.

MS. RIEDEL: What was the name of the high school?

MR. EBERLE: Tarentum High School.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. And that would have been '64, '63, something like that?

MR. EBERLE: 'Sixty-two, '62. And I really didn't know what I wanted to do because earlier I mentioned I could run around with any crowd. And I went into my counselor, the career counselor?

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Whatever you call that. And I was really looking for some guidance. And what he said to me was, "Ed, you can do anything you want to do."

MS. RIEDEL: Helpful and not at all.

MR. EBERLE: Helpful and not at all.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And it was the not-at-all side that I took. I didn't have the wherewithal to try and nail him down. I just had to take it and leave. So I wonder to this day, did he mean it, or was he just being lazy? I don't know. Either way it's fine.

MS. RIEDEL: So much for the guidance in the guidance counselor.

MR. EBERLE: There was no guidance, there was no guidance. I can do anything that I choose to be.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Which is true. You know it doesn't really matter whether he knew it or not. But it is a truism.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: So I didn't go to college right away. I went down to Washington, DC, and, you know, I had some penchant for sciences. And so I got a job as a biological laboratory technician.

MS. RIEDEL: Hmm!

MR. EBERLE: The problem was a low-entry salary was not enough to sustain living in DC.

MS. RIEDEL: What was the company?

MR. EBERLE: Oh, I don't remember. I don't recall.

MS. RIEDEL: Before biotech, but some sort of bio research. Yes.

MR. EBERLE: They provided NIH [National Institutes of Health] with cells for cancer research.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, okay.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And that was okay, but I had to leave because I was going broke. I just didn't have the money.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: In fact I remember I calculated that I could eat lunch. I could eat a modest lunch, no breakfast. Eat a modest lunch, and then for supper—that's when I started drinking coffee because the coffee quelled my hunger. Quelled? Quenched.

MS. RIEDEL: Quelled probably.

MR. EBERLE: Whatever the word is.

MS. RIEDEL: It ameliorated it, took it away.

MR. EBERLE: So I would drink coffee. And maybe one or two days a week, three days—maybe every night—I could have a piece of pie with my coffee. And that was supper.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow!

MR. EBERLE: So that was not good.

MS. RIEDEL: No.

MR. EBERLE: So I had to go back home to Tarentum.

MS. RIEDEL: Couldn't afford to keep that job.

MR. EBERLE: No, I couldn't afford to keep it. But they were very nice.

MS. RIEDEL: You were down there for six months, a year?

MR. EBERLE: Yes, about six, seven months. And I came back to Tarentum with my tail between my legs and really couldn't do it. And at that time I had no idea what I wanted to do. I just really didn't. I hung out in poolrooms, too. I was a pretty good pool player—not great. I was certainly not a bad player, but I was a good player.

MS. RIEDEL: Enough to subsidize that income?

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And so someone told me a good pool player in adult life is a sign of a wasted childhood. [They laugh.] And I had some of that. I spent some good time in the poolroom. I don't where in heck I found the time to do everything that I did. But some of it was spent in the poolroom. And also some of that after I came back from DC. Looking back, I was probably just melancholy about everything. Just really didn't— But all of a sudden it occurred to me that I'd better go to school. And so what did I want to study? And somehow I remembered saying, okay, well, what do you really do, what are you doing in your spare time? And I was doing art actually. When I was in DC, in the evenings, especially weekends, I don't know where I got this from, but I would go down to Lafayette Park and draw the people in the park. And why I did that, how I came to do that, I have no idea. How I was prepared to do that, I have no idea. That came out of high school teaching, my high school classes, I just don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: Had you done figure drawing in high school?

MR. EBERLE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. Had your drawn portraits?

MR. EBERLE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: So you just went down to the park and began sketching people.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: That is interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And the lack of memory as to how I did that is also interesting, you know. There must have been some motivating factor.

MS. RIEDEL: So quick charcoal sketches of people in motion.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Watercolor. Yes. Go figure. I wish I had some of those paintings.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, they'd be really interesting to see.

MR. EBERLE: Or drawings. They'd be really interesting to see. But of course that got lost somewhere. So anyway, when it came down to it, I thought I would like to be able to—the only art career that I knew of was teaching elementary or secondary art.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And the person that did that were the only person I knew in art was my art teacher. And he went to Edinboro State College. And so I said, Well, I guess that's where I have to go, too. So that's where I went.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: And I think about Ken Ferguson, who's also from Pittsburgh, just down in the Monogahela.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: And I can never remember exactly which, Clarendon or where he came from? What neighborhood he came from. But he had the wherewithal to go to Carnegie-Mellon.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah-hah!

MR. EBERLE: And I wish I would have asked him that when he was still alive: Where did you get the wherewithal to be able to do that? Because his community was also just as unsophisticated as mine, Tarentum, in those days. So I'm wondering, where did that come from?

MS. RIEDEL: Maybe his high school art teacher went there. [Laughs]

MR. EBERLE: Maybe. Maybe. [They laugh.] Maybe it was the same trigger. I don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Anyway, what were we talking about?

MS. RIEDEL: So you decided to go to Edinboro to study art.

MR. EBERLE: I went to Edinboro. I think in those days it was art education.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Did you need a portfolio?

MR. EBERLE: I don't think we needed a portfolio. It was a good thing because I probably didn't have one. And you just pay your money. I think it was either 300 or 600 a semester. I think it was $300 a semester in the beginning. It was outrageously inexpensive. But also for my family it didn't come easy. We were not rich.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: We were not rich by any means. But my mom, bless her heart, she came up with the money somehow.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow!

MR. EBERLE: To keep me in college.

MS. RIEDEL: Was she working at that point or no?

MR. EBERLE: She never worked, no. She was just frugal.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, she must have been.

MR. EBERLE: She liked to stash. Well, she was Polish, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: She probably had known tight times.

MR. EBERLE: She grew up in poverty, and she went through the Depression. So she knew how to put it in the coffee can.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And she knew how to save.

MS. RIEDEL: And how did she feel that you were going to school to study art?

MR. EBERLE: She loved it.

MS. RIEDEL: Did she?

MR. EBERLE: Yes. I mentioned it one evening before supper, and she said, "I think that's terrific. You can go." Which meant she'd pay for it, because I had no way of paying for it.

MS. RIEDEL: She was probably relieved to see some sort of direction at that point, too, and going back to school.

MR. EBERLE: She was very relieved. Finally he's come around. [Laughs] You know. Yes. So I started there, and I quickly discovered that I was pretty good. And then my notion about what my career would be changed, that I would certainly go to graduate school and maybe teach college.

MS. RIEDEL: And how did that transition happen? Did you have instrumental teachers or was it your comparison with other students?

MR. EBERLE: Comparison to other students and I knew my interests were loftier than elementary education.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Although it's important, I still had ideas that went beyond that. I didn't see myself teaching elementary or secondary for long—actually any time, any amount of time.

MS. RIEDEL: This sounds like an extremely pivotal time in your life.

MR. EBERLE: Oh, yes, yes. I finally got out of Tarentum, and I discovered how good I was. I didn't know up until that time.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah-hah! Okay.

MR. EBERLE: I had no idea.

MS. RIEDEL: And what were you working on in undergraduate? Was it—what was it?

MR. EBERLE: In those days it was Edinboro State Teachers' College, and the curriculum in art was that there were no electives. They had the entire curriculum laid out for the four years. And we took one class of every medium.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Because their philosophy was if you're going to teach in an under school, that you need to know a little bit about everything. So that's what we were doing.

MS. RIEDEL: So painting, watercolor.

MR. EBERLE: Painting, watercolor, drawing, design, printmaking, sculpture.

MS. RIEDEL: Sculpture using wood, ceramic, clay?

MR. EBERLE: Plaster.

MS. RIEDEL: Plaster, okay. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Metal at all?

MR. EBERLE: There was no— the sculpture was in a regular classroom-sized thing. There were no facilities at that time for—like what we have now.

MS. RIEDEL: No wheels—no. Yes. Okay.

MR. EBERLE: In ceramics we did have—there were wheels.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: And we started out—when I started, we were still in electric kilns.

MS. RIEDEL: But I assume the wheels now are better. You had kick-wheels.

MR. EBERLE: We had kick-wheels. We had good Randall wheels. But I dreaded having to take it.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: And it was scheduled for me in the fall of sophomore year. And I dreaded having to do that because I hated it from that previous experience, but I fell in love with it immediately. Not only the feel of it, but also the challenge of learning how to center. This stuff is not going to get the best of me.

MS. RIEDEL: Now you had the right equipment.

MR. EBERLE: Which required a great arrogance on my part, you know, because it still gets the best of me. [They laugh.] Right?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Just when you think you're getting really good, the clay will come back and kick you right in the you-know-what.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Let you know who's boss.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly.

MR. EBERLE: But anyway, I fell right for it. And also socially, some of the people that I really liked were headed in that direction also. So there was camaraderie.

MS. RIEDEL: Anybody who continued on whose name would be familiar?

MR. EBERLE: Well, Dele Wukich and David Tell were two—one or two years ahead of me. Dele Wukich went to Alfred, and after that got the ceramic teaching job at Slippery Rock [University, Slippery Rock, PA], and he's been there ever since. And David Tell went out to—I'm not sure exactly which school, Indiana [Illinois State University, Normal, IL], in the Midwest somewhere—and he taught for quite a while. But died young tragically; he didn't know he had a bad heart. So unexpected. And there were a few other people there, too. So it was a good crowd, and they were very motivating.

MS. RIEDEL: And you had electric kilns—a gas kiln as well, or not?

MR. EBERLE: And by the time I was a senior, we got our first gas kiln.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: And that was a big thrill.

MS. RIEDEL: I bet. And do I assume you were mixing your own glazes?

MR. EBERLE: Mixing our own glazes and mixing clay.

MS. RIEDEL: And experimenting with stoneware and porcelain both, earthenware?

MR. EBERLE: No, we were just strictly stoneware in undergraduate school.

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

MR. EBERLE: We didn't mess with— Porcelain wasn't what it is today because there was no domestic kaolin that was really any good, that I know of, still. At some point one of the companies, commercial companies, came up with what they called tile-6 clay, which is whiter than Georgia kaolin. Georgia kaolin's rather gray.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: And the large commercial kaolins from England, Grolleg, that didn't come until much later. I can't remember when that was.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. So it wasn't even available.

MR. EBERLE: It wasn't available. I don't even think the English knew it was available. But, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] So was yours primarily functional at this point, or were you experimenting with sculptural, too?

MR. EBERLE: Oh, we're talking in the seventies. This is the *Whole Earth Catalog* [Stewart Brand, 1968]. I'm sorry, not the seventies, the sixties. We're talking the *Whole Earth Catalog* and hippie and beat.

MS. RIEDEL: Brown stoneware mugs.

MR. EBERLE: Two-dollar brown stoneware mugs. And maybe even a buck fifty. And exhibited on bales of hay. [Laughs]

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. EBERLE: And old barn-siding boards.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: And you know just living the life in blue jeans. Well, blue jeans have never left. But bales of hay have, thank goodness.

MS. RIEDEL: So you were also then selling your work?

MR. EBERLE: A little bit. A little bit.

MS. RIEDEL: But you had no desire to be a functional potter either. It sounds like you were clearly wedded to —.

MR. EBERLE: No, I did.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, you did! Okay.

MR. EBERLE: I did. I really wanted to fit in. And so I did functional pottery. I did—some of the early work is, there is a thread of my work now back to those first years, but it's a very thin thread. Because socially I accepted the notion of going back to the full [functional –EE] pottery and, you know, the whole thing. It was very popular then.

MS. RIEDEL: So just along the lines of Bernard Leach and Shoji Hamada, that sort of thing?

MR. EBERLE: Yes, yes, yes. And then eventually Alfred [University, Alfred, NY].

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So how did—yes. How did you settle on Alfred?

MR. EBERLE: Well, that was the only choice. I mean nothing ever—no other school ever came into view. You know our culture at Edinboro was you go to Alfred or you don't go anywhere. I mean that's it.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. EBERLE: And I did go to Alfred summer school between my junior and senior year. And that was the center.

MS. RIEDEL: That sounds like a very wise, fortuitous event.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, it was a good experience.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Although most of the times either [Daniel] Rhodes or Val Cushing taught summers. For some reason that summer they did not. And there's a potter teacher by the name of Maynard Tischler. I'll always remember that name. He was a terrific fellow, and we just had a good time.

MS. RIEDEL: Uh-huh.

MR. EBERLE: But I learned a lot, of course, being with all sorts of people, different types of people, different outlooks, desires, everything. It was much more expansive than Edinboro. So that paved the way.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So when you arrived at Alfred, it would have been, let's see, late sixties? Yes? 'Sixty-seven, '68? Did you go directly from Edinboro to Alfred?

MR. EBERLE: No. When I graduated, the Army wrote me a letter and said, "Ed, we really can't do this without you." [They laugh.] We need your help.

MS. RIEDEL: I see.

MR. EBERLE: So.

MS. RIEDEL: So.

MR. EBERLE: I was in the Army, and that was quite an experience. Life-changing experience. Wow, wow.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I can imagine. That must have been Vietnam.

MR. EBERLE: It is for anyone. Yes, Vietnam. I didn't go to Vietnam.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, you didn't?

MR. EBERLE: No. I'm not a lucky person at all. I don't win things. I don't even get parking places.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Oh, dear.

MR. EBERLE: Whereas my wife gets one within one or two doors of wherever she's going, even in the city here. I can't figure it out. I have to circle the block ten times. Anyway, I went through basic training, and then advanced training, and it was in artillery. And my whole company was to begin the next day jungle training, what they call jungle training preparation, because we had orders for 'Nam.

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

MR. EBERLE: And that night before that training was to begin, the sergeant came in and read off I think four or five names. And mine was among them. And he said, "Pack your bags right now. You're going to Germany."

MS. RIEDEL: Oh.

MR. EBERLE: So I was saved. And there was no logic to what those names—they just pulled them out of the air.

MS. RIEDEL: Really. So it wasn't based on any particular skill.

MR. EBERLE: No, nothing. It was based on just a lottery—they picked some names out.

MS. RIEDEL: Sounds like a lot of luck used up in that one fell swoop.

MR. EBERLE: I think that was it. And so if that's all, thank you very much. [Laughs.] I'll take it.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely.

MR. EBERLE: So I went to Germany. Almost went to Vietnam again from Germany because there was wholesale—the troops that were in Europe were being sent over to Vietnam a lot.

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

MR. EBERLE: So there was no guarantee of course that I would— But I was saved the second time, too. Yes, because my papers went through headquarters. And headquarters saw my background and said, "No, maybe you'd better stay here in personnel because we need somebody who can type." [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: Are you serious?

MR. EBERLE: I'm serious.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow! [Laughs.]

MR. EBERLE: And so I deliberated because—remarkably, I don't know why I deliberated—but I did take that job. So I stayed in Germany.

MS. RIEDEL: Smart. Where were you based?

MR. EBERLE: In Bamberg, which is in Bavaria, about an hour north of Nuremberg, half hour from Bayreuth. I think it was Bayreuth. I can't remember. Is it Mozart—I can't remember.

MS. RIEDEL: That must have been an extraordinary experience. I take it you had not been to Europe before?

MR. EBERLE: No. No, not at all. Europe was a nice experience.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I'm sure.

MR. EBERLE: The Army was not.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: And the Army, they have to—it's their job to make you not an individual. It was to take your individualness away so that you can function as a soldier.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And I understood that. And I had to do that to a degree.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE But I still fought it. So the Army was difficult. It took me a long time to get over it, mentally.

MS. RIEDEL: I would imagine.

MR. EBERLE: In the way my brain functioned, everything. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Was there much exposure to art in Europe that was expansive?

MR. EBERLE: Yes. You know I knew I was headed to Alfred and my life was in art. But did I get out and see some stuff? Yes, I did.

MS. RIEDEL: I bet.

MR. EBERLE: Did I spend a lot of time doing it? No. Well, there was not a lot of time to do it.

MS. RIEDEL: I bet.

MR. EBERLE: We did—I corralled a couple of guys, and we went down to Italy and did the kind of all of that, which was very, very nice. I never made it to France or Spain.

MS. RIEDEL: Looking at Italian ceramics or Italian everything?

MR. EBERLE: Italian everything. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: You'd only have a few weeks or a month.

MR. EBERLE: There was a few weeks.

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

MR. EBERLE: But a lot of that was just traveling or driving. So we saw a few things. The most remarkable for me was seeing *David* [Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni, 1501-1504]. That is an experience, spiritual experience, I'm sure for everybody.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Who sees that? Just a magnificent sculpture in that setting. And to feel like Michelangelo, you know. My thought is that the guy didn't sleep, you know, he couldn't have slept because he was making so much work. In the museum where the *David* is—or before you get to the main rotunda are like six or eight full, you know, sculptures. *Pieta*-type sculptures and things like that. Some not finished, but hell! So I appreciated that moment. Have you seen *David*?

MS. RIEDEL: No, I haven't. I'm looking forward to it. Especially now. So it sounds like that was a pivotal moment really. One of them.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, yes. In looking at art, yes, there are a few. I've been trying to nail down what year it was, but it must have been in my last years in high school that we did come down to Pittsburgh once in a while. And I think I stumbled into one of the "Carnegie Internationals" at Carnegie Museum of Art. Internationals are held every four years, and its international art from—it's a big show. It's a big show. But I remember walking up the grand staircase. And right on the landing part was a large woman series of [Willem] de Kooning and it just about blew me back downstairs when I saw that. I said, "Holy! This is what art is!" You know. It just totally knocked me for a loop.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And I saw that, and I said, okay. But, see, sequentially I can't place that kind of eureka, ah-hah moment in what was otherwise happening because everything seems so—as I've already talked—seems so uninspired even. Or unordinary. Or super ordinary rather, I should say. Yes. I don't know how that worked in there. But that was an ah-hah moment for sure. Man! So I've been an Abstract Expressionist ever since, I'm sure, and a cubist. And, yes, I can't quite shake those two things.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Interesting. That's really insightful. Return to Alfred? You began there in the fall of probably '70?

MR. EBERLE: 'Sixty-nine, I think.

MS. RIEDEL: 'Sixty-nine.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, fall of '69?

MS. RIEDEL: And who was teaching at the time? It was Daniel Rhodes and Val Cushing and stuff?

MR. EBERLE: It was wonderful. It was the—'69 was the last year that all of the old masters, let's say, were together. And that would be Bob Turner, Daniel Rhodes, Val Cushing, and Ted Randall.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow!

MR. EBERLE: And—yes. And then Bill Parry in sculpture. And John Woods in drawing. What a faculty it was! And Dan Rhodes did retire after that, my first year, although he did teach summer school in '70 before he left. And I know because I was his throwing assistant, which was a wonderful privilege.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, I can imagine. Your freshman year, too—or your first year—to have that be the case.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, in between first and second year.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, in between first and second year.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, and it was his last tour of duty. [Laughs]

MS. RIEDEL: So would you describe that experience a little bit? That's a very rare opportunity.

MR. EBERLE: Well, it was scary. [Laughs]

MS. RIEDEL: I imagine.

MR. EBERLE: It was a little scary.

MS. RIEDEL: How did it come about? How did the opportunity come your way?

MR. EBERLE: Probably everybody else turned it down. [They laugh.] Really. I think so. Nobody else wanted to do it. He and I had very little contact during my first year. That was a tumultuous year, though. You know that was Kent State [University, Kent, OH].

MS. RIEDEL: Ah. Yes.

MR. EBERLE: I was fresh out of the Army.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And it was Kent State. And so I didn't know which end was up.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

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MR. EBERLE: And that was rough. And Dan did not take Kent State very well. And so he actually stopped teaching.

MS. RIEDEL: Really!

MR. EBERLE: Pretty much. We had a kiln course with him for one semester, the spring semester, which was Kent State.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow.

MR. EBERLE: We sort of cancelled that. But anyway, yes, I don't know why, but I really think it was everybody else had something else to do because certainly there were better throwers. I don't know. But it was a privilege. And I'm very impressionable with work and people. People more so. And so it was terrific to watch him teach because he really was a good teacher. And he is a good writer, too.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. Yes, I seem to remember something written a long time ago.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Every once in a while I go back to the preface of his first book; I can't remember the title of it now. Stoneware? I don't remember. [Daniel Rhodes, *Clay and Glazes for the Potter*, 1957]

MS. RIEDEL: Ceramics and glazes, maybe? I can't remember.

MR. EBERLE: I don't remember exactly. But it was *the* first book. It was *the* book that we— anyway, the foreword on that is pretty much on the money. And, yes, it's very interesting. It's worth it. But he was a good teacher, he really was. The way he conducted himself, I watched very carefully, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: And what did you learn from him? How did he conduct himself?

MR. EBERLE: Boy, hmm. See, now running were into— I remember impressions and senses of things, the sense of something. Specifics I don't remember.

MS. RIEDEL: That's fine. It can be a sense even. But I mean it would be interesting because I think there aren't too many people who have the opportunity to even discuss it. [They laugh.]

MR. EBERLE: Right. What was it like?

MS. RIEDEL: Was he especially attentive perhaps?

MR. EBERLE: No. Dan, particularly because that was his last time teaching and he was probably concerned about moving, shipping his work out, all of his stuff out to his home, out to Davenport, California—

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, okay.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. I wasn't aware of any of the domestic stuff. But Dan could be aloof. He could be very aloof. A lot of people were afraid of him because he was so damn smart.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And he was a brilliant man.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: But he would tell me what to do, and I would sit down and, well, demonstrating for the—that summer school class was very important. And thinking back, I was in that same situation a few years earlier.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: But you really get immersed, fully immersed, in clay. And so your throwing instructor or the throwing assistant and what he teaches you on that is very, very important and quite heavy, you know. But he was encouraging. On a couple of things he would say, he would ask me to—he'd ask me to throw a bowl that day, go through bowls or something. He'd say, "Ed, you know I've never seen anybody do that." I said, oh, hmm. That's pretty good.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: And being in the business as long as he was, he had never seen anybody open a bowl that way.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: And he would demonstrate, too. And that was the instructional. He was very professional. He was very professional. He didn't goof off.

MS. RIEDEL: So he took it very seriously.

MR. EBERLE: He took it very seriously. But, no, he took it seriously; he took his conduct as seriously. He took the program as seriously. But I think he also knew its place in the larger scheme of things. Whatever that means.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, especially if Kent State was happening at that time, I'm sure there was real perspective.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: What about the other instructors? Was there anybody who really stood out or was especially significant to you?

MR. EBERLE: All of them were. Val in first year he was our throwing instructor. I mean he took care of that. And for years I emulated his throwing techniques. Along with in my second year Bob Turner was my advisor. So I talked more with him than most. And he was a terrific thrower and totally, totally different than Val Cushing.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And Dan Rhodes threw differently. Well, everybody throws differently.

MS. RIEDEL: How so? I mean what sort of nuances are you picking up? Or are they not nuances?

MR. EBERLE: Hmm. Huh. What sort of nuances am I picking up in the difference between —.

MS. RIEDEL: The way they all threw differently and how you would learn something different from each of them.

MR. EBERLE: Well, first off you look at the finish, if you know what, in this case, you know what the finished work looks like.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And so there was definitely a difference. There was definitely a difference. There was a difference in all of their works, from one another. And so their throwing techniques were suited to whatever they were doing. Val Cushing's is much more controlled and well-designed pottery. Bob Turner had turned away from that aspect that Val Cushing still pursued, and went to a more contemplative, sensual—you know, his sense. To watch him throw was almost religious—or that's not the right word. It was an experience to watch him work. He was so—and it's different.

MS. RIEDEL: Immersed in that process?

MR. EBERLE: Immersed in the process, totally immersed. And one with it.

MS. RIEDEL: So rather than a control of it, the way it sounds like you're describing Cushing, it was almost a dialog with it or a listening.

MR. EBERLE: Listening. A listening. And he would make hmm, ah, mmm [mimicking sounds]. And Bob was Quaker, and so he had a—everyone was pleasant there. All the teachers had marvelous characters—were marvelous characters and had great characteristics. But Bob was particularly gentle. And he was gentle with his work.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] That's really interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Just as he was gentle with people. One of the most gentle men that I've known. And he was good. I tried very hard to live up to his gentleness in my living—and failed miserably. [Ms. Riedel laughs.] But it's good to have somebody like him to try to—as a barometer.

MS. RIEDEL: But what a wonderful range of ways of working, to experience in your first year of grad school.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. It wasn't that broad, though, in terms of the country because we had the West Coast was certainly [Peter] Voulkos explosion. And then let's see. Funk had just started. I'm not sure, but I guess it was on the West Coast that that started, wasn't it? Funk? I never care for funk.

MS. RIEDEL: I think not. Especially Alfred.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And I don't think the funk period really has withstood the test of time. I'm not sure. But I don't think so.

MS. RIEDEL: I definitely out here that would be the thought, but it might be a little different on the West Coast.

MR. EBERLE: Oh! [They laugh.] You see I'm still isolated. I don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, no, I think that those are two, I think, very different schools and ways of looking at things. And I don't think there is too much crossover.

MR. EBERLE: Well, we could have a debate about that, I guess, if I was more scholarly. I can't remember—Gilhooly?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, sure. David Gilhooly.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] We can have that conversation over dinner.

MR. EBERLE: Okay. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: So what do you see as the strengths of the program, when you look back on it? What were the things that really you took away from there that were worthwhile. And were there limitations or weaknesses in retrospect?

MR. EBERLE: Actually, you know, just what we were talking about. I think what I learned there was how to act as a man, how to act as a man in arts and relate with people. And with all of them, they were good models. Not everyone was Robert Turner. But, you know, like I said, I'm impressionable, so I tried to get a little bit of everybody.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And I was a little bit of everybody, but eventually developed, was able to leave that behind.

MS. RIEDEL: What was your work like during those two years? What was your focus?

MR. EBERLE: Functional, functional. Although I was—

MS. RIEDEL: High fire stoneware? Functional.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, I highfire stoneware, functional. For the most part. But I was still—was looking at glazes and firing at different temperatures. You know, my job was to get as much in as I could.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: In experience. And I think I did that. Lot of failures. And remember, too, that I lost momentum going from undergrad to grad school.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Overcoming the army again was difficult. It was a tumultuous time. And also Evalyn and I were married in my first year. And both of our sons were born at Alfred.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh! So you had quite a lot going on.

MR. EBERLE: We had a lot going on there. That was a great experience.

MS. RIEDEL: Was she studying there as well? Was she studying at Alfred, too?

MR. EBERLE: No, no. She got a job at Wellsville, the Town of Wellsville [NY], teaching art.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So she was an artist—she is an artist—or she was an artist as well?

MR. EBERLE: I always thought so. She would say differently. She downplays it; I try to up-play it. She's a really good artist.

MS. RIEDEL: But that must make for a really interesting dialog between the two of you about work in general, your own work. No?

MR. EBERLE: She's really good at looking at art and talking about it. Talking to me about my work. She's a great critic. She's one of my good critics—as are both my sons. Somehow they developed that, too.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. And did either of them—do they work in the arts? Has either of them gone into that?

MR. EBERLE: Joseph is now a—just graduated in industrial design from Pratt [Institute, Brooklyn NY].

MS. RIEDEL: Well, great.

MR. EBERLE: At a later age. They're 39 and 40. But that was his dream for many years. And so he finally did that. But he's been a designer ever since he was a child.

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And Jonathan, the older son, he's a multi-media specialist at Wash U. [Washington University, St. Louis, MO], which means he knows a lot about all that stuff. But what is he? He's a musician, photographer, videographer, writer.

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting. So both your sons went into very creative types of work. Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Oh, yes, yes. They did. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So before we leave Alfred, any final thoughts? You were starting to talk, I think, about the limitations of the program and the strengths.

MR. EBERLE: Well, the strengths were its heritage, yes, its heritage, and what it had developed through the years from Harder and Binns [Charles Harder and Charles Fergus Binns] in the early 1900's up through the revival in ceramics in the fifties and sixties and what that faculty meant to that revival. And I've lost my train of thought.

MS. RIEDEL: We were talking about strengths and limitations of the program. And then we were also talking about your work.

MR. EBERLE: And that had its strength. But what it didn't have was the adventuresome thing that was going on in the West Coast. In fact there was some animosity.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. [Laughs]

MR. EBERLE: Between all the factions. To me, I don't care. Because I don't like to be inclusive, and I don't care for people who are inclusive. In other words, I'm sorry—exclusive.

MS. RIEDEL: Exclusive. Right, right.

MR. EBERLE: Exclusive. You know not in my club. You're not invited to my club. I don't have that—I want to be everything is inclusive. So I want to include everything.

MS. RIEDEL: There's room for all of it.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, you can't pick a fight with me for which one thing is better. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. EBERLE: Even back then I knew that.

MS. RIEDEL: And throughout Alfred, was your focus on functional work?

MR. EBERLE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. What else were you—would you describe some of the other works? Because I haven't seen any work.

MR. EBERLE: It's not worth seeing either. But the pieces that were good were functional.

MS. RIEDEL: You said there were some great failures. I think that's where this—

MR. EBERLE: There were some great failures. I was drawing, seriously trying to draw, on paper, but not on the pieces.

MS. RIEDEL: How interesting.

MR. EBERLE: In fact one of the—you know teachers and remarks to students, I have a few of those. And one of them was in one of my second-year critiques. Ted Randall said—was looking at my board up on the wall—what do you call that? Tack board? Bulletin board. With my drawings, with my drawings on it. And he said, "Ed, you know—" And he looks there, and he's looking at my pieces, and he says, "You really ought to find a way to paint on your pieces." [Laughs.] And that didn't come true for quite a while. But it did eventually come true. And so I think— He was a very brilliant man, too.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: And he was extremely insightful. A lot of people, including me, wrote him off because he was a suit. He was literally a suit. He wore a suit every day.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, my goodness.

MR. EBERLE: Because he was the chairman.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah-hah.

MR. EBERLE: And he took that very seriously. And he was also a businessman. So had a very strong, wise man persona. Which put off a lot of students. But he really had a lot to offer. So I don't think that was a glide-by comment. I think he was extremely—and his pieces are very good.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. You know I brought this, and I'll read this. I came across this quote of his, and I knew you'd studied with him. And it was interesting to me because what he was saying actually made me think of your work. And he was talking about, "I've stopped trying for the pot that has never been seen before, and continue to try for the pot that recalls all pottery." And then he talks about "creating work that recalls all cultures, not just recalling all pottery." And I think there's something incredibly—I'm paraphrasing parts of this. But he talks about looking for that degree of innovation that "refurbishes, renews, connects to old meanings, allows for invention, but looks back at the past with respect, understanding, and affection, opening the way for a continuous recreation of form." But I think there is something about that breadth and that inclusiveness, at least in this quote, that actually made me think of your work.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, there's some of me in that.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] But as a student, well, he made that one significant suggestion that did ultimately resonate deeply.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, I know. He didn't teach clay.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: So, I never really saw him with his clay in hands.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Which was a mistake on their part.

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

MR. EBERLE: But somebody had to lead the department.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right. So let's see. You graduated from Alfred in—

MR. EBERLE: Technically, '72. Realistically in '71.

MS. RIEDEL: Because you began teaching almost immediately.

MR. EBERLE: In '71.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Alfred only handed out diplomas once a year in May or June. And in order to complete my requirements, I had to teach—I had to do an independent study or something that summer to get more credits, summer of '71. So that knocked me back.

MS. RIEDEL: I see.

MR. EBERLE: So technically it is '72, and I was politely—maybe not so politely—told that it was '72. I tend to be a realist. It was really 1971.

MS. RIEDEL: When you were done.

MR. EBERLE: I don't care about three credits. Who cares about three credits? How can three credits knock a year on, I don't know. No, '71, we left right from Alfred summer school, and went to Philadelphia.

MS. RIEDEL: So you had functional work in your repertoire, you had some experiment with sculptural work? And then certainly lots of 2-D in drawing.

MR. EBERLE: A little bit. But you know there wasn't much sculpture going on there. Bill Parry, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So the work was really divided then between functional ceramics and drawing two-dimensionally on paper?

MR. EBERLE: It was. It was. It wasn't even; it was maybe 90/10; 90 percent clay and 10 percent. And another thing—just one sentence that I picked up from John Woods. I walked in and I said, "John, I'm having a hard time getting past, you know. I just can't get it out, can't get back to work. The ideas just aren't there or whatever." And he just very casually said, "Work your way out of it." And that's absolutely true. So I'm sure many teachers have said that. Or realized that, but that's true. You know when you're in a jam, you're only way out of it is to work your way out of it.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: You can't think your way out of it. You have to work your way out of it.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. Yes, yes.

MR. EBERLE: It applies to writers, too.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely. It applies to a lot of disciplines I'm sure.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, if you wait for inspiration, it may never come. [Laughs]

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, that'll never happen.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, right.

MS. RIEDEL: Not when you're sitting by the swimming pool. [Mr. Eberle laughs.] Who were some of the other students at the time?

MR. EBERLE: When I was at Alfred?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: I remember the students.

MS. RIEDEL: Anybody that was—that you learned from as well or whose work you were interested in? Sometimes the students are as interesting as the professors though that may not have been the case.

MR. EBERLE: I don't think we were a very interesting group, come to think of it. I've never really uttered those words. But I don't think we were very interesting.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Okay. How did you start to teach then at Pennsylvania?

MR. EBERLE: The Philadelphia College of Art [now the University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA] was looking for a one-year replacement position because Bill Daley was going out to New Mexico or Arizona to teach for a year.

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

MR. EBERLE: But they weren't getting anybody that they liked. This was into—summer was almost there. And my whole class—no, half of my class, which would be about five or six people—were hunting for jobs but there really weren't any. And I didn't hear of the one in Philadelphia. Nobody did. But Bill Parry said, "Well, Ed, you know there's this job down there; maybe it's right for you." Because he comes from PCA. Bill Parry, his first job was at PCA.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: Philadelphia College of Art.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: So I said okay, and I got a phone number. And I called the pot shop, and Bill Daley answered. So I said, "I'll be down there tomorrow." He said, "Well, we're not inviting you. We haven't even seen your work. How can we you know—" And I said, "That's fine. I'll see you tomorrow." So I went down and got the job. Which is good advice for me. You know that's the same thing that happened here at CMU [Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA]. And it's what I tell all other students who ask me. I say, "If you want the job, go."

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Show up.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: You know. It certainly wouldn't always happen.

MS. RIEDEL: That's good advice.

MR. EBERLE: And it's a two-way street. You also want to see what you're getting into.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly.

MR. EBERLE: You want to get a feel—literally a feel—of the place.

MS. RIEDEL: It was probably really important to have a job, though, too, because you had two small children.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, we had to. The thoughts of going and making pottery—and again we're talking New Age stuff here. The thoughts of being out on a farm and setting up the barn, you know. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, the haystacks.

MR. EBERLE: The haystacks and all. You know it was very, very much on our mind, you know. But the reality was we had two young children. Although the pay—still for ceramic teachers—is not very good unless it's a union position.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. So you taught at Philadelphia for four years.

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

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And was there much time to work on your own work at the time?

MR. EBERLE: Oh, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: Had to do it. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: I have no visuals, I have no sense of what your work was like during those early years. What were you working on?

MR. EBERLE: Functional pottery when I first went. Maybe the first year or so. The functional stuff continued right up until '85. And then it pretty much dropped off the map for me. And then the last two years, eeking my way into more sculptural thoughts, but still working in the vessel, vessel format.

MS. RIEDEL: And this is again all high fire gas stoneware?

MR. EBERLE: No, not necessarily. I'm still roaming around trying to find what it is.

MS. RIEDEL: You're exploring.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, I'm still exploring.

MS. RIEDEL: Raku or pit firing, things like that?

MR. EBERLE: Oh, yes, raku, yes. Salt-firing. Salt-firing, that's one when I sent a cloud of sodium chloride up 15th

Street at night, I said, "This is not good."

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: I can't, with a good conscience, fire this salt kiln in the city. It's just— So I stopped doing salt then. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: Disaster narrowly averted. Oh, dear.

MR. EBERLE: Well, when you put the salt in, I mean that big plume comes out. And I literally saw that plume go right up 15th Street. Oh, my.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

MR. EBERLE: What were we talking about?

MS. RIEDEL: The work during that time. Experimentation.

MR. EBERLE: Experimentation still. And that's when Grolleg opened things up, in the early seventies it must have been. So I took a stab at porcelain in '71, '72. Failed miserably because I was trying to use my stoneware sense on the porcelain, and it just didn't want to do it.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And when I came back to it a year or so later and discovered, okay, porcelain is different and needs to be handled differently. And so let's try to find out what that is. And then everything's been fine since then.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. So the porcelain—throwing porcelain—really began in the early seventies.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And was it transformative from the start? Or was it just another avenue of exploration?

MR. EBERLE: The second time I went to it in '73, '74, '75, it was transformative. That's too strong a word.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: It indicated a change in direction.

MS. RIEDEL: And what about—what was the new direction?

MS. EBERLE: Well, china paint also came into play. So painting or drawing on pieces started to occur. Although I didn't quite know what I was painting and drawing. But I was trying to do it anyway. And there was a move away from trying to be a functional potter into being more expressive.

MS. RIEDEL: Was color very important at this point?

MR. EBERLE: I worked in color, but it wasn't very important. I've never been a colorist.

MS. RIEDEL: I didn't think so. But when I hear porcelain and then china paint, I would wonder if that would be part of the allure of the porcelain was that much clearer sense of color that you can get.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, yes. And line, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right. So the sense of line.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Painting and having it stay there.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Always a plus.

MR. EBERLE: Always a plus. What you see is what you get. I liked that aspect of the china paint.

MS. RIEDEL: Which is very different than other parts in ceramics—to be sure not to overstate the obvious. But that what you see isn't at all often what you get —

MR. EBERLE: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: — in other ways of working. So that would be very different—

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: —criteria.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MR. EBERLE: And so I carried that into the black and white where what I see is pretty much what I get out of the kiln.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly, exactly. Maybe we'll talk about your teaching time now and then be done with it? Because you taught for a limited period of time at PCA and then at Carnegie-Mellon?

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And then you decided not to do that anymore.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, I would say that.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. So were there—did you structure your curriculum after things that you'd picked up in Alfred? Did you develop a philosophy of working that was somehow very different? How did you structure your classes? Was it very much dependent on what the university wanted?

MR. EBERLE: At PCA I was a junior member. So what I did, what my thoughts were, weren't so important. But the overall—I was more design-oriented actually at PCA, wanting the kids to be good technicians and good at what they do. And giving them as much information as you could. I was very technical in those days, and so one of the things I contributed was the glaze calculation and all that technical stuff, which I did—which I learned from Alfred. Which I have since just totally dropped. I'm totally low-tech now, and I have no idea what's going on out there. And, let's see. And then coming to CMU, being in charge—we used to be a couple of faculty, but I lost that and it became only me. So, you know, the priorities changed and the whole method—methodology—changed over the years. I was there nine years, so that was a long time to shape a curriculum.

MS. RIEDEL: That was '75 to '85, I think, yes. Just before we leave Philadelphia all together, you were teaching with Bill Daley.

MR. EBERLE: Actually I never taught with Bill Daley.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, you didn't!

MR. EBERLE: No, when he came back— The year that he was gone—well, the industrial design department was imploding, and they were having a hard time up there. And so the dean talked Bill Daley into teaching and taking over the industrial design program. So he did. And then so the clay department did another search, and they hired me.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, I see.

MR. EBERLE: For some reason. So I stayed on for three more years.

MS. RIEDEL: Was there much exchange between you and Daley or not?

MR. EBERLE: There was a bit. Of course you know he was quite busy. But, yes, there was an exchange. And he's been important to me for all these years.

MS. RIEDEL: You mentioned, I think, that he was the one who introduced you to the concept of dynamic symmetry?

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Is that right?

MR. EBERLE: He said, "Ed, have you ever looked into dynamic symmetry." And then, boom, the whole world opened up to me. And so John Woods said, "Work your way out of it." And Bill said, "Have you ever heard of dynamic symmetry?" And yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Would you describe how that affected your work, or what that experience was like of discovering that, the dynamic symmetry, and how it applied to your work or how it changed it?

MR. EBERLE: Well, one of my questions was, what's the reasoning behind these things? What is the reasoning behind form and design? And consequently if you start to read about dynamic symmetry, it leads to nature.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And well, what is the connection? You know.

MS. RIEDEL: The Golden Mean, the Fibonacci Sequence, that sort of thing, yes.

MR. EBERLE: How can it be explained? So it's just one tangible way of explaining some of the things that occur in clay and sculpture and whatever you —architecture. So I liked that.

MS. RIEDEL: Were there pieces where you began to try applying some of that to your own work?

MR. EBERLE: Yes, that started earnestly in the late seventies.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: When I was here at CMU.

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

MR. EBERLE: It was still not applied. I don't believe it was applied when I was in Philadelphia. Not yet. I was still reading. And also there wasn't that much to read.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: There as only several books out: D'Arcy Thompson's *On Growth and Form* [1917], and Jay Hambridge.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, right.

MR. EBERLE: Which I don't recommend Hambridge. I think he's—he wrote an entire book on misunderstanding of what the whole thing is about.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah-hah.

MR. EBERLE: Which I actually knew at the time, too. But D'Arcy Thompson talked a little bit about the numbers, number theories and rectangles, etc., and dynamic symmetry. But he mostly talked about growth and form and all. So he didn't necessarily put those two things together. He was just presenting his observations about all growth and form, which I found very, very interesting. Since then there's been an explosion of interest in all of those things again.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely.

MR. EBERLE: I don't seek it out, but somehow it finds me. That there's new information, and there's new books or things like that, somebody will call me or write me. "Hey! Have you seen this?"

MS. RIEDEL: So we were talking about syllabus and curriculum as you developed it over the years at both Philadelphia—well, you said Philadelphia was more geared towards design.

MR. EBERLE: Philadelphia was rigorous. We were very rigorous about what we wanted the students to learn, etc.

MS. RIEDEL: Technique, still. And when you came to CMU, how did that—how did it change?

MR. EBERLE: I emphasized—I did not emphasize that at all. You know what I was more interested in at CMU was the development of the individual. And whether that be a life in clay or a life in—a good life for them, whatever that entailed. So that was kind of my general philosophy. Although I tried to give them, you know, a good—you have to learn your craft. And so I tried to do that with them. To teach them the craft of clay alongside their own desires.

MS. RIEDEL: And did you develop courses, coursework for that, different syllabus?

MR. EBERLE: It's been a long time.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Syllabi.

MR. EBERLE: Yes and no. Some of it was, you know, flying by the seat of my pants.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: But some of it was very deliberate. Yes. You know. I love curriculum. I love the curriculum design.

MS. RIEDEL: Mmm.

MR. EBERLE: And I did as much around that. So, yes, I did do that with my own thing. But I also did it for the whole art department. Not as a job, but in my thoughts trying to bring everything together, make sense out of it.

MS. RIEDEL: The technical skill and the creative experimentation.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Because my students, you know, came from painting or came from architecture, you know, and came from everywhere. One did not go to CMU to study clay necessarily.

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

MR. EBERLE: Although that did occur. But mostly on the graduate level. But not on the undergraduate level.

MS. RIEDEL: And what were you teaching exactly there?

MR. EBERLE: I taught ceramics. And occasionally drawing.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. And when you look back on the teaching experience—because I realize it was a limited window of time, about 14 years—do you see a difference in students that are trained in university programs versus students that learn their craft outside of a more formal, traditional setting?

MR. EBERLE: Looking at the work only?

MS. RIEDEL: Not necessarily.

MR. EBERLE: Well, I don't get out much. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: Well, let me rephrase that maybe with another question. Do you see a particular place in universities for craft and for ceramics?

MR. EBERLE: Well, for craft if it is understood and explained, yes. Not if it's misunderstood, the craft of something. For instance, at CMU robotics was big. And the craft of robotics is very important. It's very lofty stuff that they're doing and thinking of. In those days they were still trying to figure out how to get a robot to see even the most basic thing. Now they can interpret the whole landscape. But not when I was there in whatever or whenever—the late seventies. And so they had to learn their craft. So everybody has a craft that they have to learn. So if in—I think we were talking about ceramics; I'm not sure.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm.

MR. EBERLE: So, yes, you have to learn the craft. You have to learn your instrument. And I tried to do that as much as I could. But also, on the other hand, looking for other venues, other ways of saying things, of expression. And most of my teaching as simply getting out of the way. You know Ferguson said that, Ken Ferguson said that.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: That just learning to get out of their way is good. And I was good at that. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: How did you come to know Ken Ferguson?

MR. EBERLE: Well, he's from here. And he went to CMU.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: So there was a connection.

MS. RIEDEL: He'd been teaching all those years down in Kansas or he was teaching—

MR. EBERLE: All those years in Kansas City, you know. And I first met him in Philadelphia.

MS. RIEDEL: He was teaching there?

MR. EBERLE: I was. And he came through as a demonstrating—demonstration. I don't know what the connection. Maybe he saw my work, and he liked it, and he invited me to Kansas City to do one—I think a one-day workshop.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: Which I did. So I visited there two or three times after that.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Sounds like there's been an interesting—or there was an interesting ongoing dialog there over time.

MR. EBERLE: There was, there was. We got along. [Ms. Riedel laughs.] But right now I need to take a break.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Let's do that.

MR. EBERLE: How are we doing time-wise?

[END OF DISC 2]

MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Edward Eberle at the artist's home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on June 14, 2010, for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Disc No. 2.

When we finished up, we were talking about sort of your final years at the university, at CMU, and we were starting to talk about what your work was like at the time. Which tied in perfectly to what we were just looking at, which is some of those little china paint bowls that date back to the late seventies.

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

MS. RIEDEL: At which time you were really experimenting, it seems, a lot with pattern, nonrepresentational pattern.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. I was just trying to understand pattern, particularly as pattern is explained in dynamic symmetry or the phi rectangle or the number phi.

MS. RIEDEL: The number 5 rectangle?

MR. EBERLE: The number phi, phi, phi, the number phi, 1.618.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

MR. EBERLE: And the china painting did start in Philadelphia and doing some searching there. And then continued into the late seventies. And then I dropped it. And I dropped it because I developed, over the years, I developed an environmental allergy where I can't use any—and I still can't—use anything that's petroleum-based or anything that gives off gas.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah.

MR. EBERLE: So like laundry soap. Anything that has perfume just makes me ill.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Which is odd because I smoked, too. Actually the smoking can actually cause it or exacerbate it. But, yes, my choice of materials has a lot to do with my environmental allergy.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: I can't have like—like to fix my drawings, which are sometimes done in pencil or charcoal, you know, smudge materials that have to be fixed. And so that is done at the end of the day where my bag's packed and everything's outside the door. And then I go back in and I spray the pieces, holding my breath. [Laughs.] And I immediately run out the door, and then I'm okay.

MS. RIEDEL: A respirator won't do it? There's nothing at all?

MR. EBERLE: There are some good respirators, but it's easier to hold my breath.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Hold your breath and run. That's an interesting technique..

MR. EBERLE: Yes. so it eliminates a lot of things like working with steel, welding, any painting, oil paint, even latex paint kills me.

MS. RIEDEL: So this came on later in life.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Interesting. So that really put the end to china paint.

MR. EBERLE: That put a big end to the china paint.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Because that's all oil-based. Although I was talking with Kurt Weiser recently, and I think there's some materials that you can use, that are not as lethal to me anyway, in a china paint thing. So I would paint otherwise. I love oil, I love oil paint. And I would be painting still. But I can't do it.

MS. RIEDEL: So with the elimination of the china paint, did that, in effect, redirect your focus to black and white?

MR. EBERLE: Perhaps.

MS. RIEDEL: Did it help eliminate color from your work?

MR. EBERLE: Perhaps. Well, I think I stopped the china painting around 1979. In fact I think I had a show offer. You know we tend to—at least I tend to—rewrite history. And I'm not real sure exactly if that happened. But I think I got an offer from the Brooklyn Museum [Brooklyn, NY] to show the china painted bowls. Just a little show. Jack Lane was the director then, and he looked at them and said fine. Coincidentally, he left there and came down to the Carnegie to be the director here after that. And he was here for a few very good years. And then he went out to 'Frisco, [San Francisco] right? And I don't know where he's at now.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. I don't either.

MR. EBERLE: But anyway, I just let that die because if I show something then I'm saying this is what I do.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And I was not going to be doing it. So I didn't think it was fair.

MS. RIEDEL: During that time when you were working with china paints, were you working exclusively with pattern? Were you doing any figurative drawings?

MR. EBERLE: No. I was trying the figure. I took peepee steps on the figure. The results were not very satisfactory for me. But it's interesting because I had already—I was trying to find a way to paint the figure; why I do that, I have no idea. I really don't. But, yes, trying to find the figure. I'm not sure how it is with other people, but I'm very impressionable, and I'm also easily intimidated. Like here at CMU when I was teaching here, even though I taught drawing, a little bit—which is interesting because I had never really had an official drawing course. I'd never had an anatomy course.

MS. RIEDEL: Really! Not in undergrad or anything?

MR. EBERLE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: I was never taught to draw the figure.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh.

MR. EBERLE: So I stayed away from it, particularly because we had a powerful anatomy drawing teacher at CMU. And so, you know, that tells me—that intimidates me, and I didn't want to let that show on my part. But then when I went to the studio then I was free to pursue that.

MS. RIEDEL: That's fascinating that you never had a class.

MR. EBERLE: That's my own intimidation.

MS. RIEDEL: So you're entirely self-taught when it comes to figure drawing.

MR. EBERLE: Entirely. And even if I took those courses, I still wouldn't be any good at it because I can't draw likenesses. I don't draw technically the way one thinks of a drawer of figures. And those people, the good ones, they can draw anything. I can't do that.

MS. RIEDEL: Or you can't reproduce perhaps what you're seeing. Is that what you're saying?

MR. EBERLE: That's correct. I can't do it.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes, yes. Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Which makes me by nature a cubist. [They laugh.] And some of the Impressionists and Abstract Expressionists.

MS. RIEDEL: It's interesting that back and forth. I think of you as a very young child learning to draw perspective and how in many ways you throw that to the wind on the pots. And how you weren't necessarily trained—you weren't trained at all to draw the figure. But you draw it continuously—have drawn it continuously for years.

MR. EBERLE: Now I am, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. One final question before we—two final questions—before we leave the university world. When you think back on those early years, is there a particular time or a particular experience that stands out as *the* most significant or rewarding educational experience that you've had?

MR. EBERLE: In teaching?

MS. RIEDEL: Well, in teaching or as a student. Is there anything that you feel—

MR. EBERLE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Let me rephrase. As a student or then when you were teaching with other colleagues, is there something that stands out for you in your own work as the most rewarding educational experience for you and your work? From what you've said it sounds to me as if the experience at Alfred is most significant.

MR. EBERLE: Well, yes, most significant.

MS. RIEDEL: But it also sounds like there's been a lot of invaluable exchange with Ken Ferguson.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Only—let's see—only when I was at the studio. I had two—what is important to me or was is people that are older than me who I can talk with. And he was one had interest in what I was doing. And Bill Daley. So now that Ken's dead, all I have is Bill Daley, and I'm getting older. So I'm running out of— [They laugh.] I'm running out of mentors. But anyway, that's not what you were asking.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, no, that's along those lines. You can consider them as two mentors.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: But it's interesting that it's Daley and Ferguson and not necessarily any of the Alfred professors.

MR. EBERLE: That's correct. Although I'm sure the interest was still there, but one reason or another, the sculpture teacher's name; I can't remember what it is. Bill Parry.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, Bill Parry, right.

MR. EBERLE: Before he passed away, I made it a point to go up to visit him. And he went off on this wonderful tangent about my work, and it was embarrassing to me because I just, oh, man. And he really looked at it. I mean he knew exactly what was going on—to my surprise.

MS. RIEDEL: That he'd followed it so closely.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And I didn't know that. I didn't know that. The lines of communication weren't there.

MS. RIEDEL: It was probably wonderfully gratifying for him.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, it was. And I'm not guessing at that. He told me that.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes. Well, I think as a professor, teacher, it would be hugely validating, too.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: To one's own contributions.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, it surprised me that he kept up, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: So in '85 there was a very pivotal time in your career. You stopped teaching completely to become a full-time studio artist.

MR. EBERLE: I have to go back to a profound moment.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Please do.

MR. EBERLE: The best thing that I ever did in teaching was Joseph Campbell. I had been reading him from an ah-hah moment when I first discovered him actually on television.

MS. RIEDEL: Was that the "Power of Myth,"[Bill Moyers, PBS,1988] series?

MR. EBERLE: Actually it was before that. It was the very first Bill Moyers interview done on stools up in the [American] Museum of Natural History in New York City. And that was an interview. And that's the first one I saw. Evie and I were out taking a walk, and we were with children, etc. We were knocking around religion. And that's very difficult to talk about when you really don't know what you're talking about. You know religion. It just keeps coming back, and you just exasperate yourself.

Anyway, we were exhausted from that conversation. And we came in, and we turned on the TV, and there was Joseph Campbell, this fellow, talking about myth and religion. And just in this interview he was like answering the questions that we had been grappling with for years and years and years. And so I was hooked. So I read all of Campbell that I could. And I'm not an A-type personality. But when we were looking for visiting people at CMU, one of my colleagues Kathleen Mulcahy said, "What about that fellow that you've been reading?" Now this is before Joe Campbell really took off.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: You know. Just before. Before the second Moyer interview, the *Power of Myth*. Anyway, who is that man? I said Joe Campbell. She said, "Well, why doesn't he come?" How can I do that? I mean I don't know. So I knew he lived in Greenwich Village [New York, NY], and so I got a really great directory assistance, 9-1-1 [4-1-1], and she helped me find him in Greenwich Village. It turned out there is only one Joseph Campbell in Greenwich Village at the time. So I called, and his wife answered. And she says, "Well, I'll get back to you," when I made the proposal. And she did. And so he stopped here. And we had, you know, he came at the behest of the ceramic department. So he was our guest.

MS. RIEDEL: How extraordinary!

MR. EBERLE: Not the university.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. This was 1982 I think. Yes, I think that's what your notes said maybe?

MR. EBERLE: I don't remember. Again the dates are a little fuzzy for me. But the kids would put together a potluck luncheon. So that whoever the guest was could enjoy and be in the—so there was Joseph Campbell down with his suit.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: And he's in the pot shop, and he is just thrilled with the whole thing. And we got done eating, and he held forth in the studio. And the kids were hanging onto the rafters. I mean they came from all the students, and it was a wonderful time.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, I imagine.

MR. EBERLE: So that was actually the—and the message that he left us was, well, the literal message was "Cut off your head." But he was saying was, "Don't think your way through it. When you're doing your art, get rid of your head and just let your body do it."

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: So he knew enough about the process of art to get us to that point.

MS. RIEDEL: And he said body, not heart.

MR. EBERLE: He may have said heart.

MS. RIEDEL: Because you were discussing the haptic fellow earlier. And I'm just trying to—

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: But yet the head out of the way one way or another.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, yes. And let the creativity come out.

MS. RIEDEL: He used Medusa as the correlation there. But then he gave an evening lecture, which was very well attended. And then he went out to a conference in Toronto. And then after that his career just went boom, through the roof. Well, with *Star Wars [Episode IV: A New Hope*. George Lucas, 1977 and the *Power of Myth* interviews, etc.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. EBERLE: But he really thoroughly enjoyed his stay here.

MS. RIEDEL: And he was here for a day.

MR. EBERLE: Just for a day.

MS. RIEDEL: Extraordinary.

MR. EBERLE: Down in the pot shop getting his suit dirty. Talking with the kids. [Laughs.] Not about ceramics, about mythology.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right, right. Which of course figures so prominently and repeatedly in your work.

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

MS. RIEDEL: And so was that really the seed, this experience of Campbell that brought mythology into the work?

MR. EBERLE: The first exposure, yes.

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

MR. EBERLE: It's remarkable that in my education in undergraduate and graduate school that there was no discussion whatsoever of mythology in any class or curriculum.

MS. RIEDEL: It is, isn't it?

MR. EBERLE: Which I—is it a coincidence? Is it that I went to two schools that just didn't teach it? Or was it something that was old-fashioned and not being taught anymore. But I had no idea. I had no idea until I saw Joseph Campbell on TV. And I got a transcript of that meeting, you know. I kept reading and reading. So, yes, that was very important to me. And also the thing about symbols. My wife is Carpatho-Russian, and I am mostly Polish. And so geographically they're all pretty close. But I learned through her how to do pysanky or the Ukrainian decorative eggs.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah.

MR. EBERLE: Which are loaded with all—everything on them has a meaning to them anyway in symbols.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: And that's the first time I really came across a system of meaning of symbol. And so we, she and I and the kids, too, we all did pysanky. And pysanky really did figure into then, the china painted pieces, fitted into a larger sense of where symbolism and that was headed for, pattern.

MS. RIEDEL: Now what is pysanky. I'm not familiar with it.

MR. EBERLE: Oh, Ukrainian decorative Easter eggs.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, okay. That's just the term for the eggs.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. So we have an egg here in front of us now.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, we have the egg here. And I don't remember their protocol. But the deer or he reindeer have great significance. And this seems like a fruit tree. But all these—I'm sorry I don't remember all the symbolism. But we—there is a book on it. But it's very strict, it's very strict. Just like Russian icon painting now is extremely rigid.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: But the original Russian icon painting is tremendous stuff. It's really good before all the dogma hits it. Now, this is dogmatic. But still it was the first time that I've really run into any kind of a system in undergraduate school or graduate school, believe it or not. The question is: What is that mark that you're making. What is that image? What is that thing? And it was never brought up. Which might be partially a fault of the sixties where everything was thrown out.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: But I'm not even sure it was really taught in the fifties either.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And it's interesting because I think about your work as being a fusion of so many different systems of mythological and psychological pattern systems.

MR. EBERLE: It is.

MS. RIEDEL: So it's interesting to hear about the roots of this one in particular.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And also I'm a generalist. I'm not specific. I don't remember facts, I don't remember—if I study something then I'm done with it, and I forget what it is. Except that what I do do is I retain a sense of it. In order to do the houses or the architectural works that I do, I don't need to study architecture. I just need to have and embrace a sense of what that is. And so in doing that, then my so-called architectural pieces, which by the way I never thought of as architectural myself, then are invention. It's invention on my part and now duplication.

MS. RIEDEL: So is that how you—how did you think of them if you don't think of them as architecture?

MR. EBERLE: Not as architecture per se but the sense of. And what we're talking about is the interior space.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Okay.

MR. EBERLE: So it's the interior-exterior, and it's also—a lot of formal concerns come into this, too, like scale.

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

MR. EBERLE: What, in my way of thinking or feeling my way through of the form, like the largest lidded forms, what is it that on that lid that's going to give one a sense of scale. And someone explained to me yesterday a fair definition of scale, in that scale is the object can be as big as it wants to be or as small as it can be. So I'm not sure if that's really—I'm not even sure that I'm repeating that well enough. But anyway, if I put a common pottery knob on it, you know, it gives it a scale.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Then it becomes a tureen, and it's locked in space.

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

MR. EBERLE: It's locked in size. But if that changes, you know, what activity, visual activity, what form activity, is going to make that larger in scale?

MS. RIEDEL: Right. I see.

MR. EBERLE: And so that's where the architectonic thing comes in. And I have people sending me architectural things, really neat stuff, that I ought to pay attention to. And I just throw it right in the file. I throw it away because I don't need it.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: That's not what I'm looking at.

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

MR. EBERLE: At all.

MS. RIEDEL: So you're looking at the form, the form with the potential to make something, to play with the scale.

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

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

MR. EBERLE: No to play with it; to alter it.

MS. RIEDEL: To alter it.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Which, if one is not aware of it, which is a battle in pottery versus a more sculptural vessel kind of thing. Pottery should be here and now. Our coffee cups, tea cups here, and they should be the scale that they are. I mean you don't want to be drinking out of a skyscraper.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Particularly first thing in the morning. [They laugh.] You want the cup to be a cup in its own size.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Mm-hmm.

MR. EBERLE: Not to be smaller or bigger than it is, just exactly what it is. But when you move into sculpture, then that changes.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Right.

MR. EBERLE: And so that's why potters, me in particular, had, you know, struggled with that for a long time.

MS. RIEDEL: And when I think about your work, I think of huge really, significant variations in scale for the medium that you're working in. For clay I think of the very large vessels that are probably five feet tall and the tiny cups. And it seems that it's something you've explored repeatedly over time.

MR. EBERLE: Oh, yes. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And then I think with the figures themselves on a single vessel can vary significantly in scale and in transparency.

MR. EBERLE: And in size, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

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

MS. RIEDEL: So you're altering a sense of scale both in the two-dimensional and a three-dimensional sense, format and figure.

MR. EBERLE: Well, in drawing a wonderful African drawing—I can't remember, you know, where it came from—but how do you express importance in a person in drawing even stick figures? Well, the important person is the largest one. Well, it's in children's art. Mom and Dad or Grandma and Grandpa are big.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. EBERLE: And the children, you draw yourself as little. And so there's an importance kind of thing happening there, despite the age thing, obvious. But so some of the important figures are larger. The less important figures are smaller. And so there is a drawing from Africa; I've always been impressed about that drawing, where the queen occupies most of the space, and there are these little stick figures running around. Those are the minions. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Do you remember what the name of it is or where you saw it?

MR. EBERLE: It must have been an art history kind of thing. It was in some book somewhere; no, I don't recall.

MS. RIEDEL: Can you explain—or would you explain—what prompted your decision to stop teaching and work in the studio full time?

MR. EBERLE: Well, I was fired.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh!

MR. EBERLE: I didn't attain tenure.

MS. RIEDEL: I see.

MR. EBERLE: And tenure was a long process at CMU, nine years. And it's hard to talk about without whining, you know. I haven't found a really good way of talking about it. They came up with a good reason, what they thought was a good reason, which was totally non-applicable to anybody that taught there or has taught there since. And that is that I didn't have any major show in any major museum in a major city. And they just— It turns out that— The only thing I can think of is there was—I know that he sabotaged me. There was one faculty member. I know that he sabotaged me. But I don't know exactly what for. But the only thing I can think of is that his wife took a class with me. And I'm sort of naïve in a lot of ways. And I didn't know that I was supposed to give her an A regardless of what she did. And she didn't do anything until the night before critiques, and she went out and rakued a few little tchotchkes. So I gave her a C as a gift because she had absolutely failed the class. But, see, I take things like that literally. I mean if you're going to do a class, you do the class.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: So I think I offended him. Is that reason enough to end my career as a teacher? I don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: Was that—I imagine it was—difficult. I imagine it wasn't the way you necessarily wanted to go. Would you have chosen to continue teaching? Or in retrospect maybe it was a very happy accident?

MR. EBERLE: Well, you know, any teacher will tell having a steady paycheck is really nice. Can I make it as an artist selling me work? I have no idea. I certainly hadn't had any success with that in teaching and selling my work. So the outlook was very bleak. But what else could I do? I didn't know how to do anything other than teach. And I didn't want to teach anymore. So let's open a studio.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. So you had no interest in going anyplace else?

MR. EBERLE: No. I looked at some places. I went out and visited with Norm [Norman] Schulman out at [Ohio State University], Columbus [OH].. He wanted me to come out there and teach with him, and I almost did. But in the 11th hour I said no. "I just really can't teach anymore. It wouldn't be fair to you, Norm, and it wouldn't be fair to me." And it certainly wouldn't be fair to the students. So I said no.

MS. RIEDEL: That whole experience of tenure soured things that you just didn't want to go on? Or you were just done with teaching?

MR. EBERLE: Yes, both.

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

MR. EBERLE: Both. Well, things were percolating. Remember I had already discovered the black and white, although I didn't realize how important that would be in the studio.

MS. RIEDEL: How did you discover that?

MR. EBERLE: I listened to the audience.

MS. RIEDEL: And they really responded to the black-and-white work.

MR. EBERLE: You know in school as a student or a teacher, you think that one learns or thinks that everything's a struggle, that you have to struggle to learn something.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And the things that come naturally to you, you tend to dismiss as, that is too easy. You know this thing has to be difficult to be worth anything.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And there is also a penchant for disguising what you really wanted to talk about in your art, at least I had that, and I know a few others that have it. I don't know how universal it is. But there is a sense of, I know and you don't. You being the audience. But it's really like, I really don't know, so how can you possibly know? [They laugh.] But anyway there's sort of a culture or something, whatever you want to call it, that says, you know, if you work is popular, then it's probably not any good.

MS. RIEDEL: Hmm.

MR. EBERLE: But from my very first black-and-white experience, the sigillata on porcelain, it was welcomed by anybody who saw it and unless they were dead from the neck up, which there are a few, but not many. And so it took maybe six months of being at the studio until I woke up and said, Wait a minute, listen to your, you know, who's your audience? And listen to what they're saying. And as long as I can keep my own integrity and not bend what I do to popular flavor, then I think I'll be okay. And that's turned out to be correct. Some—well, we'll get to that with galleries. You know some people want me to walk the line with my work perhaps and not deviate into sculpture. Things like this.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Not pay so much attention to drawing. And I just, you know, it's not being contrary. But I just have to do what I have to do.

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

MR. EBERLE: Whatever that is in the moment.

MS. RIEDEL: I think it's interesting to think about—or to point out at this point—that when I think of your work dating from this period, the mid-eighties—when you first had the studio—I just think of an enormous amount of experimentation happening. I think of that very large greener's [ph] figure. I think of that abstract footstool piece. So it seems to me that a lot of experimentation was happening: There was the introduction of the figure. There was a lot of pattern. There was the black and white. It seems that a lot of the seeds for your career were very much already in operation there and then.

MR. EBERLE: Pretty much. Pretty much. One thing we haven't talked about was my interest in psychology, which really came from Campbell, who was a firm Jungian [Carl Jung]. And so when, you know, somebody handed me Jung's *Man and His Symbols* [Carl Jung, ed., 1964, which he didn't write, but still.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: So that makes it.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Exactly. Sure.

MR. EBERLE: But, you know, after all these years, just as an afterthought, I still don't know what symbol is. And neither do the people whom I talk with. We really don't know what that means. I don't know what that means. So Jung became important and then James Hillman became important to me. And so all that, mythology and James Hillman's take on mythology and symbol, and taking all that information, then it became fuel.

MS. RIEDEL: When I think of Hillman, I think of archetypal psychology.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: It's almost an intersection between—there's that mythological sense and the human sense in that archetype, almost an intersection between human experience and mythological experience in the archetypal. No?

MR. EBERLE: What the tape can't see is my face drooping down and going into blankness because remember I'm a generalist. I don't remember, nor can I articulate—

MS. RIEDEL: Maybe the intersection of the personal and the universal's a better way to think about it.

MR. EBERLE: Okay. [Laughs.] I don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: Does that resonate?

MR. EBERLE: I don't know. I don't know. What I get from Hillman is number one, my work— He talks about, in interpreting dreams, he talks about narrative versus imagistic. Some of our dreams are narrative certainly. And maybe if they are narrative, then they're more understandable. But there's also the dream which is just a series of images, which he calls imagistic. Which is more stream of consciousness.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And what he says about—what sticks with me is in his interpretation of dreams, he says, Read the image, stupid. [Ms. Riedel laughs.] Don't bring in all this dogmatic mythology and symbology.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Because— Okay, water. How many different things can water be?

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly.

MR. EBERLE: And why say that, oh, it's Narcissus, okay, seeing his own reflection. If that image is in the dream, it might not be that at all, if you're open to just read the image. What is the image saying to you? And so even I can interpret dreams, as it were and feel comfortable doing that. But I enjoy listening to my wife's dreams. I think that's the only other person whose dreams I listen to.

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

MR. EBERLE: But that's not really what I'm talking about. We're talking about image. And also Hillman's study or theories on Puer and Senex are extremely important. Puer being the trickster boy, and Senex being the wise old man. A banker is Mr. Senex, no humor. All business. Puer is the guys drinking beer on TV ads. [Ms. Riedel laughs.] Puerile.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Adolescent.

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

MR. EBERLE: But that's one thing. In terms of people, Voulkos was a rampant Puer.

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

MR. EBERLE: He had very little Senex. The trick is I learned is to balance the two. Not always. But, you know, let them go up and down, let them seesaw because Senex helps the child not get in trouble, and the child, trickster, helps the Senex not to take himself too seriously. That's extremely simplistic.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: But this is applicable to any artist, you know, any artist. And I think it's important stuff.

MS. RIEDEL: And does that dialog play out in the work?

MR. EBERLE: It plays out in process.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: That's where it really plays out. Sometimes it shows up.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. That makes sense.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Sometimes visually it shows up. I'll have a wise old—my wise old men can show up as a decrepit me, you know, with a potbelly and just kind of slumped over. Or it can show up as a sage or a wise man. Or he can show up as a giver of gift. That piece in there is *The Gift to the Child* [1997]

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, okay.

MR. EBERLE: Which we can look at later. Where it's the older man giving the gift to the child. So there's the parental, paternal thing going on. What was I talking about?

MS. RIEDEL: How that plays out in the process and sometimes in the work itself.

MR. EBERLE: Sometimes in the work itself. But more just in the sense and learning and being confident about the encounter.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

MR. EBERLE: Going into the arena, going into chaos, going through the door into chaos and trying to find order.

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

MR. EBERLE: I think in some—like somebody said poetry is. I don't remember. See that? I just don't remember quotations and things like that. But it has something to do with poetry or music pulling things out of the silence. You know, where do they come from? Comes from the silence?

MS. RIEDEL: Now that's interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And I don't worry about meaning too much. I do worry about it, but I say not too much because I really haven't come up with a good way of explaining the meaning. Except I come back, and I fall back to Joe Campbell says, "What does a rose mean?" You know it's an experience. If you experience a rose, what does it mean? It doesn't have to have a meaning or the experience is the meaning.

MS. RIEDEL: It's actually—that ties in, I think, interestingly to the little we've said so far about your way of working, which is that so much is worked out in the process of working. You don't do sketches ahead of time of the drawings. You don't sketch the forms ahead of time.

MR. EBERLE: No, no.

MS. RIEDEL: It all is very much evolving in the moment.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Yes. It's working with material, working—being willing to walk off a cliff. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: How so?

MR. EBERLE: Well, you know, because it's not dictated. I don't know where I'm going with it. I might fail.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, the whole idea of constructing these forms out of porcelain and firing them to cone nine strikes me as walking off a cliff. I mean I think of—

MR. EBERLE: It is kind of nuts, isn't it?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, it is. [Laughs.] If I were going to do that kind of construction, I might not use porcelain to cone nine.

MR. EBERLE: [Laughs.] Well, what else would I do?

MS. RIEDEL: I don't know. And as you were saying, the color of this particular porcelain is taken to that temperature. One of the things that you like so much is that blue white, right, rather than the warm white.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, the blue white. And it jumps right out—you know it demands attention if it's a good fire. But the quality of the clay and the quality of the paint merging, I know in experience, just doesn't happen in any other way. And my forms and my drawing are not separate. But they've developed together over the years.

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

MR. EBERLE: Where the work gets bigger and more adventuresome, let's say. It starts going other places.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. The form in particular is just really—well, actually when I think of it, it started out fairly experimental. Then you've certainly explored.

MR. EBERLE: I've always had that experimental thing going on.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

MR. EBERLE: Even in Philadelphia towards the end.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And I think about that gleaner piece in the mid-eighties as being a very tall constructed figure. And in many ways it seems you've come full circle now with much smaller constructed and deconstructed figures.

MR. EBERLE: I usually work all sizes at the same time.

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

MR. EBERLE: Which is all scales at the same time. Which would you—I don't know exactly; I don't know what it is. Size or scale. But I work the relative distance that I can in porcelain. And I'm limited to porcelain because there is no other clay that can give me what I need. And what I need has been developed in the painting over the years. So everything is intricately woven. That what is possible is derived from the materials and the process.

MS. RIEDEL: And is it the way the terra sigillata in particular goes over the porcelain in particular in terms of flow and stroke and line that you're referring to?

MR. EBERLE: Yes, yes, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Because that's very particular. I mean just thinking about how different—I know you've experimented for years with different oxides. And I assume you may have probably experimented with different clay bodies, too. 'Til you found that perfect combination that would allow you to do what you wanted to do.

MR. EBERLE: I don't know if there's anything that I haven't tried. I can't think of it.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] It feels that way when I look at the work.

MR. EBERLE: Except slip casting.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, okay.

MR. EBERLE: I won't do—

MS. RIEDEL: You're not going there.

MR. EBERLE: Anyway.

MS. RIEDEL: In 1986 there was a small piece I saw that made me think it was the first time I'd seen a piece that was so small and so psychological in focus. And I'm thinking of that [*Anima, Animus* [1986] piece. Is that a period in which you begin to experiment with a more miniature sense sensibility and a more psychological sensibility? Or had that been going on for some time?

MR. EBERLE: 'Eighty-six would be two years into—one or two years—into the studio.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Maybe we should just talk about the studio experience, the first year or two and what that was like, to be full-time focused on the work.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And I'd had no experience with that. So how does one know? You just feel your way through it. And like I said, I quickly discovered that glazed pottery, I couldn't earn a living. I couldn't support a family with that work, regardless of how good or bad it was. It turns out it was not very good. [They laugh.] And so what should I do? I worked with the large figures, full-size figures in a fire-clay body. And later large floor vases. But it was really—I needed to come back and just listen to myself and listen to who was looking at the stuff and say, okay, it's the black and white. So let's go with it. And simultaneously again I'm reading Jung, I'm reading Campbell, and I'm reading Hillman. And so all of that stuff was coming with me. And plus the art or other instances where I find evidence of that working.

MS. RIEDEL: Anything come to mind?

MR. EBERLE: Oh, yes. A light bulb came on for me. A light came on for me when I looked at the Rockefeller Wing at the MET [Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC], of the South Seas, primitive art.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, okay. Okay.

MR. EBERLE: The longboats with the animals on them. And just a fabulous exhibit and ways of using pattern that made sense. And, boy, if I could come anywhere near the vitality that they had in their work. I've never hit that. But it's a good thing to shoot for. But there was also a revelation in that exhibit, I think, in the lower-ceilinged room before the big room, is this ceiling of a longhouse painted bark. And they'd painted the bark with clay. And the clay was still "pitted" ["strong" –EE] in color. And I'm standing there and thinking, clay is inert. It doesn't fade.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. EBERLE: So sigillata, and I started using sigillata gesso on paper also.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Okay. As opposed to oxides or pigments.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: So I think that answers the question you asked me.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] We were talking about art that embodied some of the ideas that you were reading or the sense you were reading from Hillman and Jung and Campbell, I think.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. So what was I looking at that time. It's too long ago to recall.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Mm-hmm.

MR. EBERLE: That's be 26 years ago.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: A lot was happening.

MS. RIEDEL: And the drawings and the clay both in these mid- and late eighties, they're seeds, I think, of your classic work as it evolved. But it feels much more sparsely populated. Everything feels that there's much more negative space around either the symbols or lines or even the figures.

MR. EBERLE: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] At that time I was keenly aware of negative space as it were. I've recently come to think that negative space is not a good word. And I know that there's another word out there for it. But it's the space—and that other good word comes from science. It comes from robotics and seeing, teaching computers how to see. That's where it comes from.

MS. RIEDEL: How interesting.

MR. EBERLE: But in an art way we really don't have a word for the space in between things.

MS. RIEDEL: That's true.

MR. EBERLE: In English.

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

MR. EBERLE: And so just in a recent show with Peter Beasecker down at the Santa Fe [NM], I called the show "The Space Between Things." And it would be nice if there was one word, you know, instead of a whole long description.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. I read that, too, the space between.

MR. EBERLE: The interval. And I'm also using interval in titles of the pieces right now. Where I'm concerned in that interval between forms, whether they be physical forms in the Santa Fe show, or painted forms like in the early bowls of mine like Mimbres works. And, you know, where did they learn that? They just had a sense of that space. They had a sense of it, and they exercised it.

MS. RIEDEL: Did the first rectilinear pieces begin in the late eighties?

MR. EBERLE: Yes, I think they did. I'm a little loose with the dates again. But, yes, I believe they did begin in the late eighties. I became braver. Well, braver? More brave. Up until that point most of the forms were round like a round vase. But working with the sigillata black paint and grays on the works, I kept asking of the forms, "What form do I need to make in order to paint?" What is that form? What is that form? Is it—casually I would say is it the forms that I've always been making? Or is it a special form that's required for me to be able to do more painting? And that's what it turned out. So the faceted faces, four or five sides, came out and variations on that. So that the faceted—faceting the clay or giving it a number of sides—then set up scenes or vignettes. Here it is in my notes. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Perfect.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And the forms have to be painted. If I were to finish the form in clay, then it's finished. And then anything that I do to it like painting on it would be overdone.

MS. RIEDEL: I see.

MR. EBERLE: So the forms, if they are made for the painting, then have to be not done or begging to be painted.

MS. RIEDEL: And how does that process work since you don't sketch a scene or a vignette? How do you know what you want to put on the form in order to make the form?

MR. EBERLE: I don't.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: I just ask of the form, what form? Let me express it in a different way. In ceramics we're often taught to make things fast. We're on time. There's a time element to it. So a question that I ask myself literally over there was what kind of a form can I make that demands one full day's work? One day of painting it. And that was a peepee step for me. And then it became a week eventually. What form can I make that requires a month to paint? In other words, eliminating time as an element in, formal element in, in terms of what you're making.

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

MR. EBERLE: Which is part of eliminating the potter's conscience. Now so does the time or the time of involvement answer that—well, it's another way of answering it, whatever you asked me.

MS. RIEDEL: Shall we take a break? [They laugh.]

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

[END OF DISC 3]

MS. RIEDEL: Right before we paused for lunch, I think we talked about the rectilinear forms.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And so let's talking briefly before close today. You say 1991 was a pivotal and significant year.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, it was.

MS. RIEDEL: And what in particular comes to mind?

MR. EBERLE: Well, in the late eighties the pentagonal forms—what did you just call those?

MS. RIEDEL: The architectural lidded forms?

MR. EBERLE: No, the other ones.

MS. RIEDEL: Rectilinear?

MR. EBERLE: The rectilinear forms. Those started to emerge late eighties with the feet.

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

MR. EBERLE: And faceted sides. And then in 1989 I joined Garth Clark Gallery [New York, NY] and had the first show up there with mostly smaller works. And there may have been—I'm not sure. [Inaudible] problems not there yet.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Because that show was smaller, but it was very successful.

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

MR. EBERLE: And then I started to do the larger, slightly larger faceted or five-side, four-sided pieces. Sometimes six. And then the opportunity for a museum show here in Pittsburgh at the Carnegie came for '91. It was the year of the International. So I had a really beautiful show, and it was well curated by the curator for decorative arts and the director of the museum; they co-curated the show.

MS. RIEDEL: And what were their names?

MR. EBERLE: Philip Johnson was the director, who is now I believe still at RISD [Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI]. And— [Vicky A. Clark –EE]

MS. RIEDEL: It'll come, or we can add it later.

MR. EBERLE: We can add it later. And so that was good. And so multiple studio visits throughout the year, starting in '90 and then it was picking up speed in the spring of '91. And then they had the show selected by let's say June. And so that show went up, and that was very nice show that they selected. And that had some little bit larger pieces in there. Some lidded pieces, tall lidded pieces, and a number of bowls. Anyway, that was a very successful show.

MS. RIEDEL: Paintings and ceramics. Oh, sorry, drawings and ceramics as well?

MR. EBERLE: No drawings.

MS. RIEDEL: No drawings.

MR. EBERLE: Just the straight black and white.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: And then as soon as they finalized their selection in June, I also had a one-man show slated for Garth Clark in October, for which I did not have any work. So I turned around and made a powerful show for Garth. I don't know where that energy came from, but somehow it came. And I do not work at night. I was very rigorous about that.

MS. RIEDEL: WE were just mentioning how you really need natural light; you insisted on natural light.

MR. EBERLE: I need natural light. And also in the early—in the mid-eighties and late eighties—my sons were teenagers. And they needed to have a father figure home.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: [Laughs.] For all imaginable reasons. [They laugh.] So I couldn't abandon them. So I never worked at night. So during the days I did it. And it was a pretty good show at Garth, too.

MS. RIEDEL: And that show at Garth's, was that '91 as well?

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: October '91.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And the hermetic crowns were in that show?

MR. EBERLE: That might have been that show.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. I imagine it must have been.

MR. EBERLE: I'd have to look back, but I think it was. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And that was in many ways sort of a breakthrough piece or a breakthrough show, no?

MR. EBERLE: Yes, it was. Yes. Mm-hmm. The hermetic crown [*Hermetic Crown*, 1991, and *Hermetic Crown II*, 1991] form, and at the same time were these metaphorical boats and metaphorical teapots. Metaphysical boats. Things like that. One of the tremendous, very fluid ideas. And hermetic crown, what I'm concentrating in making those is the shape of the head and the top of the head and maybe exchanging that body part also with the crown, a crown form. And hermetic—why did I call it hermetic? That over time has lost its—I've lost the meaning of that. But it had sense at the time. Hermetic. Oh, it's Hermes.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah! Oh, that makes sense.

MR. EBERLE: Messengers.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure. And also that's—I think of Hermes so much as going between spaces.

MR. EBERLE: That's right.

MS. RIEDEL: So that makes a lot of sense for your work.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: That's what we were just talking about.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, there's a lot of nice coincidences that were going on like that. And they still are.

MS. RIEDEL: And form-wise it was very powerful and incredibly dense, painting and images, drawings, on that piece in particular.

MR. EBERLE: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yes, that must have been '91. That must have been that '91 show up there, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So you were finding being in the studio full time, it's a good thing you were there working full time because you were able to produce the amount of work that you needed to do.

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

MS. RIEDEL: And really I think there are so few artists who have the opportunity or ability to be in the studio full time, that that's an interesting example of what one can accomplish when one is able to focus full time on his work.

MR. EBERLE: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] I'm not sure how much that means. For instance, Akio [Takamori] teaches—taught—and he's been very prolific.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, that's true.

MR. EBERLE: Kurt Weiser teaches. And I mean Kurt and Akio really teach.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: I mean they're not pretenders.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Not pretenders. They're not title-holders like some people are. They really sacrifice the teaching. They don't teach. They just travel and do shows. And make work. Actually Garth Clark was populated by, I believe, all teachers that I know of, at least in the United States. Some of the ones in Europe, I'm not real familiar with, like—I can't remember their names now. But I believe I was the only one of the few full-time artists working.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And I'm sure it depends, too, on the university as well. A research university would allow its professors time—would understand that that career needs to be developed in tandem with the teaching career. Whereas I'm sure other colleges might—

MR. EBERLE: Yes, but what school is that? [They laugh.] Maybe I'll apply. Maybe I'll apply.

MS. RIEDEL: In theory. Well, I had that explained in that fashion once.

MR. EBERLE: Okay. Alright.

MS. RIEDEL: In the hermetic crown [*Hemetic Crown*, 1991], did that lead to then the more architectural, more architectonic forms like I think of Mythos time [*Mythos Time*, 1994] that developed over the next few years?

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Not only in subject matter or challenge, but also in just practically figuring out how to get a lid on a—the hermetic crown was round. But the lid was faceted. So trying to get a lid that was more than just a casserole lid, how do I do that? So that that information from the hermetic crown then fed other processes later for the larger architectural—so-called architectural—pieces. We were talking about this—I have a drawing here that's maybe eight inches high and 12 inches long, which is an unusual form. And I was looking at that drawing—I'm repeating this for this.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes. Please do.

MR. EBERLE: And I was looking for that drawing [*Drawing for a Large Porcelain*, 2003 –EE]. I couldn't quite solve it. So I have a chair, an easy chair, where I can sit in the studio and rest or relax or look at things. And so I had that drawing sitting there for three or four weeks trying to solve it. Until I just had an idea to go over to the drawing and bend it back to half circle. And bing! That it was. The drawing was solved because I was taking a three-dimensional sense of space or form and applying that to a two-dimensional form, which didn't work. And so by bending it, making the drawing three-dimensional, I immediately saw, well, there it is. That's what's going on.

MS. RIEDEL: Because in a drawing you had the left-hand side and the right-hand side, and the middle was unresolved.

MR. EBERLE: Right. And so it should've worked but it wasn't until I bent it. So then the next question was, well, what form do I make that is this proportion? And so I set off to make what became eventually the faceted larger architectural forms.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] You mentioned that there was also a kiln accident [April 17, 1993 –EE] at this time that sent you off—or somehow was pivotal in developing some new aspect of your work. Is that something you'd like to talk about on the tape? If not, we can—

MR. EBERLE: We just talked about that.

MS. RIEDEL: But what was it exactly lost in the kiln?

MR. EBERLE: Well, the first large pieces were destroyed in that kiln accident.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, okay.

MR. EBERLE: But the evidence was there. I knew I had to continue with that, so I just did.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. I see. Okay.

MR. EBERLE: It's just unfortunate that I don't have—I have a shard, but that's about all.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. So I think of this period in the early and mid-nineties as just being a very rich one for the work. I think of very significant pieces: *The Grass Will Grow Again* [1994], and *Twenty-five Years to Bachelard* [1995] [Gaston Bachelard]. We haven't talked about that at all, Bachelard and that influence. Perhaps this would be an appropriate time to talk about that as an influence?

MR. EBERLE: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Well, it's hard to say at this point where the house form came from or the need to build the house. Did it come from being snotty and saying, Okay, you want architectural form. I'll make a house. Or did it come from children's art. And that is that all children, at least in the United States, all draw the same type of house. And that's the house that I made. It's that house symbol. But of course in the children's art, they have the front door and the windows which are not coinciding with the house that they live in whatsoever.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: But it's still *the* house. And so that's what I fashioned my first house on. Except I had no windows and doors. Because as soon as you put windows and doors on, you've set the scale. So I took the scale out of it.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Also when the lid comes on, it changes—well, it eliminates the interior or certainly changes the interior. Were you thinking specifically about interior and exterior as this work as evolving? What was exposed? What was hidden? Was that how it was exposed?

MR. EBERLE: Well, there was nothing painted on the inside. Is that what you were asking? No.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, I'm thinking about some of the bowls, the large bowls. What year did some of those major large bowls that were painted both interior and exterior?

MR. EBERLE: Oh, that was relatively recent.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, so that's much more recent. Okay.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, three years ago, I think.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. I didn't realize those were that recent.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Alright.

MR. EBERLE: No, I didn't affect the interior of those house forms. And I made maybe four or five of those, I'm not sure.

MS. RIEDEL: And it's interesting because they're also figures very much in a sort of environment. But the scale of the figures varies, as we were talking about, the scale of the actual form.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: They're certainly nonlinear narrative sensibility.

MR. EBERLE: Correct. As Hillman calls imagistic.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Varying degrees of transparency, capacity. And real fusion of mythological and psychological and archetypal characters: animals figuring in there, birds, monkeys.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, I think so. And I believe there are some questions that one could ask about figures on the outside of the house not occupying the inside of the house. I'm not sure what all that means. Nor do I care to know what it means because it just seemed natural to do whatever I did. So the inside of those pieces was not painted. Very seldom did I paint the inside of any of those large forms.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: As in never. [They laugh.] I'll paint the inside of a small form a little bit, which is a lot more manageable. But remember that I'm painting these pieces when they're green.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And I can't lift it up and hold it in one hand and move it around and turn it on—I can't do any of that. It has to pretty much remain in place.

MS. RIEDEL: How did the evolution of the interaction between patterns and symbols and the figures come about? Because we've seen bowls that are strictly pattern. And then ceramics that were more strictly figurative. But then they become really significantly entwined.

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

MS. RIEDEL: Or juxtaposed might be a better way to put it.

MR. EBERLE: Well, you know, I studied it well, I guess. In the beginning of the studio, in the first several years, when I went in to paint, I was not sure of who I was that day. Was I Mr. Geometric or was I Mr. Figure? And it sounds silly, but that's the way it was. Am I geometric today, or am I figurative today? And wouldn't know until the brush hit the piece.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: And literally—this might sound strange—but literally if I had a need to paint geometric, but that was not a day to paint geometric, but rather a figure, my head would hurt.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Now we're talking over a period of months and maybe even a year and a half where I was paying attention to what my brain was doing physically. And so I learned to recognize pretty quickly that day which I was: right brain or left brain. And paying a lot of attention to that bridge between the two.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: And that would hum. Yes, literally it would hum, the bridge. And so just being aware of that, it's kind of like bio—what is it, biofeedback?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: That I taught myself to be able to do either of them for anything that I wanted to in that day. Because my whole brain then was acting as one, rather than this side this day, left side another day.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, that could be exhausting.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, yes, yes. Well, it's the way my brain worked anyway.

MS. RIEDEL: And we've talked about the need for natural light in order for you to paint.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Are there any other qualities that are specific to your work environment, essential: quiet, music.

MR. EBERLE: I very seldom play music when I'm working. I play music when I'm not. It's not arrogance that I say this, but I can't work, I can't be as creative as I can be when I'm listening to somebody else's creativity because I naturally want to pay attention to that.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: I want to pay attention to their singing or the melody or the song or Yo-Yo Ma. Anything that I do—Yo-Yo Ma's playing, anything that I'm doing is terribly insignificant. So what the hell am I doing here? So therefore don't play it, you know. Don't go up against the other creative stuff. I could usually listen to talk radio. But finding talk radio that was compatible with my politics was difficult. But then in later years I had BBC because somebody got me an X—one of those Sirius satellite radios. So I can listen to a lot of varied things. So in the last years at the studio, since 2004, 2005, then I was listening to BBC. Just for something to keep my company in some ways because I do work alone.

MS. RIEDEL: And do you enforce that? I mean do you have a phone?

MR. EBERLE: Had a phone, and I always answered it. Usually answered it. But I did have—well, the studio's no more. But James Shipman was my last studio—sorry—was my last graduate student at Carnegie Mellon. And we were standing around trying to figure out what to do. And I said, "Well, I'm going to do a studio, do you want to come?" He says, "Okay." So he was with me the full 25, 26 years over there.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, really!

MR. EBERLE: But he did his thing, and I did mine. We very, very—we did a little bit of collaborative work in way, way in the beginning, but eventually did not work together on art. Of course we both maintained the space, etc. So he was a good studio person to be with. And he had skills that I didn't have, and I had skills that he didn't have.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you share the same space?

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Well, more or less. No.

MS. RIEDEL: One large room.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, the layout of the space allowed us not to even see each other. Yes. But now that the studio is moving, we're moving in different directions away from one another.

MS. RIEDEL: And we might just mention now that the studio was lost how long ago to eminent domain?

MR. EBERLE: I moved out February 26, 2010.

MS. RIEDEL: I see you just have moved out.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Due to eminent domain. Which is fine because they really do need to expand that road. So I have no animosity towards the state. But I am lost without my studio. I haven't been able to find a suitable—we've been looking for over a year and haven't found it yet.

MS. RIEDEL: Because you need—well, you need that natural light.

MR. EBERLE: I need the natural light. But the big deal-breaker usually is the kiln.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Code-wise.

MS. RIEDEL: And I imagine it's much harder now than it was 25 or 30 years ago.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, it is because the cities and towns wherever you're going, they're paying a lot more attention to code—and rightfully so. I mean they're made to keep things safe.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And people safe so—so anyway, the gas kiln is a deal-breaker on a lot of ventures that we were looking at.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you find that you've been able to move into drawing until the ceramics is active again? Or that really hasn't been?

MR. EBERLE: Well, I haven't found the method to do the drawing yet. I thought it could occur in my basement. But I ran into that natural light thing again, which I just discovered a couple of days ago, that that's why I can't do it down there. So I have to find a way of getting out of doors, I guess, to do the drawing.

MS. RIEDEL: Maybe we'll wind up today with the nineties.

MR. EBERLE: Okay.

MS. RIEDEL: And then we'll pick up again tomorrow.

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

MS. RIEDEL: So I think of a couple of significant things towards the tail end of the decade. I think you mentioned 1998 also was a very prolific year. I think *Six Imperfect Letters to Heaven* [1998] came about that year.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, the nineties were very good. The larger forms were coming out. And the forms, the painting, and the information that went into the painting all kind of coalesced and really came together. And it was in a really quite nice and natural way. And things were flowing very nicely. And I was making great progress, learning how to put lids on those pieces and then learning how to make the houses. But it's more than just those physical forms. It's getting at—well, for instance, *Twenty-five Years After Bachelard*—you pronounce Bachelard different than I do.

MS. RIEDEL: You probably pronounce it correctly.

MR. EBERLE: Anyway, I had read him in graduate school, courtesy of Bill Parry. And in *The Poetics of Space* [1958] Bachelard talks about the house from cellar to garret. And I was thinking about that a lot all the way from graduate school, which was 1970, until the nineties. So it was 25 years later that making that house that I felt that I had a sense of understanding about what Bachelard was talking about. Intellectually I understood, and even poetically I understood a little bit. But I think that with that piece I really understood it. And so hence the title, *Twenty-five Years After Bachelard*.

MS. RIEDEL: I see, I see. And what exactly did you come to understand beyond the intellect. I'm sure it's difficult to say. Or somehow that was a significant piece.

MR. EBERLE: You're right, it is difficult to say. Huh. I don't know what to say about it. I really don't.

MS. RIEDEL: Maybe it was a further coalescing of all these things that you've been working on?

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Yes, I think things came together with that piece, and it's an immediate recognition for most people on that piece. Now, to define it, to give it meaning verbally, orally, I don't know. The Carnegie Museum [of Art] owns that piece.

MS. RIEDEL: Right about the same time you're doing a series that was completely different than anything you'd done before, your *Phenomenology of the Ten Vessels* [1999] series. Was that happening right—I have '97 to '99.

MR. EBERLE: That's about right. Actually that piece grew out of an invitation from a local print shop: Artist Image Resource, operating on the north side. And they invited artists in, and they would be the craftsmen behind making some prints.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: And so they invited me in. And with that project, everything coalesced also. I had just made a large round form a year—not even a year—before that. And it was maybe 30 inches high. Anyway, it was a straight-sided round form, very plain. And before I painted that, one of those—before I painted it, I was looking at it. And I relaxed in my chair, and I looked at it and said, "What does that remind me of? What is that?" And I said, "What is on the inside of that form? What's on the inside? Is it this? Is it that?" Well, it eventually turned out to be holding things like sulfur, ether, lead, urine, and carbon. And so then I took that white piece; I didn't paint on it. I took it and photographed it. And then we took it to the printmakers, the silkscreeners, and we duplicated that same size on the two-dimensional paper. And so there is the actual ceramic pieces, but yet there's also the corresponding five vessels on the wall. And they differ slightly. And I might say that when I say urine, I don't mean that in a bad or scatological way. There's a really interesting book that was edited by actually a Pittsburgher, a Jungian here in Pittsburgh, called *Salt* [Stanton Marlan, ed., *Salt and the Alchemical Soul*, Woodstock, CN]. And it was interesting because he put together, besides his own theories, he put together three essays, one of them on Jung's writing on salt. And then he asked Hillman to do a writing on salt.

MS. RIEDEL: How interesting.

MR. EBERLE: And it was really wonderful.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you remember his name, the author?

MR. EBERLE: I have the book.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: And, you know, our bodies, it's just a wonderful system for processing water and salts and toxins and everything that is involved in our body, and urine is the vehicle. So that's—when I use urine, that's what I'm talking about. And Hillman quotes somebody else saying that the—in Latin ["Urina puerorum est mercurius" –EE]—that the piss of the young boy is mercurial. And there is a difference between the pee of a young boy and one of an adult.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: So I guess, you know, it would be the pee of a young boy, which is much more attractive. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Let's say, or ur-endearing. So that's why I use that. So, yes, that became highly alchemical.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Highly—if I had that piece to take over again, I would actually not call it *Phenomenology of Ten Vessels*. I would call it the *Phenomena of Ten Vessels*. Because there were ten physical vessels—I'm sorry—five physical vessels and five images, flat images, of vessels. Why is not one of them water? Because there's nothing remarkable about a large 15-gallon bucket of water. There's just nothing remarkable about that.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: But if you're facing 15 gallons of sulfur, now that's significant. And of course of all of these—as I got deeper into the piece, the more coincidences, the more crossovers became more apparent. And I really think it's one of my stronger pieces.

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

MR. EBERLE: And it was to me a fitting way to—if I might say—to close out that century.

MS. RIEDEL: It does strike me—is it the conceptual end of the spectrum or continuum of your work?

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And it certainly is the alchemical. Well, alchemy seems to run throughout. But there is certainly an alchemical elemental —

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: —quality to that.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, there is.

MS. RIEDEL: And it's also non-figurative. There are no figures.

MR. EBERLE: No figures.

MS. RIEDEL: There are no patterns.

MR. EBERLE: No patterns.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Just stating what it is.

MS. RIEDEL: Very minimal quality, which then—that minimalism resurfaces in your work from time to time. But I think that's a very interesting series for that.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Well, there's that space in between coming up again.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: That interval thing. And there's also what, you know, one of a former students is now I consider him a colleague or artistic partner or friend—I don't know what you call it. But anyway, we're knocking back and forth: What is entity? And certainly applies to that piece. What is the entity that we're perceiving. What is that thing? And anyway that was donated to the [The] Museum of [Fine] Arts, Houston [TX]. And they've been—they're photographing the piece now, and it's never been photographed in toto, in whole. So I'm really looking forward to that. And I begged them well enough, that they have agreed to send me copies.

MS. RIEDEL: Fair enough.

MR. EBERLE: Of the thing, of the installation. And they keep— Right now our string—our threads—of emails back and forth is getting very long because they're asking me advice on how to set it up.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah hah!

MR. EBERLE: And I basically said I have no idea because I've never set it up. [They laugh.] So we've been working back and forth on how to do that.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And that piece strikes me also as such an interesting dialog or, again, a back and forth which I think of back and forth as being very much an essence, an important essence, of your work. But a back and forth between two-dimensional and three-dimensional, between very concrete and conceptual at the same time. I mean there's just that—I can't think of another piece that has that much of a tandem relationship between the 2-D and the 3-D or between the—

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

MS. RIEDEL: And at the same time it's devoid of any of the figurative or any of the geometric patterning.

MR. EBERLE: And go figure. And the cross— Okay, even looking at the text, the text, my using text on the piece goes back to high school.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And the love of alphabet. Although the text on here is through stencils, which somebody told me is the way to eliminate ego in the text, to make it more universal, which I liked.

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

MR. EBERLE: But if you really think about it, the way I think about it is line is an invention of man. Line does not exist in nature. Line is an invention of man. And I look at the cave paintings in Lascaux [Montignac, Dordogne, France] and the use of line on the animals. And they also use color as form, too. But what an invention! The lines of those go to compose a beast of some sort, a horse, let's say. And it's just so wonderful. Okay. So there's the history of the abstraction of line. Line is highly abstract. And what kind of lines then make an alphabet? And so all of that comes together you know. The mystery of the line, and the line finds its way in through Sumerian clay tablets to written text, that is, linear text, written, whether you're talking Middle Eastern culture or Eastern culture, calligraphy—is it calligraphy, or is it the Japanese?

MS. RIEDEL: Well, the brush paintings?

MR. EBERLE: Yes, the brush paintings. Oh, my gosh! The weight that they put on the meaning and looking for beauty in a brushstroke. So it all comes together, it all comes together.

MS. RIEDEL: Good. Well, shall we pick up tomorrow?

[END OF DISC 4]

MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Edward Eberle at the artist's home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on June 15, 2010, for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. This is disc number three.

Let's start this morning with a discussion of your exhibition history and how it's evolved from the early craft fairs, I guess. Well, or from the hay bales and—we don't have to go back quite as far as the hay bales and the planks. [Laughs.] But did you begin exhibiting your work at craft fairs? Or where and when did you begin exhibiting?

MR. EBERLE: At craft fairs. And in an occasional juried show. I think one of my—one of the first craft fairs I did was one while I was still in school at Alfred, and it was in Rochester [NY].

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

MR. EBERLE: And Val Cushing did that every year, and he was quite popular there because he was born there and he had quite a following. And it was really humbling to have my booth right next to his.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah-hah! [They laugh.]

MR. EBERLE: Oh, boy! So that was an experience.

MS. RIEDEL: Were you showing functional work at this point.

MR. EBERLE: Oh, yes. It was all functional.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So this would have been the sixties, late sixties—early seventies perhaps.

MR. EBERLE: This would have been the summer of '70.

MS. RIEDEL: So it must have been a heyday for functional ceramics in that part of the world, no?

MR. EBERLE: Yes, it was. It was. We did okay, as I recall. And then I didn't do any of that kind of thing in street fairs in Philly. I did several here in Pittsburgh.

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

MR. EBERLE: And then slowly in Philadelphia worked my way into smaller galleries there.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you remember the names of some of those?

MR. EBERLE: My main gallery was Gallery 252. A wonderful lady, Teddy Jacobs, ran that. And had a number of shows there, particularly two-person shows with Wayne Bates. And I think her gallery was —I think it was on 16th Street. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And what were you showing at this?

MR. EBERLE: And at that same time, The Works Gallery, which is now huge, just started out down on South Street. And it was clearly a craft shop. So every once in a while when I had cups and lower-priced pieces, I would go down, and she would—Ruth Snyderman—would buy those.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, she'd buy them outright.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, that's nice. Unusual. Wasn't that unusual? Was that unusual at that time?

MR. EBERLE: Yes, it was.

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

MR. EBERLE: But I think, you know, they're still in business. So I think they kind of figured it out.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: You know. And even way back then, in her first several years of opening, she said, "Now, I'm not always going to be a craft shop. I have ambitions. But we need to start somewhere." And there was one case that actually worked out. Where they started small and then went big.

MS. RIEDEL: And were you able to transition with them from functional work to more sculptural pieces?

MR. EBERLE: No. By that time, when I moved to Pittsburgh, then—

MS. RIEDEL: That was the end of that.

MR. EBERLE: That was the end of that.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Did you do any of the ACC [American Craft Council] craft fairs?

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Rhinebeck [NY] or anything like that?

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Not Rhinebeck. I did two Baltimore [MD] shows with the early black-and-white pieces and one Springfield [MA] show with that.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Now what was the response like early on to the work?

MR. EBERLE: Oh, it was very good. In terms of buying, eh, not real great. But it was enough to keep us going. And in the first several years in the studio I was doing wholesale. I was doing wholesale, and in my intention of just being able to get through the first two or three or four years doing wholesale.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And then slowly move into high-end consignment. I would not take any low-end consignment, what I call low-end.

MS. RIEDEL: Now what do you mean by that? Are you talking about the production work versus the one-of-a-kind?

MR. EBERLE: Low-end consignment is when the shop or the gallery won't buy the work, but they'll take the work on consignment with no obligation for any additional expenses like flyers and shows and things like that. So advantage to the gallery. No advantage whatsoever to the artist. I call that low-end.

MS. RIEDEL: I see.

MR. EBERLE: And with that then they have no obligation, particularly if it's a mix where they buy work and have low-end consignment. Their emphasis will be on what they've already invested in.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly.

MR. EBERLE: And not the low-end stuff.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: But high-end is different. It's where the gallery commits to the work.

MS. RIEDEL: And that would be, for example, exhibitions, that sort of thing?

MR. EBERLE: Yes. That would be Garth Clark [Gallery, New York, NY], Perimeter [Gallery, Chicago,IL]. Because everything I do now is on consignment, just all of us, you know, but it's high-end. It's where the gallery person has a commitment to you and to your career.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. I've never heard it defined that way, but that makes sense. And you refer to that as high-end consignment.

MR. EBERLE: Well, yes. I don't know where I got that from.

MS. RIEDEL: I've never heard that before.

MR. EBERLE: I think I invented it as a way of talking to young people trying to break in.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Yes.

MR. EBERLE: And caution them, you know, to be careful of the low-end consignment stuff.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] That makes sense.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And I didn't have a— In selling wholesale, the shops, galleries, whatever, whoever buys, once what they see, what they see and what they pick out is exactly what they want to get.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And with my work, even in the wholesale, it was one-of-a-kind because I didn't repeat any pieces exactly. Now I'd repeated a motif if someone would say I really like this rabbit bowl, for instance. I'd say, okay, but it'll go in with the rabbit motif but it's probably not going to look like this. So as a result I did have some fallout because they didn't want to play the game of chance.

MS. RIEDEL: Quick question because this seems like an appropriate time to ask: Did you accept commissions at all? Have you done commissions?

MR. EBERLE: I've done commissions. And usually on commissions I make the piece two or three times because something, for some reason, usually happens to that piece. It might crack in the first fire. Or the first painting might not be what they requested. And so I usually wound up making it two or three times. And I'm losing money doing that.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. And how did a commission work for you? How was that structured? Were they asking you to reproduce something they'd already seen that had sold? Did they come to you with images or ideas they were interested in? How did those work?

MR. EBERLE: Both of those.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: Both of those. But again, I only did several. By several, I think it is two.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Okay.

MR. EBERLE: One had a theme in mind or some images that they would like to see. And the other—I can't remember what you said.

MS. RIEDEL: To reproduce something that perhaps was already sold?

MR. EBERLE: Yes, yes.

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

MR. EBERLE: And that was it. I stopped it.

MS. RIEDEL: So then you said not more.

MR. EBERLE: Correct.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Just too time-consuming for what it took if you have to do each one two to three times for one commission.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, yes. And then in the early days of the studio various people representing art agents in the Pittsburgh area were getting commissions, and I'd be asked to submit a proposal. Until I figured out that I was losing way too much time on a turkey shoot of who gets the commission.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And so I dropped out of that, totally. You know I'd spend maybe a week working up a proposal and doing it correctly. And then you know. And that would be low-end commissions work, where I can't demand money up front for me to pay for that.

MS. RIEDEL: And there'd be no initial deposit or sort of retainer for that proposal even.

MR. EBERLE: Oh, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Especially when you're a full-time artist, that's—yes.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So moving back to the evolution of your exhibition history, right. You were mentioning—yes.

MR. EBERLE: So in Philadelphia selling some small works to The Works Gallery, having some minor success with

Gallery 252—

MS. RIEDEL: And these were primarily the small cups, small bowls in black and white?

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Maybe rectilinear pieces at this point now?

MR. EBERLE: And maybe a smidgen of the sculptural things. I can't quite remember. And then I came to Pittsburgh in '75. And soon after that I had a show at Carnegie Mellon.

MS. RIEDEL: That was the first retrospective there, right?

MR. EBERLE: No. Carnegie Mellon University where I taught.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, okay, okay.

MR. EBERLE: You know the school's gallery.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And that show was important because students saw it, see. I'm new. Who is this fellow? What does he do? So students saw that work, and it became—it helped build up my department.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] I'm going to pause this for one moment. [Audio Break.] So this established you in the community, gave you—people could identify you with your work.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And was this two-dimensional and three-dimensional work?

MR. EBERLE: No, just three-dimensional.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: And that show was mostly porcelain and more the constructivist kind of thing going on there. And so that was '75. And I continued to work.

MS. RIEDEL: And by constructivist, which pieces are we talking about?

MR. EBERLE: The pieces you haven't seen yet.

MS. RIEDEL: I'm trying to think of what these might be.

MR. EBERLE: I have them upstairs.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Abstract, constructed, not figurative at all.

MR. EBERLE: Not usually.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Okay. Because certainly I think of constructed or deconstructed pieces more recently. Also figurative and abstract. But I don't have a sense of what those earlier ones might look like. Were they similar?

MR. EBERLE: No. Were they? No. And you don't have a sense about it because neither do I.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Okay.

MR. EBERLE: You know I'm not explaining it well because I really didn't know what the heck I was doing.

MS. RIEDEL: So they were early experimentations really.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, I was all over the place. I really saw teaching as an opportunity to give me time to look for what I was looking for.

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. So you really took that opportunity to just explore.

MR. EBERLE: I was all over the place. I was doing semi-figurative sculpture. I was doing large outdoor pieces. Site-specific stuff. All over the place.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And all clay.

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

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: For the most part.

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

MR. EBERLE: For the most part.

MS. RIEDEL: And so did the exhibition include work of that range as well?

MR. EBERLE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: No, it was just pedestal work in '75, '76. Most of my shows during that time were in university or college galleries, you know, making the rounds—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: —that way. But in 1980 I was asked to do a show at the Carnegie Museum of Art here, which didn't turn out as well as it might have because the curator of decorative—no, I don't think he was curator of decorative arts. No, he wasn't. But he was a curator of art and invited me to do the show. But in the meantime in that period of asking and the show, a new director came in and cleaned house basically. And so my curator was gone.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh.

MR. EBERLE: And the new regime didn't want anything to do with it.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh.

MR. EBERLE: So I was caught kind of in the middle there. I won't say they didn't want anything to do with it. But it was not their project.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Right.

MR. EBERLE: You know so—

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly. That's unfortunate.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And I'm sure when they're coming in new, they had plenty to do themselves rather than—

MS. RIEDEL: Follow up on what already was established.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, exactly. So that show was a little uneven. And that show was where I definitely made up my mind that I will never hang another show again. Because I'm just really bad at it.

MS. RIEDEL: So nobody there was installing the show?

MR. EBERLE: No. I had to hang the show.

MS. RIEDEL: That's unusual.

MR. EBERLE: I had help. I had great help. But I didn't install the show as a curator would. But it was a good show. I felt real good about it. It was a good show.

MS. RIEDEL: And how was the response to the show?

MR. EBERLE: It was good. It was good. No blockbusters, you know. But it was okay.

MS. RIEDEL: And not to get ahead of ourselves, but it must have been—it must have piqued some interest because I think 11 years later there was a second exhibition at that same museum, correct?

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: In '91.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So it's interesting that what seems perhaps to fall through the cracks at that point clearly made enough of an impression that they were interested in revisiting what you were doing a decade later.

MR. EBERLE: Well, in the middle of that decade is when I started the black and white.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: And so that, the black and white did progress rapidly from '85 to '90.

MS. RIEDEL: So what did you show during the exhibition in 1980, the first one?

MR. EBERLE: There was no porcelain in that show. It was all stoneware-type busts, abstract busts, and a large figure. And there were drawings. And there were drawings.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And the large floor vases as well? Were you doing those at the time, vessels?

MR. EBERLE: In fact the first two large vessels, five—somewhere around five feet high.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And the tall figure, was that *The Gleaner* [1998]? Or something along those lines, a figurative piece?

MR. EBERLE: Huh! *The Gleaner*. Oh, the—

MS. RIEDEL: The very tall figurative abstract freestanding sculpture? It looks like some of the smaller figures you're doing now, like the Jester only it was a tall freestanding piece. It wasn't porcelain.

MR. EBERLE: Oh, okay, that piece. Yes. Similar. Similar in a way, in feel. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: How did you make the transition from craft fairs to galleries? And we talked yesterday about Karen Johnson Boyd coming to that craft fair. That might be an interesting story.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, although I believe it was my first Baltimore show, where they have wholesale days and retail days. I'm not sure when she came around. But I had made friends with—

MS. RIEDEL: Dona Look and Ken Loeber?

MR. EBERLE: Ken Loeber.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: At a previous show up near Chicago. And so they were familiar with my work. And they were good friends with Karen Johnson Boyd. And so when she came to Baltimore, they brought her right over to the booth. And it was my first experience of dealing with a collector who really knew what they were doing. Because she came, and I had a special cabinet there with special pieces, small cups. Didn't think there would be—well, I was looking for interest. I was looking to see if anybody was interested. And she walked up to that cabinet, and she said, "I'll take that one." Sat down in a chair and wrote a check. And that was it. But what it was is she had an incredible eye. She went exactly to the best piece in the whole case of maybe 20 pieces, and there was no deliberation. There was no, whatever. It was just a very, very confident and assured act. And I've had that repeatedly since. I delight in that every time that happens.

MS. RIEDEL: But that was the very first.

MR. EBERLE: That was the very first. That was my introduction. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: That must have been exciting.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, it was.

MS. RIEDEL: That look of recognition, yes.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And that relationship did continue. There was really—actually it wasn't a relationship. But that connection continued because I did eventually go to Perimeter Gallery in Chicago, which she has an affiliation with.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. EBERLE: But I had also been with some other galleries in Chicago: Esther Saks and there might have been another one, too. That period of time, all time, is fuzzy to me. But somebody had a gallery in a gallery building, and the gallery building burned down. We're talking a big building. And lost work in that. And of course worse than that, she lost her gallery. And I can't remember if it was Esther Saks or somebody else. Anyway, eventually I found my way, with Karen's help, to Perimeter Gallery, and I've been with them ever since, too.

MS. RIEDEL: And that's a long-term relationship now.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: The first show with them was '97 or perhaps even earlier?

MR. EBERLE: Well, I don't know. I don't have—my resume—

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Or we can look at that. But that's been a long-term relationship.

MR. EBERLE: That's been a long term; that's been a long term. I think it was maybe in the mid-nineties. Garth Clark was '89, I started with him. I have a small gallery here. I don't mean to say small. I have a gallery here in Pittsburgh that I've been with since '87. And they've been very supportive.

MS. RIEDEL: Is that Concept?

MR. EBERLE: Concept Art Gallery, yes. Really corny name. But they started out mostly as a frame shop and then worked their way up, where they're dealing with more serious stuff.

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

MR. EBERLE: So they've been good for me locally.

MS. RIEDEL: And how has your experience been with dealers over time?

MR. EBERLE: Very good. I try to make a good decision initially: Do I really want to work with this person? So if there's any question—you know I don't jump into them thinking that anything is good because anything is not good. There has to be something there. There has to be a commitment. There has to be a way of working. I've worked with maybe—I worked with one gallery that was very demanding, and that didn't sit well with me.

MS. RIEDEL: Demanding how?

MR. EBERLE: Well, they wanted pieces. And they wanted pieces that I didn't think they should have, like big pieces. Even with a pragmatic decision, I'm not going to spend all that money to send you a big piece and not have it sell. You know it was pragmatic. But they would be insistent, insistent, insistent. And I don't care for that.

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

MR. EBERLE: So.

MS. RIEDEL: What did you look for in a gallery? Certainly someone who is willing to mount one- or two-person exhibitions.

MR. EBERLE: I'm sorry. Say that again?

MS. RIEDEL: What did you look for in a gallery, in a dealer?

MR. EBERLE: Oh, I know. I never looked for—no, I'm sorry. Aside from my early days of cold calling, and when I started in the studio and even before that when I was teaching at CMU, I would go to New York City and see what I could feel out. And I did have a couple of feelers going on there, but nothing real serious. But after Garth Clark in '89, after that I never sought a gallery.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: I never went to a gallery. They would call me or come to me.

MS. RIEDEL: And how did Garth find your work? Or did you find Garth?

MR. EBERLE: He found me.

MS. RIEDEL: Was that through a craft fair or through another exhibition?

MR. EBERLE: No, that was through him seeing my work all over the place, as he said. He said, "I keep seeing your work here, there, and everywhere. And we really will have to talk." And the initial phone call was actually from a third party, which I've learned since is usually the way it goes. Use a third party so everybody can save face.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right. But that must have been a happy partnership for a long time.

MR. EBERLE: Oh, it was. And they were terrific, Garth Clark and Mark Del Vecchio, and working with the other people there. And they paid attention. So that was a good working relationship right up until the end. And I started with Perimeter; I'm still with Perimeter. I don't have a New York gallery right now. We have to work on that.

MS. RIEDEL: So while we're talking about exhibitions, let's talk about the second one at the Carnegie Museum of Art in '91. And then also the exhibition at the Columbus Museum [of Art, Columbus, OH] that followed in '99.

MR. EBERLE: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] The one in '91 at Carnegie Museum of Art was highly curated. I think we talked about that yesterday.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, we did actually.

MR. EBERLE: It was highly curated and well installed and well put together. And there was good publicity. It went really well.

MS. RIEDEL: And all black and white work.

MR. EBERLE: All black and white.

MS. RIEDEL: And 2-D and 3-D.

MR. EBERLE: No 2-D.

MS. RIEDEL: No 2-D again. Okay.

MR. EBERLE: No. And actually that show sold out.

MS. RIEDEL: The museum show was also—the work was for sale in the museum exhibition?

MR. EBERLE: Well, through my gallery. I mean it was all off to the side.

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

MR. EBERLE: But—

MS. RIEDEL: But there was no catalog for that exhibition.

MR. EBERLE: No catalog.

MS. RIEDEL: That's too bad.

MR. EBERLE: I haven't had catalog at all for any exhibitions. And then we moved forward to Columbus. Actually there was an NCECA [National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts] conference that was to come in March of whatever year that was.

MS. RIEDEL: 'Ninety-nine, I think.

MR. EBERLE: 'Ninety-nine. And the people at NCECA asked the museum to do some clay. And they said, Well, you know, we don't know who that would be, but Annegreth Nill used to be at Carnegie Museum of Art.

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

MR. EBERLE: And so she was the one. She says, "The only person, clay person, I can think of that can do this would be Ed Eberle."

MS. RIEDEL: And she was the curator now at Columbus?

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And so she came over. And the entire exhibition—that was '99?

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

MR. EBERLE: Yes. So I didn't really have any pieces to spare because I had—no, that was '91. Anyway, I didn't have any pieces to spare, so that show was done entirely out of private collections.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And it was mostly—and it was totally large pieces. And they did a marvelous job of setting that show. I mean it was impeccable. I mean it was just so wonderful. And that also—but that show had two-dimensional work in it.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: It had what I affectionately call the smoke drawings. But they're basically large ink washes.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And those are very abstract, nonrepresentational.

MR. EBERLE: Very abstract, very minimal. Yes. Which she referred to—Annegreth referred to—as the tabula rasa.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: The empty slate.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Going from the extremely dense almost horror vacui;,I think they've been referred to as those incredibly dense images on the 3-D work to the very minimal, almost empty 2-D. Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: And so they enjoyed that. And the museum was wonderful. We had a big opening. I think it was in February—January; the opening was in January. And the clay conference wasn't until later on. You know in January they were treating it as a show. I mean that's what they had. They were not catering. Or they didn't understand what catering to a clay conference was. And I got—when the clay conference finally did begin, I got this frantic call saying, "Ed, who are all these people? [They laugh.] These ruffians! There's thousands of them coming into our museum."

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes. They had no idea.

MR. EBERLE: They had no idea.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah.

MR. EBERLE: What was going to come down upon them. She said, "I chased some guy out of the museum. He had this large, long red extension cord going to his movie camera walking through the galleries. She had to throw him out." [Laughs.] "Edward! Who are these ruffians?" [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, that's a great story. I can see that. And those NCECA conferences can be huge, 4- or 5,000 people. Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, yes. And most of them really love to see all the shows.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure, sure. But they didn't invite you up there, either NCECA or Columbus, to speak in conjunction with the show and the conference?

MR. EBERLE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting.

MR. EBERLE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: But you've spoken at NCECA more recently, in 2008?

MR. EBERLE: Here in Pittsburgh. It was sort of hard to avoid.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. [Laughs.] This might be an appropriate time to mention your contact or lack of contact with groups like NCECA or ACC [American Craft Council]. And that that has not been a big part of your career, your experience.

MR. EBERLE: That's correct. It hasn't been. Well, some of it—or most of it—was actually probably out of a rule that I made early on in the studio when I was still participating in various local Pittsburgh art groups. And I discovered that it was taking too much of my time again. Now remember that I had two teenage boys and allotting time was difficult.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And we were starting out in the studio and trying to get income. And we were living month to month, sometimes day to day with income. And I just didn't feel that I could jeopardize that and feel good about going down and painting a pedestal and things like that. So I consciously really did have to stop that. I stopped affiliation with NCECA because I was no longer a teacher.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Of course there's the social aspect of going to those and meeting old friends and having discussions, etc., which I maybe did miss. I don't know. But I just, while it was here in Pittsburgh, I didn't see much of that because I was one of the demonstrating artists.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Right.

MR. EBERLE: Which took an awful lot of energy. So I was pretty much in for the demo and then I would leave.

MS. RIEDEL: So that entailed—what exactly were you demonstrating, painting on clay?

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Throwing and painting on the pieces. Yes. And that was two three-hour sessions. So three hours one day, three hours the next day. And so that was very intense.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. I imagine.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And we were all—there were six demonstrators, and they make a DVD out of it. So I'm miked up and remote cameras on the work. Actually they did a pretty good job on it.

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

MR. EBERLE: I was not unhappy with what they did. And of course, you know, with the audience.

MS. RIEDEL: How did you find the audience?

MR. EBERLE: Oh, they were terrific.

MS. RIEDEL: Great.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Usually you don't get heavy questions in a situation like that. They usually come from the youngsters who may even ask what sigullata is. No, they didn't ask that. They said, "Well, what clay body are you using?"

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: You know as if that really matters at great deal. But it was okay. And Wayne Bates and I recently went to the conference in Philadelphia to support Bill Daley. And so I've been to two, almost two in a row. And that's probably going to be it.

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

MR. EBERLE: The conferences have become so big.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: That what used to be camaraderie of the ceramic instructors, because in the beginning there were no students, and so it was definitely a place to hang out. But with the bigger venues and more people, it's hard to find the teachers.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Right.

MR. EBERLE: It really is. Or at least it was for me.

MS. RIEDEL: And I was at an NCECA conference a few years back, and I remember being astounded by the size of it.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: There were 5,000 participants.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And because of the numbers, they're held in buildings, conference centers which are huge.

MS. RIEDEL: Convention centers, yes.

MR. EBERLE: Convention centers, that's what I meant to say. And there's a lot of walking, you know. With the smaller one with just the instructors, it was usually a much more intimate place that it would be. Like I remember Gatlinburg [TN], that was in an art center, and we all fit, you know, in an art center building.

MS. RIEDEL: When was that?

MR. EBERLE: Oh, that was in the early seventies. [Laughs.] But still. And I think I did one more, and that was in Louisiana, LSU [Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA]. Howard Yana-Shapiro put that one together. And that was a big one when we were still small. I think he did the first big one. And it was fabulous. He asked instructors to come down for the week prior to the conference and students then came in, too. So we had a big week-long workshop. And that was really wonderful. And he had it planned out fairly well, that every night there was something to do. So that we didn't unleash, you know, a thousand potters on poor Baton Rouge. You know he kept us on campus and put dances and things like that. It was really nice.

MS. RIEDEL: That would've been the early eighties probably?

MR. EBERLE: Well, I don't recall.

MS. RIEDEL: You were at CMU?

MR. EBERLE: Yes, I was at CMU.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Okay.

MR. EBERLE: I was at CMU. And there were three of us in the throwing kind of area. And that was Sandy Simon and Bob Turner and myself. And just that being in the same room with—with us, that was fun.

MS. RIEDEL: I bet.

MR. EBERLE: Because we had three different outlooks, as it were. So that was a great time. But still, even when the regular conference started, everybody pretty much stayed at dormitories because I think it was a time when school was not in.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And so that was good camaraderie because we were all in dormitory.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. EBERLE: And a lot of good personal connection. I didn't feel that in Philadelphia.

MS. RIEDEL: Just too big?

MR. EBERLE: Too big. Too big. Too much territory to cover.

MS. RIEDEL: Have you taught at any of the craft schools like Haystack [Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Island,ME] or Arrowmont [School of Arts and Crafts, Gatlinburg,TN], Penland [School of Crafts, Penland, NC]?

MR. EBERLE: I did one session in Penland. We'll have to talk about that in a minute. I need a break.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

[END OF DISC 5]

MS. RIEDEL: I think we were talking about Penland.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. I normally don't do week-long workshops and things of that nature. But Norm Schulman called me and said, "Ed, I'm going to teach the clay sculpture during this certain period. And would you come down and teach the regular ceramics or throwing?" And since he asked, I agreed, and I went down. I also knew in advance from various stories that those types of things where you work all week, the students work all week, and mostly their attention is on filling the kiln instead of their attention being on their work. And not having to worry about a deadline. And so I think that's not a very healthy way of learning and being with other students and just gathering information, etc. Things that happen socially during those times. So I walked in and I said, "Well, we're going to do this and this and this. But we are not going to fire any of this work." And a few of them were a little upset at that.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: But everybody—everybody—got into their work and sharing, and it was a delightful time in the studio for this five days.

MS. RIEDEL: What an interesting idea.

MR. EBERLE: Or seven days or whatever it was. And I told Norm. Norm knew I was doing this. But his students were making work for the kiln.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: As it were. And they had a heck of a time, I think. But right on the last day, the night before, I said, okay, let's load the kiln. Oh, I know what it was. Everybody came and sat around and commiserated and had fun. And it was just a delightful time. And then everyone was to leave the next morning, and they would come down and get their pieces out of the kiln, and, you know, squeal and be delighted. And so it was a terrific time. Whereas the sculpture students were all still frantic about their kiln and pieces blowing up. And so I really enjoyed that.

MS. RIEDEL: That's a fascinating exercise.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And so your objective obviously was to get them to focus on the process.

MR. EBERLE: And not towards that end fire.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Not towards the final product.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And to experiment.

MR. EBERLE: Exactly.

MS. RIEDEL: Because it was something they weren't going to keep.

MR. EBERLE: Exactly.

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

MR. EBERLE: And so it was good, it was very good.

MS. RIEDEL: That sounds fascinating. It would be interesting to write about that, I would think, as a whole different way of thinking about work. Is that something you're interested in doing again at any other place?

MR. EBERLE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: No. So these schools are not something that you're interested in incorporating into—

MR. EBERLE: Well, I think they're wonderful.

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

MR. EBERLE: I'm just not well suited.

MS. RIEDEL: It sounds just to the contrary [laughs] from that story, but—

MR. EBERLE: [Laughs.] Well, I don't want to be away from home that long is exactly why I don't like to do it.

MS. RIEDEL: And given the 25 years that you were just constantly focusing in the studio, that would just detract from your work. And actually that leads in perfectly to another—please go ahead.

MR. EBERLE: Well, there is one thing. I do resist doing workshops, etc. But regardless of how I feel about them going in—trepidation, nervousness, you know, why am I doing this?—invariably there are gifts that come from those encounters. And they are good. And so I have to constantly remind myself that that will occur. And it always pans out that way. But it still remains that I don't like to be away from home for too long.

MS. RIEDEL: And it makes me think of—we don't have to address the whole quote here and now—but early on in your full-time studio work in, I think for the exhibition at, this is Concept Gallery in '91, you wrote a paragraph about the value of being consistently in your studio without any distractions, without having to focus on any other tasks. And it seems to me as we you look at your work and your process of working over the past 25 years, that that has enabled you to progress into working the way that not many artists have an opportunity to do. Many artists are pulled off to teach whether it's at a university or multiple workshops or doing lecture workshops, demonstrations around the country or around the world. And you have really chosen very consciously to focus full time on studio work and to really cut out as many distractions as possible. Is that accurate?

MR. EBERLE: That's accurate. And part of that, of course, is learning how to say no. [They laugh.] Which is difficult for me. But I have learned how to say no. But I'll have to say that I've maintained a relatively, I don't even want to say rigorous, because it was not a rigor to go to the studio every day. And I can say with confidence that almost every day that I walked into that studio, I was delighted and thankful that I had such a grand opportunity for that day to begin again. And that was very special, yes. And I worked five and a half days a week, half a day on Saturday and never on Sunday. [Laughs.] And that worked well for me, that kind of schedule. And you were thinking about that quote. Yes, the ability to—five years. So now would be the value of being in my studio consistently for 26 years, you know. Twenty years later, it's still the same thing.

MS. RIEDEL: I don't think I've talked to anyone who has had that consistent and singular a focus over that period of time. There may be artists who can do that for a sabbatical period. But even artists who are full-time artists and don't teach full time or teaching part time, seem to do a lot of lecture demonstrations or a lot of workshops.

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

MS. RIEDEL: Nationally or internationally.

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

MS. RIEDEL: So I would imagine that your experience is not all that common. And it certainly seems it's allowed you to be extraordinary prolific. And to experiment, to really explore. I mean I think about the range of your work, the incredible diversity and continuum of your work that we talked about at the very start. From the figurative to the abstract, 2-D to 3-D, non-representational. I mean there's just been such a level of—the newly minimalist focus, the installations. It's an extraordinarily prolific body of work that's been produced over time—diverse as well.

MR. EBERLE: I average about 100 pieces a year.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you!

MR. EBERLE: Yes. But that includes small pieces. And so there are usually only maybe five, six, seven what I would say major pieces done a year, which is not prolific because they take me so long to do.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. EBERLE: And I've painted—I've literally painted myself into a corner [laughs] in that way. That I can't churn them out. It just can't happen.

MS. RIEDEL: No, they don't have that sensibility at all.

MR. EBERLE: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: How have you seen the market, the commercial market, evolve for craft and for your work over the past three decades? Has it improved? Have there been peaks and valleys? Has it gotten harder? Has it gotten easier as the work is better known and has developed?

MR. EBERLE: It has gotten easier. Just if you think about—if one thinks about just the cost of a piece. I went from $2.50 mugs to $15,000 pieces. And that was the way the market was moving. And that's a lot of space. That's a lot of territory to cover. And so it did escalate. Has it still escalated? Well, we're in a slump. There was a slump in the nineties which I really didn't feel that much for some reason. The slump right now I am feeling. There was also a slump right after 2001.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: I felt that a little bit. I'm really feeling this one, as most people are.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Most artists are.

MS. RIEDEL: And also Garth Clark has closed since in this time, right?

MR. EBERLE: Garth has closed.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. When did he close?

MR. EBERLE: He closed 2006, I believe. Maybe 2007. Somewhere in there. And right. So I don't have that to go on either. But, you know, that was my experience, but it's also the experience of a lot of other people, too. Like I'm sure Akio has had the same experience. And right down the line.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

MR. EBERLE: I was—I had an interview with Charles Cowles. And as I'm sitting there, there was a [Peter] Voulkos stack piece sitting in the corner for $250,000. And I'm thinking wow! [Laughs.] You know there are reasons, of course, that that price went up. But still, you think there is a pile of clay for $250,000. Now that's significant.

MS. RIEDEL: It is significant. I'm sure he never got anything like that during his lifetime.

MR. EBERLE: During his lifetime. But regardless.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: He paves the way again.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. What sort of changes have you seen in craft and particularly in clay, sculpture, over the course of your career? Is there any general sense you have of that? Perhaps not, since I know you focus so much on the studio work.

MR. EBERLE: No, I'd have to say that it really has become much more sophisticated. Now, I'm not talking about generally, not mine specifically. But it has become more sophisticated. In the sixties we were all concerned with —most of us were concerned—with pottery, with function, with folk pottery notion, sitting in the kitchen with a pot of tea and handmade cups.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Utilizing pieces of utility. And back in the sixties—well, Voulkos would have started up the movement in California, which was, of course, the major breakaway.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And things have just escalated since then. They finally made their way out East. [Laughs.] But even when I was in graduate school, it hadn't really reached us yet, as a whole. So yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Let's talk about the work itself. We left off yesterday towards the end of the nineties, and we talked about the *Phenomenology of Ten Vessels* [1998-99]. And about this same time it seems to me, 1999-2000, the vessels began to deconstruct. Is that accurate?

MR. EBERLE: Yes, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: What was the motivation, what was the inspiration for that? What was the idea behind it?

MR. EBERLE: It will take me a moment to remember.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. EBERLE: Well, up until that point I had been doing small deconstructed pieces like particularly around the teapot theme. But these were small, half a loaf of bread kind of size. And those could certainly be called deconstructed pieces. In the meantime I had been doing a lot of the larger lidded pieces and of course the other size of the *Ten Vessels* piece, that size. And two of those were painted in figures, two. But—what was going on? So, even back as early as '91, I'd been dealing with what could be termed the deconstruction. But in some way I was thinking of it in terms of reconstruction.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Sure.

MR. EBERLE: Rather than deconstruction.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: And so doing the larger pieces was just a need to have more surface area perhaps, of having a larger volume to deal with. The larger the vessel, the larger the space, the larger the interior. I think that was what was going on. And, hmm.

MS. RIEDEL: It also seems to change the balance of the narrative somehow. It seems to add more dimensions—it seems to add more potential for different dimension, different scale. Now perhaps that wasn't the reason behind it or perhaps it was.

MR. EBERLE: I'm having a hard time answering that because I don't know if there is a clear-cut answer to it. I do remember doing the first piece. And frankly I didn't think that anybody would be interested in it.

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

MR. EBERLE: But some people came in that was a—you know museums have collectors clubs or whatever you call it. Anyway, I got a visit from one from LACMA [Los Angeles County Museum of Art], I believe.

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

MR. EBERLE: And a lady saw that piece sitting there. She says, "Oh!" I said, "You're kidding." You know, to myself. You know you actually like that. Somebody actually likes it. And so she scooped it up right away. And then I went on to keep working in that manner.

MS. RIEDEL: Sounds like one of your early ideas about what's of interest to you also fusing with what is of interest to your audience.

MR. EBERLE: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Well, I'm not always the best judge of my work. Sometimes—or very often—I'll think that something is just really awful or a failure or I missed the mark, or it's too radically different, or whatever, and the people that I trust will come in say, "You know, you're wrong on that." So.

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting. So you've really learned to trust that over time, too.

MR. EBERLE: Oh, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: That's very interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And then do you come to see it differently yourself? Or does it always feel to you as if it still missed the mark?

MR. EBERLE: Oh, no. It—

MS. RIEDEL: It validates the original vision that gave—

MR. EBERLE: It validates the original vision. And way early in our conversation, I mentioned—I think I mentioned—something about those things that come easiest to us are the hardest to accept.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And I believe that first one, that first large deconstruction, was of that ilk. It was just a natural thing for me to do, to get a larger painting surface and also make a comment on pottery and a more sculptural space, more activity, more chance for diversity of form. And that came so easy to me, that I didn't think anybody else would be interested in it. But the opposite proved to be the case. And so I continued to do that with the large deconstructions. Now, I have had a period between 2003 and now, 2010, going into much more sculpture, much less painting, much more minimal works, culminating in dealing with that space between things. But when I reestablish the studio, that will be done, and I'll go back to painting again. I know that. Part of the reason I was able to do the sculpture right now, too, is that, well, the market isn't there.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And so, well, what happens, you know? I can either stop or really do some work that is not commercially viable. Or I can spread my wings, as it were, to explore some other things now that demands aren't that high on me right now.

MS. RIEDEL: And so are you working on that right now? Because my understanding was that you weren't working right now due to the loss of the studio.

MR. EBERLE: Well, this Santa Fe show was in January, I believe, it started in January. And I had been working up to that show for the previous year.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. I see.

MR. EBERLE: And I closed the studio totally on February 26th of this year. But also consider that it really took me six months to pack the studio.

MS. RIEDEL: I'm sure. I'm sure.

MR. EBERLE: Not literally pack, but in packing there has to be sorting. And I did a lot of photography of pieces that were buried in boxes for years. And so the photography took quite a long time. So to carefully pack a studio, you know, took six months. And that's a lot of time that I wasn't making things.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. So.

MS. RIEDEL: I definitely want to touch on the more recent work, the very minimalist pieces; I'm going to give the wall installations and then I'll show the shelf installations. But before we get there, I'd like to move back briefly just to discuss the deconstructed figures that seem to come in between the deconstructed vessels and then the current work. I'm thinking of pieces like *The Jester* [2004]. And then there's also that very more cubist—I think of them as still-lifes, also the *More than [a Molecule], Less than [a Moon]* [2009] pieces.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. I had the desire to instead of painting the form, human form, figure, to actually make it. And with porcelain it's a little more difficult.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: For me anyway. I was doing life-size pieces in a heavy fire-clay body, pieces bigger than myself. But you can't do that in porcelain.

MS. RIEDEL: No.

MR. EBERLE: At least I haven't figured out a way to do it. Well, actually I may have.

MS. RIEDEL: Stayed tuned.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, stay tuned. That's still to be proven. But that type of figure was actually done in stoneware back in the early eighties I had made one piece. And that intrigued me, the throwing the figure. In other words, throwing the various parts: the thighs, the feet, the head, the torso, the derriere. And using basic—having an empathy with those forms. But also what happened—well, I've been dealing with the sphere, the cone, and the cylinder for many years.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: In painting and in the work. So these, the low figures from 2003, 2004, were a way of doing that. And 2001 I had started making the stand-up figures. And I was not getting anywhere with that. They were not successful. I believe I made 40 of them.

MS. RIEDEL: Forty?

MR. EBERLE: Forty. And only one came out the way it should have.

MS. RIEDEL: Too much slumping or cracking or things you just weren't happy with.

MR. EBERLE: You name it, it happened to it. Or I had the proportions wrong. And too many things could go wrong, and they did.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: So I only gone one piece out of that whole experience. But, you know, at some point you have to say, "Well, if I'm not having success with this, I must be doing something wrong. This must be the wrong approach to it." And so, you know, it took me 40 pieces to realize something was wrong. You know if the piece doesn't make it through the—if it's a struggle for the piece to get through the kiln, then, you know, it's telling you something. You have a problem. So that depressed me. So I stewed about that maybe for a year or two. And then it finally hit me of how to do it. And it was just being much more carefree and building the sense of the figure and looking towards gesture of the positioning and the gesture of the arms and the feet and whatever else was happening. And it came to me and bing! You know. And there was 100 percent success rate.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm! Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: So that, you know, that's a clue.

MS. RIEDEL: And are these pieces also fired cone-9 reduction.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And that's asking a lot, I realize, of the clay to take it that high, especially when it's a piece that's sculptural. I assume that you're doing that because again it's the color that the porcelain achieves at that temperature that's essential to the work for you.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

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

MR. EBERLE: And the other thing about those smaller reclining figures from 2003-2004, was that they did not move in the kiln. In other words, they didn't slump.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: They didn't distort, they didn't crack, which was, you know. So all systems were go for that solution, which is unusual. So the geometric approach that led into the larger sculpture were gluing; I have to glue pieces together in order to get that high or large. And so there is definitely a connection. Now, some of the larger pieces, there's a step up to maybe twice the size of the smaller 2003-2004 vessels. And these pieces were standing up. But the thing about those were really working in 360 is something that I adhere to in my work, whether it be any of it, any of this work since the mid-eighties is thinking about the 360 approach to the piece; in order words, all the way around. My pieces are normally not frontal or two-sided.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: They're usually, as some student pointed out to me recently, omni-facial.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Yes.

MR. EBERLE: I said what?! Oh, you mean 360.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes, yes.

MR. EBERLE: So—I don't recall where I was going with that.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, I think those pieces are interesting, too—please go ahead.

MR. EBERLE: Oh, I know where I was going with that. Since I do work on the 360, I'm always looking all of the angles. And in constructing the more vertical figures out of the abstract forms, like the form, basically the cone, sphere, and cylinder, the pieces in different views of the sculpture—and they were usually figurative—the figure would change. Like for instance there's a piece called *Walking, Sitting*.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: No, *Walking, Sitting, Running* [2006]. Depending on where you stood around the figure, the figure looked like it was either sitting or definitely walking, and in one view the figure was clearly running.

MS. RIEDEL: I'd love to see a visual of that. I'm not familiar with that piece.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And there were maybe at least five of those if not more, where they even surprised me that that was going on. And certainly I couldn't go into the piece. Well, I could go into the piece thinking that I am going to get these multiple views and these multiple activities, multiple gestures. And so I did look for that and enhanced that.

MS. RIEDEL: Are these also reclining figures?

MR. EBERLE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: They're vertical figures.

MR. EBERLE: They're more vertical. And during this time I also learned how to—I learned something else about the fire. These pieces usually changed in the fire. In other words, they slumped, they untwisted, they would unwind, do various things. So the figure that I put into the kiln was not necessarily the figure that came back out.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: And if the old potter's conscience wants it to be exactly what it was put into the kiln. But I started looking very seriously at what the kiln gave me. And I thought, well, that's okay, you know. I accept that. Fire, I have made my peace with you, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. EBERLE: And now I even construct pieces that allow you to do that even more. In other words, the fire actually became just one more element of the work. So after all these years, I've finally accepted it as a partner, let's say. Now wood-fire people will, you know, they'd tell you that right up. But up until that time, I had not been seeking the embrace of the fire.

MS. RIEDEL: It's interesting, too, because these pieces became much more monochromatic as opposed to the drawings and the very detailed narratives that were happening that way. The figures went completely white. And the sculptures broke down really into maybe black and white or maybe just white.

MR. EBERLE: Just sometimes white. Yes. And the larger pieces usually black and white.

MS. RIEDEL: And were you thinking—we mentioned this before, off tape, but it's good to talk about it on disc—were you thinking specifically about going more minimal and more monochromatic in order to allow the form to take the complete focus?

MR. EBERLE: Yes, yes. With the figure painting on the pieces, there's a certain tension and movement, visual movement.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: You know depending on how far away from the piece you are. There's a reverberation, let's say, of white, black, and grays and textures. And it's that, I believe, that's relatively dominant, that reverberation. And in the pieces, the larger black-and-white, non-painted pieces, I wanted to be more clear about that form. And those are not about vessel. In these pieces I've left the vessel behind.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yes, that's an interesting point.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. So I'll just—

MS. RIEDEL: Are these the first pieces where that happens?

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And so, you know, other things come into play.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: So I'm not prepared to deconstruct the meaning of sculpture versus vessel. But, yes, that's what occurred. Yes. Yes, that's true. So that for the last seven years, I guess, I've not been paying that much attention to vessel work as—I'd rather leave that blank. [They laugh.] I don't want to say the word, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Because for me there is no distinction between the vessel and sculpture. You know there really is no distinction in my attitude or my approach to the piece. Now there are nuances, obviously, that go on there. But when I'm working, when I walk into the studio, my only job is to make things and not categorize them.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And so I pay a lot of attention to that. And if I start thinking in terms of, well, I have to make vessel or I have to make sculpture, which is non-vessel. No, wait a minute, vessel, sculpture, non-vessel, non-sculpture, that can really slow you down, I think. So for me it's not an issue. I have to make it a nonissue. And that also fits with the argument of arts versus crafts. For me it's a nonissue. I'm not going to worry about that.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: That doesn't have anything to do with why I'm working. So in the studio that is a nonissue. Now realistically, it is an issue for a lot of people. But there are answers to all that.

MS. RIEDEL: That's not what's of interest to you.

MR. EBERLE: My job is to make work. My job is to make my work. My passion is to make my work. I don't mean to reduce it down to a job because it's not. It is in the sense of a work-a-day world. You know you go in and you put your time in and you get paid for that. And that's the same thing. But in making art, of course, it's much more, much different than that. It's passion and desire. Blind ignorance. Willingness. And the need for search—searching—and exploring. And it's always about the next piece.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Right.

MR. EBERLE: It's always about the next piece for me.

MS. RIEDEL: The pieces like *The Jester* piece strike me as especially interesting because I do think about your work, as I was saying earlier, as a continuum. And I think of some of those earlier pieces, the hermetic crown [*Hermetic Crown*, 1991, and *Hermetic Crown II*, 1991] and some of the more architectonic pieces as the figure on an iconic form, on an iconic vessel. Some of them were iconic and others architectural bringing in that. But figure on form. And then with the pieces, the abstract sort of deconstructed figures that are on their own, it seems to still be an exploration of figure. But the figure and the form have become the same thing, as opposed to having a figure on a form.

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

MS. RIEDEL: Now the figure is the form.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And it's interesting. We've been talking about interior and exterior, inside and out. And it seems to me that your work sort of turns itself inside out over time.

MR. EBERLE: Well put. You say it much better than I ever could. Yes. Hmm.

MS. RIEDEL: And then the most recent pieces, I think of the shelf installation. But I'm thinking of the wall installations are even a step further abstracted, where you have just, say, a ball and square, both white, mounted on a wall. They seem to be reduced or re-contextualized, to use a word that you mentioned, and I think—I've thought about it in a similar way a couple of days ago—taking it one degree further.

MR. EBERLE: Well, when you take two objects or two forms, feng shui comes close, maybe a little close, to—or maybe not so close—to describing that active space between two objects. And if done well, or successfully, there is a reverberation between those two or three or four or more pieces. And it's activating the space between. Now I had developed, also along with this, a system of minimalizing or breaking things down to the pattern or the essence of things. And it was the numbers 1, 3, and 4, which would be the circle, triangle, and square, or the sphere, cone, and cylinder. And no five-sided figure, but being affected by 5, which is important and has the linkup to Fibonacci and the Golden Mean.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Now I knew in art historically that this was not new, that others had certainly worked with this. And not being a student of art history, I rely on other people to tell me what it is. And one fellow said, "Well, that's Klee, Paul Klee." And so I looked at some of his, and I'll be darned, there was a piece, a painting of his, in this book where it's the more geometric forms floating in this color field. But down in a corner, the right-hand corner, was a rectangle, circle, and triangle.

MS. RIEDEL: Triangle, yes.

MR. EBERLE: In other words, he had put the legend: The legend of the map was right there, bing! And I recently ran across a quote from [Paul] Cezanne in a letter to a friend, I guess, where he said that nature should be—see I can't remember exactly what he said. I have the quote upstairs. Nature should be expressed in spheres, cones, and cubes.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting, interesting.

MR. EBERLE: And now he said nature should be expressed in. He didn't say painting. So we're talking about over a hundred years ago, he knew it. And I only recently discovered it for myself. Now part of that is—damn! I thought it was an original thought. [They laugh.] But the other part of that is, I'm not far off. It's okay. And I was not doing this knowing that there were other people, those other artists, had already been there. They had already visited that and exhausted it perhaps. So it remained a rediscovery for me. Maybe naïve, but still, it was there.

MS. RIEDEL: So the one form I can think of that we haven't addressed directly so far are these Abstract Expressionist wall sort of plates.

MR. EBERLE: Correct. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And some have color.

MR. EBERLE: Some have color.

MS. RIEDEL: Which is complete deviation from everything else. But what are the dates of these pieces?

MR. EBERLE: Very recent.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Oh, interesting. Alright. So these are some of the newest work.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. So imagine that I'm making the vertical sculptures, the black and white, sometimes all white, vertical sculptures. And people ask me, do I draw them before I make them? Which then the answer politely is no. It's impossible to draw them.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: So that question always presents itself somehow. Why can't I draw these? Well, I have drawn some of them after the fact, which are kind of interesting. And even the more interesting drawings I found over the years is to draw the finished piece without looking at it. And that reveals some very interesting things.

MS. RIEDEL: Like what?

MR. EBERLE: Well, where it emphasizes one thing over another, and it might even be the thing that you were more passive about. But it turns out to be a more important element of the piece. So, "I didn't look at it that way." So the drawing, the remembered piece, the remembered drawing of what it was, comes out a bit different than the piece itself. And so there's learning that's going on there. So on a whim, walking past my drawing table while I'm making these more vertical sculptures, I just took some—I started to draw what I think one of the sculptures would look like drawn or trying to find a way of drawing it. And I used graphite, the side of a graphite stick, to describe the various circles, triangles, and squares, and rectangles. And even throwing line in there, too, on that very first one. And it was done very impetuously and very fast, very quick. And I said, God, that looks like a how-to-draw-sculpture book in the 1950's perhaps. Somebody trying to, in a cheap book, you know, how to draw. How to make sculpture, how to draw sculpture. Whatever. So I started a whole series of drawings that way, slightly different from the very first one actually. I figured out how to draw those. And they're all done with tools like the foam brushes that you get from Home Depot.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: The foam holds the sigillata or whatever material I'm using. It holds it well, and I can just describe, with various sizes of brushes, describe cones and circles and squares. And so there are over 40 of these two-dimensional pieces.

MS. RIEDEL: Drawings.

MR. EBERLE: Drawings.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: See. And so I thought, well, okay, you know, I've always done wall platters with using the square, circle, triangle, but approaching it with Abstract Expressionist point of view. I'd never done it with more clinical flat kind of investigation. So that was kind of like a detour. And so the drawings existed, and I said, well, okay, I can take this information from the drawings and actually apply it to the bowls, those large wall platters. And in fact the wall platters are painted. Most bowls, large platters, are painted horizontally on the floor or on the table. But these, because I stick a nail through them to hang them up, I paint them on the easel. I paint them vertically.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. So that changes the whole ballgame, see.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely.

MR. EBERLE: And the arrogance of just stabbing a nail through them, I mean, face it, you know, I'm not making bowls for pea soup or spaghetti, you know. [They laugh.] Then in trying to figure out how to hang a large or heavier piece, I'm not interested in trying to figure a new way out of hanging it and disguising the hanging. I just let it be right there. And so a lot of these pieces just have nails sticking out of them, you know.

MS. RIEDEL: And it's interesting. Are they all torn as well?

MR. EBERLE: Not all of them.

MS. RIEDEL: Because these are painted and torn as well.

MR. EBERLE: Sometimes they tear—now when I throw those forms, I lift them off the wheel immediately.

MS. RIEDEL: Wet, still wet. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. EBERLE: Wet, yes. And so sometimes they do split. And so I just accept those splits. I tried to induce it once and saw how faked that was. And said, Ed, that's stupid, you know. You can't fake it. You can't fake a tear. A tear has to be non-deliberate. A tear cannot be deliberate.

MS. RIEDEL: And what provoked or inspired the introduction of color beyond the black and white?

MR. EBERLE: Well, in the drawings or on paper, some color came into play. And that coupled—that color was much more subdued, much more subdued color. But I had never had the opportunity to use the new technical advance of yellow, red, and orange in a high-fire reduction kiln. You know the companies figured out how to get those colors.

MS. RIEDEL: How interesting.

MR. EBERLE: For years I've been looking for a way of using those just for the delight of using them. Because when I started out back in the—just this came into play in the nineties, I think, the late nineties. Because a true fire-engine red was not possible in cone-9. You could get blood reds.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Yes, that copper red.

MR. EBERLE: In copper red. But they're highly—they're temperamental.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: But these reds and yellow—

MS. RIEDEL: Bright, very bright.

MR. EBERLE: Very bright. So I'd always wanted to use those. So there they are.

MS. RIEDEL: Uh-huh.

MR. EBERLE: Am I going to use it again when I go back to painting? Probably not.

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

MR. EBERLE: When I go back to painting the vessel pieces. Then I probably won't.

MS. RIEDEL: Were these part of the show in Santa Fe? Did you show these in Santa Fe?

MR. EBERLE: I sent four of those down—three or four of them.

MS. RIEDEL: It occurs to me that one other form we haven't discussed at all are the very large bowls.

MR. EBERLE: Oh, boy!

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Which are unique because they alone among all your work that I can think of are painted both inside and out.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, and that's a crucial thing. Can we take a slight break before—

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

[END OF DISC 6]

MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Edward Eberle on June 15, 2010, at his home in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. This is Disc No. 4.

We had just started to think about talking about the large bowls when we ended the last disc, and—

MR. EBERLE: Now the large bowls, the one ones that are may be 16, 17 inches wide and, oh, eight, nine, ten inches high, that form came to me in fact sitting outside in my backyard. All of a sudden this form just popped into my head, and I quickly sketched it before I forgot about it. But I envisioned this bowl form that would be painted inside and outside in the same manner. And so the bowl that I drew, I tried to approximate on the wheel. And found that the relationship—it's a very difficult form to throw. It's a very simple-looking thing.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: But it's a very difficult bowl for me to throw because both the inside and the outside have to be honored at the same time. And it's much easier to consider the inside of a bowl that would be more flared where you can't see the bottom of the bowl. And if you pull the outside up too much, then it becomes a cylinder.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: So the balance between the inside form and the outside form is very crucial—extremely crucial and very sensitive. And with those bowls, sometimes it would take me two or three tries to finally get the one that was good. So I've made four of those large bowls that are painted on the outside and the inside, where the figures actually do move over the rim onto the inside and vice versa from a figure that originates on the inside to move to the outside.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. And the treatment is a little bit different. The outside is black field, and the inside is white field. And what I mean by field is the space behind the figure itself.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: The figures themselves. And when it really comes right down to it—and I've asked people, I've asked curators and other people who have seen a lot more work than I have, if this has ever been seen before. And it turns out what it has not. So this very simple-looking form of a bowl painted on the outside and inside giving both enough space to be present has really not occurred in the history of ceramics.

MS. RIEDEL: That you either favor the inside or your favor the outside. And there might be markings on either side. But that one is the predominant surface.

MR. EBERLE: Correct, correct. Right. And of course where you can actually see without going into contortions.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: The outside and the inside. And so this has literally not ever—has not occurred, which is surprising.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] It is surprising. In some ways it seems so simple.

MR. EBERLE: Mm-hmm. Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: But you're right, to have the equal balance between the two.

MR. EBERLE: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And they present it technically. They present it just physically being able to paint the inside of the piece is very difficult.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly.

MR. EBERLE: And the bowl has to be big enough that it can accept my arm. And when it does accept my arm being on the inside, that's a very dangerous thing because you don't always know where your elbow is.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: But luckily I did not break any of them in painting them. But it required so many contortions, different contortions on my part, to be able to get on to the inside particularly and do the same type of painting on the inside as I do on the outside. Now, I've made I think five of those, and I'm not going to make anymore.

MS. RIEDEL: Were those more recent?

MR. EBERLE: Those are more recent. Those are 2007.

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

MR. EBERLE: Two thousand seven.

MS. RIEDEL: And how did the idea come about? Because it is, as we were saying earlier, the only form where you have worked both interior and exterior equally.

MR. EBERLE: Well, inspiration or intuition or an idea isn't always—or let's say it is not usually—a two-by-four upside the head. It's very quiet. It's very subtle. It's a wisp of a thing, and it's easy to let it go by.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: But as I said, when I was sitting on the porch, all of a sudden this form, the completed form, came into mind. Now where did it come from? You know there are many elaborations we could talk about but none of them are as straightforward as it just came to me.

MS. RIEDEL: Now when you say the completed form, do you mean with the black field exterior and the white interior. And with the figures.

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

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Have you reversed them?

MR. EBERLE: So I see that as a gift, you know. It's just a gift. Have I reversed the black field, white field thing? No. No. On the last one, I did the under painting on the inside, but I did not develop any figure. And although it's interesting to me, it's not interesting and obvious to others. But I left the inside open because it's much more abstract and misty and non-descript in its—and the title of the piece is *Things in My Backyard* [2009], which is literal in some way for the painting on the outside. But it's also things in my backyard would be a metaphor for in the back of my brain, in the back of my head, which are not, in this case anyway, which are not delineated, which are not finalized form or object. But the stuff of the image is there but not the image itself.

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

MR. EBERLE: But that thinking about it is a little too cerebral for most people. It's actually a little more cerebral for me.

MS. RIEDEL: It makes me think a little, too, of this Bachelard piece again and that sort of roof form where the figures get almost misty and not as pronounced or detailed as the main form itself.

MR. EBERLE: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Well, part of that is the photography; that's a hotspot. So—

MS. RIEDEL: So that the actual piece is not that way.

MR. EBERLE: Correct.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. I thought it was perhaps a precursor to that.

MR. EBERLE: No, that's a—

MS. RIEDEL: That's just a photographic glitch. [Laughs.]

MR. EBERLE: It is. It is. It's a very difficult—

MS. RIEDEL: Let's correct history right here and now. [They laugh.] I'm glad we got that. I think a final thought that would be interesting to mention here is, as we've talked about the different styles, art styles, that we've seen in your work over time from Abstract Expressionism to Cubism to Minimalism, that these are not things you've thought about specifically when you're working on the work. That whatever the work is has come from your experience of working and not from an external study of art history.

MR. EBERLE: That is correct.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Because that requires a precondition, that requires pre-thought, which I try wholeheartedly not to go into the process that way. So it suits me.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And I think I already did say way at the beginning of the interview that I am a generalist; I don't get real specific. And part of that is to keep me more pure in some way, and not seduced by someone else's idea or remedy. But rather to rely on my own intuition and invention. Boy, that sounds heavy and arty. But I guess it's still true.

MS. RIEDEL: Which is very much in this case rooted in the process of working.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Thank you.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Thank you. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Sure. Do you see your sources of inspiration changing over the years, or have they been fairly constant?

MR. EBERLE: No, they change. You know the flavor of the month, the flavor of the year. And it usually is dependent on who I'm reading.

MS. RIEDEL: Hmm. [Affirmative.] Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. So although I've not been reading very much lately in the last few years—although there is material to read. I bought [Carl] Jung's [*The] Red Book* [New York: W.W. Norton, 2009].

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, I'd like to see that.

MR. EBERLE: And I haven't read it yet.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: I've barely looked at it.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: So we can look at it later.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, that would be great.

MR. EBERLE: So that's something that lays ahead. Yes, I haven't been reading that much lately. Like, for instance, what I think of is, if I run into a form or an object or a thing that is suggested in the piece while painting it, like a bee, now generally I know what a bee looks like, but biologically and anatomically correct, I really don't know when it comes right down to it. Or let's say a lion. And some artists would run to a reference source to find out, okay, you know, what's going on here? What is the anatomy, etc.? I don't. I just keep plowing through and invent. If I don't know it, I invent it—

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: —in the moment.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: And so that's why it's difficult to trace exact features like architectural features, like facades and things like that. They won't be in my work as a reference, as a strict one-for-one reference back to this building or that building or this bee or that bee, you know. So it's bee-ness. It's façade-ness. Which also leads me—I don't think I talked about clay-ness.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, no, we have not.

MR. EBERLE: Which is a constant mantra for me in my work, and I do think about it a great deal. I first heard the term from Bob Turner and in his work. That he stayed strived—strove: what's the word?

MS. RIEDEL: Strived, I think.

MR. EBERLE: For clay-ness in the work. Now to describe that or define that I've tried and have not really been successful as to what clay-ness is.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: But it has something to do with allowing the clay to be clay.

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

MR. EBERLE: It has something to do with not wanting to be perfect or perfection. And this also applies to painting, too. I think good painters allow the paint to be paint.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And so it's a matter of allowing the clay to be clay and not disguising that. Now I'm not saying that that's the way it all has to be—certainly not. Some people really do like the control. They want to use the clay as a material in order to objectify their image, which may not have anything to do with clay specifically or clay-ness. But there have been a few people, prominent people, who do adhere to clay-ness. And the first one that I can think of is George E. Ohr. He really understood clay. And he liked clay-ness as exhibited in his wobbly bowl. If your bowl went too thin and started wobbling, you know, he saw that and said, "Hey, this is clay. That's what clay does." And it's expressed really in all of his work, I feel. And certainly Voulkos understood clay-ness.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Now I don't know if you can jump right in and do that from scratch, from the get-go. I think you really do have to work with clay and learn the craft before you can understand clay-ness.

MS. RIEDEL: I think of Ken Ferguson, some of his pieces?

MR. EBERLE: Oh, his later work, absolutely.

MS. RIEDEL: And some even of Chris Staley, for some reason, comes to mind.

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

MS. RIEDEL: Some of those very loose, slippy teapot forms.

MR. EBERLE: There aren't many that I can think of. And even in the moment right now I can only think of one other person whose name I can't recall. But there aren't that many who have that mantra where you can sense that that is in the forefront of their working.

MS. RIEDEL: It's the clay equivalent of somebody being painterly. Is that the idea?

MR. EBERLE: Yes, possibly. I would say possibly because I'm not sure what painterly means. But I think I know what it means. Yes. Well, [Vincent] van Gogh turned oil painting around on its ear, as far as I know, just squeezing the tube out onto the canvas. I don't know if that occurred before.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. I don't either. But a very strong sense of a medium itself.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, where it's not dominant, it's not the message.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: It's only a means to the message to the means to the message or a means to the form, whether it be two-dimensional or three-dimensional.

MS. RIEDEL: But the message and the form are directly, intrinsically, inextricably linked to the medium.

MR. EBERLE: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes. No, we hadn't talked about that, so that is— And that makes sense. I associate that with some degree of looseness.

MR. EBERLE: It's a looseness certainly. It's loose in the sense that you're not trying to—loose in the sense that you're not trying to make the clay go where you want it to go. It's honoring the clay, I think.

MS. RIEDEL: It sounds like the way you were describing yesterday—I think it was Bob Turner and the way he'd throw, almost as if you were listening to the clay.

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

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Very much in tune during the process.

MR. EBERLE: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] It was a delight to watch him throw. And I was at the end of his studio, so I was physically out of the picture. But in his concentration, there was nothing, you know, between him and his work. I mean the exterior world just didn't exist. And to watch his hands and the way he looked at the piece, turning his head and standing up, and he would talk to the piece, too. Not in words. But he would go hmm, hmm. [Laughs.] And it was done so well, it really was a song.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: You know that he sang. And danced actually around the piece. And so that was a total cooperation between the material and the person, and the artist.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Interesting. Is there—your sources of inspiration have changed routinely. And you said specifically with regards to people you might be reading at the time. We've mentioned Jung, we've mentioned Hillman, we've mentioned Bachelard. Is there anyone else that's been significant we should note?

MR. EBERLE: Not that I can think of right off hand. Somewhere around here I have a sheet of paper that I wrote for influences. But I'm not even sure how pertinent that is at this time.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, we can pause and find that.

MR. EBERLE: I think the reading—yes, pause for a minute.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. [Audio Break.] This is a related question in some ways. What do you see as the similarities and the differences between your early work and your current work?

MR. EBERLE: Now, early, what do you mean by early?

MS. RIEDEL: Well, I think probably we won't go back to the mugs. But maybe the very—

MR. EBERLE: Okay. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: Maybe the very early, more sculptural work, where it began to be between form and figure.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, Philadelphia.

MS. RIEDEL: But we could go back as early as functional. I mean it is still vessel related. So how might you see that?

MR. EBERLE: And the question was?

MS. RIEDEL: The similarities and the differences through how it's evolved over the past three decades, four decades.

MR. EBERLE: Well, in the beginning I was taking blind stabs, let's say, at various things like meaning in symbol and pattern and sometimes hitting it, sometimes being on the mark, sometimes not. So in the interim, with study and talking with other artists, gradually adding onto my breadth of applicable knowledge. So there is necessarily an advancement. Well, let's see in the vernacular of the street. Sort of I would say, the older I get, it does not become more simple, because the more you know, the more you have to use.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: So it has not become more simple, and it's become extremely complex.

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

MR. EBERLE: And that's a matter of time passing and accumulating more information and maybe even distilling that information and throwing out things that just really aren't that useful anymore. And embracing other concepts, ideas, feelings even more so.

MS. RIEDEL: Something we mentioned in passing yesterday, I don't think it was on the disc, was that your skill has developed significantly over the years. And you've chosen in some ways to go increasingly low-tech. It's almost an inverse proportion as the skill has developed.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, the skill is developed in how am I able to achieve that form in whatever particular size or whatever. For instance, on the large lidded vessels, the nature of porcelain—if you throw the lid, the lid is thrown upside down, and the flange is on the end of that bowl shape, whatever you want to call that. But porcelain is so—is much weaker in that form, the flat bowl, at least in my case it won't support a flange, the added weight of a flange. The piece just slops over. And so I had to develop a different way of doing it. And that was, I throw the bowl form or the lid form upside down as one thing. And then I throw a flange separately.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. EBERLE: And then put the flange on the piece and then lower the lid onto it. So bingo! There it is.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: And so it took a long time to figure that out. Anyway, where was I going with this? The main question.

MS. RIEDEL: Similarities and differences between the recent and earlier work? We were talking about the increasing skill and the decrease in technology.

MR. EBERLE: Oh, the low-tech.

MS. RIEDEL: The increasingly low-tech.

MR. EBERLE: Yes, yes. And that is having found the wonderful combination of the black sigillata on porcelain. I like the low-tech of that, you know. I have the clay, and I have the sigillata. The sigillata is very easy to prepare. And I don't—I tried to use a ball mill, but I really don't like the sound of it. So I like the quietness of just the normal separation and settling out, of sitting in a jar for a couple of days. And so it's very low tech. Extremely low-tech. And I really like that. And that allows me to pay more attention to other things. I don't have to worry about glaze, etc.

MS. RIEDEL: Travel has not really had a significant impact on your life or work. Is that correct?

MR. EBERLE: That's correct.

MS. RIEDEL: Not that you're not a travel fan.

MR. EBERLE: Correct. Because I'm not much of a travel fan. Although in the early years of the studio, within two or three years, I think, I received an anonymous travel grant.

MS. RIEDEL: Really!

MR. EBERLE: From Pittsburgh here. In fact there was a painter friend in the studio with us at the time. He had a smaller area. And it came down to, you know, do we give the money to Scott [Vradelis]—all the money to Scott—or all the money to Ed? And they compromised and split the money and gave it—it's all coincidence that he came up, that his name came up and so did mine. So we split it, and I think it was—it was a modest amount. It was like $2500 to travel. And their directive was to, you know, do some travel that you think is going to be conducive to your work.

MS. RIEDEL: How interesting!

MR. EBERLE: Right.

MS. RIEDEL: So just out of the blue an anonymous grant.

MR. EBERLE: Out of the blue, anonymous, serendipity. And I gave it a lot of thought as well as my friends. Everybody's saying, well, you have to go to Japan, you have to go to China, you have to go to Korea, you have to go to the Orient. And I'm thinking, yes, that was probably where I needed to go, and maybe I should go to Europe. Well, there's not much clay in Europe.

MS. RIEDEL: No thoughts about Greece?

MR. EBERLE: How could I forget that? You have to go to Greece and look at the Greek pottery there.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Which, by the way, I've not really looked at seriously. But I relied on a dream that I had of waking—of being awake for a sunrise in Mimbres country. And I had that dream, and I carried it around with me for a few weeks until it came time where I had to make a decision for the grant people to say where I was going. So I went with the dream. I had the dream of seeing the sunrise in a Mimbres locale. And it was realized.

MS. RIEDEL: Where did you go?

MR. EBERLE: And that was all serendipity, too. Went to—well, the Mimbres country is down in the southwest portion of New Mexico. And the center of that is Silver City. And I drove down there, and I didn't like the feel of the town. In fact, I turned around, and I was almost out of town on my way back up to Albuquerque and Santa Fe and whatever is available up north. But I said, I better stop and have a cup of coffee and rethink this. This is a little too impetuous. And serendipitously I was talking with an elderly couple here in Pittsburgh before I went. You know when everybody's telling me where to go.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: Well, I think I did mention that I might go down to Silver City. And they said, "Oh, there's an elderhostel down there that we know of, and a delightful lady." And it just sounded so stuffy and not my cup of tea that I didn't pay much attention, although I did write down the name of the lady that ran this elderhostel. So I'm looking through my notes, sitting there with a cup of coffee. And I find her name. And I said, oh, what the heck, you know. I'll give her a call. And it turned out to be the exact person that I needed to be with. Because she was an avid historian and fan of the Mimbres. And she was very protective of not divulging anything to pot hunters.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah!

MR. EBERLE: But she had several sites on her property which was a larger tract of land along with her bed-and-breakfast hotel, elderhostel kind of thing, ranch. And she had an ancient house site where the stone foundation was still visible, prehistoric.

MS. RIEDEL: Extraordinary.

MR. EBERLE: It might not have been Mimbres, but it was prehistoric Indian, and it was on her property. And she gave me a room off to the side away from everybody else. I'd get up in the morning, and she would pack my lunch, and tell me where to go that day. And I would do the rounds. She knew exactly where I needed to go. And one of the mornings it came down to I needed to do the sunset thing. And so I woke up where I normally don't wake up in the middle of the night or just before dawn. But I woke up, and I stumbled my way up maybe a half a mile and found in the dark, found this place. And sat down, and I waited—no, I didn't sit down—I stood up, and I waited for the sun to rise, and there it was. So I realized the dream. And it was very important. But it is like mashed potatoes. The harder you grab onto it, the more it squeezes out. You can't really grab it; it's too elusive.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly.

MR. EBERLE: But it really did work. And there are some other very special places down there that she sent me to with picto—

MS. RIEDEL: Pictographs?

MR. EBERLE: Pictographs and petroglyphs.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Where only just a few people knew there they were, and she was one of them.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow.

MR. EBERLE: So I saw things that normally wouldn't be seen. And I saw so many, and picked up so many Mimbres bowls that it just made me blasé about the whole thing. [Laughs.] Because there were—

MS. RIEDEL: Out there on her property, there were just shards everywhere.

MR. EBERLE: No, just in collections and whatnot. Albuquerque Museum [University of New Mexico Art Museum], at the university there, etc. But it was really not the bowls that I went down there to see.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: I knew that. It was to be in their space. And so that was significant.

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

MR. EBERLE: That really was significant. Well, it just accentuates the place where you—where I—can operate, and I have to pay attention to what that is, and to be sure that it's correct.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Would you like to mention her name or the location more specifically?

MR. EBERLE: To do that I would need to do a lot of research. And all of that research is in storage.

MS. RIEDEL: Somewhere around Silver City, we'll leave it at that.

MR. EBERLE: Somewhere around Silver City. Yes. And of course that was the eighties. So I'm sure she's probably not there anymore. What a find!

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: Really now. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Well, I'm glad we talked about travel. It may not have been much, but what there was was significant.

MR. EBERLE: Yes. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. RIEDEL: Have any of the magazines, like *American Craft*, *American Ceramics*, *Studio Potter*, have those been significant at all?

MR. EBERLE: No, they haven't been. And half-jokingly, what I tell students is don't read those magazines. You'll go blind. But for me there is a truth to that. I'm not sure what it is. Arrogance, ego, not liking to see somebody who's not getting it, you know. I don't know what it is. I don't find any inspiration there or anything there.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Okay.

MR. EBERLE: And that includes any articles that might be written on me, too. [They laugh.] I'm not leaving myself out of that equation. That's true.

MS. RIEDEL: So in general it sounds like writing about art and art history has not been of interest to you.

MR. EBERLE: I write about art almost every day.

MS. RIEDEL: But that's part of your own process.

MR. EBERLE: It's just part of my own process.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right. But reading that sort of material has not been an influence at all.

MR. EBERLE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. EBERLE: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, I think we have done a very thorough job here. I have a few final questions in summary, and then we will be done. Do you see your career in terms of episodes and periods that are distinct? Or do you see a thread of continuity that runs through the work?

MR. EBERLE: Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't. Probably more often I see it as jumpy. But in reality I don't think it's as jumpy as I think it is.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: In fact, this interview has given me a chance to look, by the nature of the way you set it up, of looking at the whole thing, and I don't normally do that.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. EBERLE: I don't normally look at the whole picture. And I'm still not sure what that is. But I have a sense that there might be something there. But what that is exactly, I don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah-hah. Okay.

MR. EBERLE: And part of that is age. I'm more willing to accept my attempts when I was much younger, much younger age. And willing to accept what I deem my failures as not failures anymore but as just things that happen along the way.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] What about the work in particular matters to you, is significant to you, your work?

MR. EBERLE: Ask again?

MS. RIEDEL: What about your work in particular matters to you as significant to you?

MR. EBERLE: Hmm. I don't know. I don't understand what that is.

MS. RIEDEL: Hmm. Let's think how else might I rephrase that. Well, I guess another way to think about it would be what keeps you going into the studio day in and day out after 26 years?

MR. EBERLE: Well, again, it's the next piece.

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

MR. EBERLE: It's the process and willingness to enter the chaos, and that's what keeps me fresh. And so each day, if things are good, it's an adventure. And each day is an opportunity to keep moving. The thrill for me is in the process. And that's where I like to be.

MS. RIEDEL: That would be my thought, but I don't want to put words in your mouth. [They laugh.] Well, finally, I guess, would you discuss your thoughts about the importance of clay as a means of expression, what it does that nothing else can do?

MR. EBERLE: Clay is an astonishing material. It's as old as the hills, as they say; or it's as old, almost as old, as civilization itself. And with so many clay people, potters, what you will, over millennia, each individual who approaches the clay still finds their own—if conditions are right—they find their own way of working with the clay. And some of that influenced by geography, you know. But those who have clay available to them and clay of a certain culture—or today the clay of the individual that is so malleable that it can fit anybody. Well, paint can fit anybody, too. But three dimensionally, for a three-dimensional material—it is extremely adaptable to each person that's ever worked with it. And my mind is drifting. So I'm having a hard time staying on track.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Do you want to pause for a moment, or we can wind it up here.

MR. EBERLE: Ask me the question again. Do you remember what the question was?

MS. RIEDEL: I guess what about clay-ness—is a good way to think about it? What about clay-ness matters to you? What about it is significant? Why have you chosen to follow, to work with that material over all this time rather than perhaps moving into the drawing full time? What about it is unique and—

MR. EBERLE: That's a good question, and one that I really can't answer, why. What is a grown man of 65 years old still playing around with clay? And anybody that's made clay, being 65 or older, has asked the same question of themselves. [Laughs.] And I don't know of a good answer except that it just—the clay draws you in. There are certain individuals that the clay draws in. And I think some of that has to do with soul, the type of soul or how accessible the soul of that individual is. Clay is a very soulful material. Literally the clay is of the ground, and the soul is of the ground.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. EBERLE: The spirit is of the mountain. And there's maybe a little bit of porcelain up there in the clouds. But clay generally as we think of it is in the valley; it's in the ground. It's well-grounded. So that individual, the makeup of that individual, if they have that soul, somehow makes that link. And it usually probably isn't conscious, it isn't a conscious linkup. But it is there. That's a pretty good answer. We'll leave it at that.

MS. RIEDEL: Perfect. Thank you very much.

MR. EBERLE: Thank you.

MS. RIEDEL: Bravo! You survived.

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