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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Jennifer Bartlett on June 3 and 4, 2011. The interview took place in Brooklyn, New York, and was conducted by James McElhinney for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Elizabeth Murray Oral History of Women in the Visual Arts Project.

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

Interview

JAMES MCELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney speaking with Jennifer Bartlett at her home and studio in Brooklyn on Friday June the 3rd, 2011.

Good morning.

JENNIFER BARTLETT: Good morning.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Where were you born?

MS. BARTLETT: Long Beach, California.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Really?

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] Yes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And what was your childhood like? Were you exposed to art at an early age?

MS. BARTLETT: There—we—there was some art books at home that I would look at, but not a lot. And I think probably bought by my mother. My father was a big—feeling that artists were parasites on society—[laughs]—and you know the rest.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah. How did he make a living?

MS. BARTLETT: Construction.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see. So he was all for the sweat of the brow and the honest day's work and—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, sort of. I think he was bankrupt twice. His—

MR. MCELHINNEY: So he was enterprising.

MS. BARTLETT: Yes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah. And was he involved with—I'm imagining if he was in construction he was involved with the building boom right after World War—

MS. BARTLETT: Pipeline.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, pipeline. Oh really?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. Yeah. And—

MR. MCELHINNEY: So not home construction he was involved with.

MS. BARTLETT: Systems, I would say.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Systems. Oil, water—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: In and around Orange County [CA]?

MS. BARTLETT: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah, we lived right on a little area called the Peninsula. And so close, you know, on the beach. So I had a beach—beachy upbringing.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So was he a native Californian, your father?

MS. BARTLETT: No. He was born in Idaho, I believe.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, in the West—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Somewhere in the West—Idaho, yeah. And your mother?

MS. BARTLETT: Washington, D.C.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Interesting. How did they end up in Long Beach?

MS. BARTLETT: I think that my grandfather on my mother's side worked in hotel management, so he took—where did all the senators live and that kind of stuff at that—the Adams, or—I don't remember what it was. And so he relocated to the Beverly Hills Hotel.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And that was his operation? That's quite a place.

MS. BARTLETT: Yes, I know. I'll tell you, I am really not good at recollecting or communicating childhood events, you know. I am—I don't know why. But I'm not.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, we don't need to—we don't need to explore that too closely. Just to get a sense of place, a sense of origins, a sense of—

MS. BARTLETT: Let's see, Woodrow Wilson High School [Long Beach, CA]. [Laughs.] Then I went on to Mills College [Oakland, CA]. And it was sort of—I didn't look at other places too much.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How did you pick Mills?

MS. BARTLETT: I—somebody that I knew went there. And I liked the artiness of it. I wanted to be an art major. And I liked its proximity to San Francisco and Stanford. And so that's where I went. And after that I did the same thing for graduate school. I, you know, got all of the information about all of the graduate schools. And on one you'd have to draw a chair and another you'd have to do this—they were all on the East Coast, interestingly enough.

And that sort of—I didn't like that. And so Yale [University, New Haven, CT], you didn't have to anything. You just would send in slides of stuff that you'd done. And that seemed to make much more sense. They didn't even, at that time, require a degree, a BFA or anything.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You know, a lot of the people who taught there, actually, like—well, for a brief moment [Willem] de Kooning taught there—

MS. BARTLETT: When?

MR. MCELHINNEY: I think 1951.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh my god.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And so did Will Barnet, who didn't complete high school.

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: And Lester Johnson taught there the years that I was there, and he never completed high school. So—

MS. BARTLETT: Really?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah. So I mean, they were, I think, more interested in just the quality of the work than anything else. They wanted the best students they could get.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So what was the first memory you have of being in the presence of a work of art? What

triggered your interest in art?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I think the first big one was a [Vincent] van Gogh show in Los Angeles [CA]. [Coughs.] And I'm going to cough— I have allergies. And I add to them by smoking. So—[laughs].

MR. MCELHINNEY: But your—but they're American Spirit Lights, so they're sort of the—

MS. BARTLETT: No, these are the mediums, unfortunately.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh medium, OK.

MS. BARTLETT: The yellow ones are light.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I'm sorry. But they're sort of the—like the tobacco equivalent of health food, right? [They laugh.]

MS. BARTLETT: Or exactly the same as the other ones. They taste better.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And they don't burn through like Marlboros do. They just go out, like old-fashioned cigarettes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right. There aren't all those chemicals in them.

MS. BARTLETT: That's right.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: And so first work of art. That was pretty fabulous. And—

MR. MCELHINNEY: So was that like an ah-ha moment for—

MS. BARTLETT: Why did this—I remember another thing in Long Beach [CA] was a performance by John Gielgud of the "Ages of Man," which was a sort of walk-around show that he had. That was very impressive. And at that time, probably when I was in high school, junior high, the first French movies started coming over and—in my case, to the Bay Theater [Seal Beach, CA]—and that was pretty astonishing at that point. I think I—one of the first was *The 500 Blows* [*The 400 Blows*, 1959], which I just thought was absolutely wonderful.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Antoine Doinel.

MS. BARTLETT: Yes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: He was in so many other—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Jean-Pierre Léaud? Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah. Well, so that was, yeah, the so-called "new wave"—[Francois] Truffaut and [Jean-Luc] Godard and [Louis] Malle, all those guys.

MS. BARTLETT: And all the—yeah. Louis [Malle] became a friend. And he was wonderful. And he always had the quality of making you feel like a genius. So he was—[laughs]—a delightful person. I thought he was a wonderful director. Do you remember *Murmurs of the Heart* [1971]?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Of course.

MS. BARTLETT: And this is also around the time of—oh god, what was it—the [Stanley] Kubrick movie? *2001 [A Space Odyssey]*, 1968]?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yes. Yes.

MS. BARTLETT: Which I thought was brilliant at the time. And the *Godfather* movies—

MR. MCELHINNEY: So the late '60s, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: So it was kind of really, you know, from the mid-'60s on pretty fabulous. But I hear myself

talking a lot about movies.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But don't you think they are, in a lot of ways, sort of the narrative paintings of our time, as they're painting with light in a dark room?

MS. BARTLETT: I thought I was—[laughs]—I thought I was an example of a narrative painter in our time.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Of course.

MS. BARTLETT: I don't know. I had a friend at Yale who was very interested in movies, to the extent—she was from New York—that she knew all the hairdressers. You know, we'd watch all the—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, the credits.

MS. BARTLETT: —credits. And so she would say, oh, he did the hair in such and such and such and such. I found that riveting.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, you know, the makeup is always a Westmore.

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] Right.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Al Westmore, Wally Westmore, Bud Westmore. They were all, like, Westmores.

When you were at Yale, did they have in the residential colleges every night a film society or alternating nights? Because when I was there, they had that.

MS. BARTLETT: I don't remember that. No, there was a local theater that was a street behind Chapel Street.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Was it the Lincoln [Theatre, New Haven, CT], or—

MS. BARTLETT: I don't remember what it was.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: But they would have movies at like around noon every day, which I'm sure were filled with college students taking a break, so one saw a lot there. I don't remember film societies, per se.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, in the '70s, there were. Each—a number of the residential colleges in the department of English at the *Linsly-Chittenden Hall* would have—on alternating nights they would have films, and often the kinds of movies that you're alluding to, like the new wave films and foreign films, classic films.

MS. BARTLETT: But they—but during that time it seems like it was great time for American films too.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yes, it was. Yeah, that would have been the age of Arthur Penn, and of course [John] Huston was still alive and well, and a lot of talent—Kubrick. A lot of talent.

MS. BARTLETT: And what's his name, the guy that abused the 13 year-old girl, that's now—

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Roman] Polanski.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah. Well, it was a wonderful—it was a wonderful period.

MS. BARTLETT: But the whole period in terms of music, in terms of literature, in terms of everything, I think was very exciting.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So just out of curiosity, you get to Mills College, you're up in the Bay area. How did that change your outlook on things and your sort of—

MS. BARTLETT: I much preferred being there than Long Beach, California. But then, I wanted to go to New York [NY] as soon as possible.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right. Right.

MS. BARTLETT: So I ended up just applying to Yale. And that was the only graduate school I applied to, which was cutting things very fine, I think, in retrospect. But luckily—[laughs]—I got in. And went back—you know, went to the East Coast and kind of never looked back, really.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Who did you work with at Yale?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, a lot of people were there for short stints. So the overall person, Jack Tworkov was head of the department. And Jim Dine did a gig there. And they'd always have somebody coming from New York. [Robert] Rauschenberg I remember coming, and who else? Did I say [James] Rosenquist? Really, tons of people, it was sort of one—and Chuck Close was there, like a year above me. And we became friends and then lived within a block from each other in New York when I moved there. There were just a ton of people, like [Claus] Oldenburg, you know, in and out of the school. It was great.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Who were in your class? Or who was in your class?

MS. BARTLETT: Michael Craig-Martin, who lives in England now, an artist. Jon Borofsky. Chuck was a year or two ahead. Richard Serra was a year or two ahead. I used to be tortured by the people that were a couple of years ahead. Who else was there? I mean, tons of people. I think Rackstraw Downes was just there. Brice [Marden] had just been there. He had graduated.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Janet Fish.

MS. BARTLETT: Janet Fish. Had she just graduated?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Probably.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And [Robert] Mangold.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, he had graduated.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right. And—

MS. BARTLETT: I met him later because we both taught at the School of Visual Arts [New York, NY].

MR. MCELHINNEY: And that would have been before people like John Moore and—

MS. BARTLETT: And?

MR. MCELHINNEY: And I'm trying to think who else from that—I mean, I'm trying to—but anyway. It was, you know, the Tworkov years.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And he was the head of the school or the dean of the school at the time?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And the regular critics were—I mean, the people who were there weekly—

MS. BARTLETT: Teaching.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, teaching.

MS. BARTLETT: Al Held was there at that time. And other people that I didn't know too well, like Louis Finkelstein or *Bernard Chaet* or—and I didn't know any of those because, you know, in—at Mills I was reading all of the art magazines, which was really about it—what we had. And so I was probably more interested in everything that was in the art magazines—

MR. MCELHINNEY: So there were no teachers at Mills that were influential or—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. There was one that was great, who just was enthusiastic, which is probably the best teaching in the world. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: And who was that?

MS. BARTLETT: His name was *Ralph DuCasse*.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How do you spell his name, do you know?

MS. BARTLETT: D-U-C-A-S-S-E.

MR. MCELHINNEY: DuCasse. So—

MS. BARTLETT: What kind of a name is it? Is it Latin or French?

MR. MCELHINNEY: It sounds French. DuCasse, yeah, DuCasse. So it sounds French. So you went to Yale's two-year program?

MS. BARTLETT: It was two and three then. And I was in the three, but I only went the two.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see.

MS. BARTLETT: I mean, just because of—I don't know why. That's how it worked out.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So the third year was like a preparatory year? Like a BFA year?

MS. BARTLETT: I think how they used to do it was the first year was your BFA, and the second two were your MFA. But then they were condensing things, you know. And so certain people would go through in the two years, and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: So you got out of Yale and moved promptly to New York. Did you live there—did you live in New Haven while you were at school?

MS. BARTLETT: I did, because I was—I got married when I was at Yale. So I had a studio in the same building as Neil Welliver. Do you remember him—

MR. MCELHINNEY: I do. I knew him, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: So I lived in New Haven—actually in Cheshire, Connecticut—for a while after that and had a studio in New Haven. And then I got a place in New York that I'd just go to every weekend or something. And my marriage broke up and I went to New York full time.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That was after a couple of years?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So what year might that have been? Can we remember the date?

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] No. You mean, when I moved to New York?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah. Just out of curiosity.

MS. BARTLETT: For some reason I have in my mind that I moved there in 1968, '69. And you know, I had, as everyone did, a string of teaching jobs at various places that involved a lot of traveling and stuff. And then I, you know, got a job in School of Visual Arts and then I began at a certain point making enough from my painting to sort of support myself, and so I haven't taught since then. But I taught at the University of Connecticut at Storrs, Bridgeport University [CT]—was it a university, I don't know—some community college that I can't—New Haven Community College. I had a job at the Jewish Center [New York, NY] as a librarian.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Which is where the art school is now. [Laughs.]

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I guess so. Is that the Deborah Berke one?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, the one across the street from—were you in the A&A building? Was it—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: And I think I was there in the first couple of years.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Must have been.

MS. BARTLETT: And—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Did you like the building as an environment to work in?

MS. BARTLETT: It wasn't ideal because, you know, the cubicles we were allowed were pretty small. And then people would expand theirs, you know. I was one of the big expanders. But there were other expanders too,

who would expand into my place. [Laughs.] And so it wasn't great. I loved the library. And I loved the little place on top.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: Where you could have coffee or something like that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: The coffee shop on the roof.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: The architecture department and graphics seemed to have more space. But maybe that was—

MR. MCELHINNEY: They were then—yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: —because they didn't have little cubicles. They—it was an open-plan sort of situation, which I wouldn't have liked either, so. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: The architects were all in kind of a communal, big, sprawling, open—

MS. BARTLETT: Space.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Space. So were the studios then on the fourth and the fifth floor—was it, you know, the pit arrangement that later evolved with—

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, I don't know the pit arrangement. I think they were on the fourth, fifth and sixth or the fifth and sixth?

MR. MCELHINNEY: But there was a large atrium sort of with a walkway around and where a lot of crits were held on one floor. It was different arrangement. So you were there before the fire?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I think after the fire in—

MS. BARTLETT: What was the fire? What caused the fire?

MR. MCELHINNEY: As I understand it from people who were there at the time—and I don't want to misspeak, but I think John Moore; there's a guy named Richard Waller—does that ring a bell?

MS. BARTLETT: Uh-uh [negative].

MR. MCELHINNEY: —told me that some students in the urban planning department set a fire—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —actually in just contempt of, you know, the building. They hated the building, and they just wanted to destroy it.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, Jesus.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And now of course the thing is being handled like a great treasure, and a lot of us hated it.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It was not a very hospitable—it leaked, it was cold—

MS. BARTLETT: Right. Everyone wanted it to be at Crown Street.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, right, right, or back in Street Hall like—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —in the old days, but this sort of ragged concrete walls and this sort of like a bunker environment—is that how you remember it?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, but I probably don't remember it as quite as negatively, do you know?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, I didn't mind it that much, but a lot of people did, and—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —allegedly, the fire was not accidental. I think it happened in the late '60s.

MS. BARTLETT: That's interesting.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I'm sure that a researcher—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —having to look at this interview online could research, you know, the date of the great Rudolph A&A Building fire.

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] Arson. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Arson—alleged arson, never proved nor prosecuted. So, were there any people at Yale, was there one person—

MS. BARTLETT: What was the big wahoo—oh, the Beinecke Library.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Beinecke.

MS. BARTLETT: Who built that? Who built that?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, I think the money came from somebody named Beinecke, but—

MS. BARTLETT: No—

MR. MCELHINNEY: —oh, the architect?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It was [Marcel] Breuer? No.

MS. BARTLETT: That was the art—no. Who did the art museum?

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Louis] Kahn.

MS. BARTLETT: Kahn, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Louis Kahn did the art gallery and across the street now, you know, the British Arts Center—you know, the Mellon Center for British Art. I think—no, it's not Breuer, but the—but the courtyard outside of the Beinecke was [Isamu] Noguchi. There was this kind of subterranean open garden.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I just—you know, I sort of remembered thinking at the time that there were actually similarities between the art building and the Beinecke Rare Books Library.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, right.

MS. BARTLETT: There—it was very much of the time, you know, and I think I knew that when was I there.

MR. MCELHINNEY: They were—they were structures that were of that moment, that sort of late high modernism—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —before people began to put ornamentation onto buildings again—people like [Philip] Johnson and [Michael] Graves and others in the '80s.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, who—

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Robert] Venturi.

MS. BARTLETT: —who did I go to school with there? The one that builds—they're sort of awful—the sort of “look back” buildings in New York, and one was just a complete sellout on Central Park West recently; I can't remember. But—wasn't Michael Graves—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Stern?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, what's Stern's first name?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Bob.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Bob Stern, who's the dean of the architecture school now, I believe, or was until recently.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. I don't—really?

MR. MCELHINNEY: I think he may still be. Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: I can remember getting—there was a—used to be a prize given by the Architects' Association. I don't know what it's called. Anyway, I got it one year for some work I did for a building in Sweden, and I was there with—it was Bob Stern, Morris—I mean, what's his name Graves—Michael Graves. But it was all of them, like, you know, six of them or seven, and they—I was the only woman—[inaudible]. But they were just torturing me the entire time, do you know? About there was really bad weather, so it was clear because there was a woman there and buh-buh-buh-blah—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Really?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Amazing. Unfortunate.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, it was always—it was always like that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, this is a good time maybe—

MS. BARTLETT: Who used to call me “babe”? That was a head of the Los Angeles Museum, but he called every other woman “babe” too.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, everybody in Hollywood calls each other “babe.” It's a—it's a multi-gender greeting, like “hun” in Baltimore. Just out of curiosity—I mean, this is—this is an opening to ask you how you found Yale as a place to study, being a woman, and who were some of the other women who were in your class who maybe —

MS. BARTLETT: I don't know if there were more women in my class. I think there was one, and I didn't know her very well. I think I read her name in, you know, publications or something—Elaine [sp]—I don't know; I'll probably remember the last name too. But most of my friends—I mean, a lot of my friends were guys, and it was fine. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Is that where you met your future husband?

MS. BARTLETT: No, I met him because he used to be friends with a person I was going out with at Princeton [University, Princeton, NJ], and he was at Princeton. Then he went to Berkeley [University of California, Berkeley, CA] for premed.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, say—so you and he—

MS. BARTLETT: Got sort of—

MR. MCELHINNEY: —met in the Bay area?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see.

MS. BARTLETT: Or got together in the Bay area.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right. And then came east together—

MS. BARTLETT: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, we both were accepted at Yale.

MR. MCELHINNEY: In the school of art?

MS. BARTLETT: No, the School of Medicine and the School of Art.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see. So he was a doctor or studying to be a doctor?

MS. BARTLETT: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MR. MCELHINNEY: So who were your closest comrades at Yale?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I—Jenny Snider, who was at Yale then, and I saw a lot of people in the English department like Peter Biskind and his wife of that time, whose name I can't remember. I think there was only one woman in the medical student—school, and she was just known as having big breasts. That was it. [Laughs.] And let's see who—you know, I knew other fellows in other departments, and I didn't really know any undergraduates or anything.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: I took undergrad—I took the greening of America by what's his name? The law professor who—was it a class of the—[inaudible]—who wrote a book that became very well known in that time frame about the greening of America—[laughs]. And so he was kind of a hippie and that—and then I took Russian literature and a bunch of stuff like that. I didn't ever have an art history from what's his name—the architect, or—

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Vincent] Scully.

MS. BARTLETT: Scully.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, he—I think he still occasionally speaks.

MS. BARTLETT: Is he still alive?

MR. MCELHINNEY: He's still alive, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh my—[inaudible].

MR. MCELHINNEY: *The Yale Alumni Magazine* had an article about him last year that he's—

MS. BARTLETT: Really?

MR. MCELHINNEY: —well into his 80s, and—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —still holding his own. I recently saw William Bailey—

MS. BARTLETT: Oh my God.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Do you know Bill?

MS. BARTLETT: I never knew him then, and I, you know, didn't like his work; so I wasn't—you know. You're very sensitive at that point, very much on your art mission, do you know what—defending your—you—one's self against everyone else, do you know?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, that was—that was the mode of instruction too. It was very combative—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —and sort of tough love, not so much nurturing, and—or—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I think I didn't mind that at all, but he just gabby to me. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: I think—I think that's why certain people are attracted to Yale, is because it had that reputation of being sort of ranger school for the art world. People like—

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: —Al Held had a reputation—

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] Yeah, Al that—

MR. MCELHINNEY: —for being—

MS. BARTLETT: Alex Katz—

MR. MCELHINNEY: —Alex Katz, for being brutal in critiques, and students used to prize themselves for having survived a withering blast from either, so—

MS. BARTLETT: I can remember one of them, probably Al Held, following me out—me out of class making his point, you know, over and over and over again—about putting things in a decorative envelope, which you—I—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —did excellently. But, you know, it was entirely the wrong route.

MR. MCELHINNEY: For him?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: For him. Yeah, so—that he was not about that at all. In fact, he was rather opposed to that, as I recall. But he was another one who spoke a lot about film in his critiques.

MS. BARTLETT: Really?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Even named a painting of his after the Eisenstein film, *Ivan the Terrible*, because part of it's black and white, part of it's in color.

MS. BARTLETT: We did—this was much later, of course—but at the—I don't even like to say the word, the Reagan Airport [Washington, DC]? The old National Airport?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right. Orange County, yeah? No—

MS. BARTLETT: In Washington, D.C. and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, in Washington. Right. It's the John Wayne Airport's in Orange County. [Laughs.]

MS. BARTLETT: Yes. There was a 400-foot long—or maybe it was 500 (feet)—glass—what would you call it? If it—it would be like a frieze or something, but it was made of glass. And so both of—Al did one side, and I did the other side. So we're sort of eternally bound.

MR. MCELHINNEY: In conversation.

MS. BARTLETT: What?

MR. MCELHINNEY: In conversation with Al forever.

MS. BARTLETT: Yes. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: But how did you find Yale as a woman? Did you find that it was a—

MS. BARTLETT: Well—

MR. MCELHINNEY: —gendered environment that was—that was—

MS. BARTLETT: Listen, it was so much better than Long Beach, California, or the boys at Stanford [University, Stanford, CA] or Berkeley or something like that, except actually the Europeans at Berkeley were interesting because it was freedom fighters from—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Hungary?

MS. BARTLETT: Yes. And you know, sort of interesting guys, and they were more sort of sophisticated.

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Inaudible.]

MS. BARTLETT: What?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, Hungary and Eastern Europe. There were those two uprisings about a decade apart.

MS. BARTLETT: I think these were Hungarians.

MS. BARTLETT: So you know, I didn't notice—now, I wasn't naturally a feminist type, do you know what I mean? And I mean, I just wanted to be the best artist. And that was it. And that was plenty for me. And Elizabeth

Murray had been at Mills when I was there. She was in her last year and I was in my last year of undergraduate.

And so that was, you know, that seemed like a normal relationship to me. [Laughs.] And so I didn't really come across—you know, I'd get mash notes from the undergraduates every so often—[they laugh]—but I didn't feel prejudiced against or—anything in particular. I mean, all of us were really young and really ambitious. And that took priority over everything.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Who did you work with as a teaching assistant? Did you have a teaching assistantship at Yale?

MS. BARTLETT: Mm-hmm [negative]. Oh, Richard Serra had—was in the Sy Silliman class, which was color theory, the [Josef] Albers class where everything was based on—I will never forget the smell of—what was that silkscreen paper?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Color-aid.

MS. BARTLETT: Aid. And Richard, you know, would regularly, you know, creep up and tap me on the shoulder. And I'd look—[inaudible]—and say, "You're going to flunk color," do you know? Because I didn't want to do the assignments. I would just be covered in—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Rubber cement.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, the—after a session with that kind of thing. And I just turned in free studies—[laughs]—and I did fine. Richard was on my case most of the time. [Inaudible.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: So he was—he was teaching it?

MS. BARTLETT: He was the assistant teacher for—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, he was a teaching assistant, yeah. Because about 10 years later, in the second year of the MFA program, everybody in the arts school was—or many of the people in the arts school were assigned to work with one of the professors as an assistant teaching an undergraduate class.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, no.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, you never did that.

MS. BARTLETT: Huh-uh [negative]. I mean, the art department for the undergraduates seemed negligible at that time. I mean, you know, one never heard about it, one never saw them.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right. Maybe they became a little more integrated later on, in the '70s.

MS. BARTLETT: Maybe.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So you complete your studies at Yale, you get married, you stick around—

MS. BARTLETT: For a year or two.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —New Haven for a year or two, you do the adjunct shuffle, you find your way to New York. Then what happens?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, a lot of people I knew—Elizabeth had gone to New York by this point. Chuck Close went to New York, a guy I was close to, Joel Shapiro, because he was married to Jenny Snider's sister. And they subsequently broke up. And you know, you just kind of—there was Joe Zucker, who was in the same building as Chuck. There was Alan Saret, who was around the corner. And he was turning—he would give people different shows in his studio. And I can remember, for mine, Alan built this incredibly beautiful staircase of bamboo. And I walked down it and it totally dropped—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, dear.

MS. BARTLETT:—underneath me. And I had a huge wound in my leg. But it was memorable. I liked it. He was close to Keith Sonnier. So you just kind of knew everybody.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It was a much smaller scene at that time.

MS. BARTLETT: Much, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And much less commercial, I guess.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, yeah, because no one was making any money. And during the '70s, there had been that, what, recession or something. And everyone was just barely getting by, you know, with their teaching jobs and stuff like that.

And there used to be somebody—Elizabeth remembered this—that would—I think Best & Company, Sydney Best, who collected art, but what he would do is trade products for an artwork. So we all got stoves and dishwashers and clothes-washers and slide machines and TVs and stuff for a piece of art.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Sydney Lewis—

MS. BARTLETT: Lewis! Was it?

MR. MCELHINNEY: —who was from Richmond, Virginia, and who gave the wing—

MS. BARTLETT: And it was Best & Company, right?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, exactly. So you were trading—it was like queen for a day, right? You traded paintings for a refrigerator.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, absolutely. And when they were delivered, it was just unbelievable.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How did that actually work? I mean, how did you—how did you hit their radar?

MS. BARTLETT: I don't know.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But who contacted you? Were you contacted?

MS. BARTLETT: I don't know.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Somebody just showed up with a refrigerator and—

MS. BARTLETT: No, no. Someone—you know, someone probably said to me, "Oh, you should really see if Sydney Lewis wants to trade with you." And so I did.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Were any of your—were any of your colleagues also trading work?

MS. BARTLETT: Elizabeth—every—all of them, I think. Everyone. And they must have had an incredible collection.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, I'm thinking about it, because I do know the museum in Richmond. And I can imagine there's sort of Al Leslies, there's [Philip] Pearlstein, there's your work, there's Elizabeth Murray. There's a whole

MS. BARTLETT: Raft of—

MR. MCELHINNEY: —raft of artists who were sort of making their names in the '70s and '80s. So—and that's interesting. So they're actually trading merchandise for art.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. And they were generous with the merchandise. You know, you could choose a lot of things from the catalogue.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And do you remember which painting you sold to them for which appliance?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. I just made a specific one, and it was a plate painting. And it was actually sort of nice. And I hadn't done anything like it before and I haven't done anything since, where one section was removed and put at the end of the painting. So it was a painting with a hole in it, with the end happening—you know, but there were several different phases of painting.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Now, when you say "plate painting"—

MS. BARTLETT: You know, I worked on these cold-rolled steel, one foot square with a baked enamel surface and a grid—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay, those.

MS. BARTLETT:—silkscreened on. And then recently, I started working on plates of different sizes. I think there was a 50 centimeter size, there was—well, then there was a whole—feet and inches, there was a 12 inch, the medium size, which was 18—8 inch, and the large size was 24 inches.

And those were just recently in a—there was a giant piece at Pace [Gallery, New York, NY] that was shown in January, I think.

MR. MCELHINNEY: What inspired you to do that?

MS. BARTLETT: To do what?

MR. MCELHINNEY: What was, you know, the trigger to adopt that format?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I don't remember if I—I don't know if you remember the time when, with a lot of Pop art, that the artist very much proselytized not having any hand in something. But I had a slightly different reason. I looked—had been watching subway signs. And they had to withstand a lot of punishment. And where Frank Stella could have coffee rings on his drawings and have them look rather exquisite, my coffee rings just looked messy.

So I thought of a thing that had to do with subway signs that could be attached directly to the wall, that you could wipe down and clean off every day if you were so inclined. And it sort of went—and I liked the idea of being able to pack it up, because shipping was more about size than weight at that point, so it was economic. I liked the idea of having a painting go around a corner, you know, all kinds of stuff which probably had to do with Richard's pieces, you know, that were, you know, the tall slab in the corner. But those—all those things would have—I would have been aware of.

And so I took a bus out to New Jersey and found this place who makes—still makes the plates for me. But the father was much better than the son, the Gerson Feiner Company [Bogota, NJ]. And they made it—

MR. MCELHINNEY: What's the name of the company?

MS. BARTLETT: What? Gerson Feiner.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Gerson Feiner.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. What did you hear? That?

MR. MCELHINNEY: That's what I heard, but I—[they laugh]—no, no, no, I just—I just want to be clear, because in the transcription, there are always questions about spellings of proper names and everything, so—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. Yeah, G-E-R-S-E-N—or is it O-N? How would you spell Feiner, like F-I or F-E?

MR. MCELHINNEY: F-E-I-N or F-I-N, yeah. It can be looked—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. No, it was an I and an E.

MR. MCELHINNEY: F-E-I-N-E-R. OK, that's great to know. So you went out to New Jersey and you found this place and—

MS. BARTLETT: On a bus.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And what did they normally do? What was their normal product line?

MS. BARTLETT: Any kind of steelwork, do you know, like they had one of those pipe benders there. They had—but I think it was a small level—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Fabrication.

MS. BARTLETT:—yeah, not a giant one, and certainly not an art one. I think I looked it up in the phonebook.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That would have been my next query, was how did you find them? Just in the phonebook.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. I think so.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And so you—

MS. BARTLETT: So I explained what I wanted, which was cold-rolled steel and then a baked-enamel surface, like a refrigerator. And then later, I had a silkscreen epoxy grid put on. And at first, they didn't have holes, and then they started having holes, so you could just hang them directly on the wall.

And I was going to start a huge piece on the universe. And it's—the farthest I got was a picture of the Earth and one of Mars, which wasn't quite finished. And then I just started doing pieces with them. And that was a

horrible year, when you weren't in school and the first year after, trying to figure out what you were trying to do. And every time I'd think of an idea, I—well, or I would think of an idea, I'd put down a person's name who had it before me. [Laughs.]

And you know, it just is a kind of ridiculous obsession. And I could remember some pieces I did then that were just so awful. Like, I would draw on canvas—not freehand, but not measuring either. I'd use a straightedge and draw a grid on it. Then I'd sew all of them together, and they'd hang with grommets. They were just awful. And—but you know, I think that that was the beginning of my grid obsession, though it had come out somewhat at Yale, too.

Well, that was another—there were two other people at Yale. There was Bill Williams, William Williams, who's still actively showing, and Peter Bradley, whose father was—who was married to a good painter, who I'm not remembering—Susan McClelland or something like that. Anyway, he told everyone he was Miles Davis' son, and then I found out later that he was never Miles Davis' son, but he was Art Blakey's son.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, why tell- [inaudible]—

MS. BARTLETT: You know, so you can see the mind, or the lack of one, in that. [Laughs.] Oh, god.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Bill Williams was at Skowhegan [School of Painting & Sculpture, Madison, ME] the year I was there, so I knew him, yeah, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, was he? Yeah, he's a nice guy, I think.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, really nice guy. So the grid—what was your work like when you first got to Yale, just out of curiosity?

MS. BARTLETT: It wasn't a grid.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, I—

MS. BARTLETT: It was—I was very influenced by photographs of Arshile Gorky. Of course, when I saw them in real life, they really were totally different than I thought they'd be.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You mean, of his paintings, his paintings.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. And they—to begin with, they were much smaller. The surface was flatter. You know, I mean, just so many things. And I was doing pieces that possibly were based on some of his ideas and shapes, too. And you know, I kind of remember these little things that I would—but they were almost like little figures, but they weren't figures. They were little homunculuses [ph], homunculi. They didn't have any real content.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Like [Joan] Miró or [Yves] Tanguy or—

MS. BARTLETT: That's right, like Miró.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, Gorky, as I understand it, moved up to Sherman [CT]—

MS. BARTLETT: Connecticut.

MR. MCELHINNEY:—Connecticut to be near all the surrealists who were up there during the war, you know, during the war.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, my god. Who was married to—who was Dorothy—Dorothea Tanning married to?

MR. MCELHINNEY: I knew that [Naum] Gabo was up there, [André] Breton for a while, Tanguy was up there.

MS. BARTLETT: I didn't know Breton was there.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, there was a whole kind of war-time colony—

MS. BARTLETT: Community, yeah—

MR. MCELHINNEY:—during the Hitler years and during the occupation of France by the Germans. They were all hiding up in the hills of Litchfield County [CT]. And Peter Blume lived up there—a bunch of people still living up there, but—

MS. BARTLETT: The playwright that you mentioned, Arthur Miller always was—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Arthur Miller. Yeah, he was a friend of mine. But the—he—

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, well I knew him through a friend of mine. Did you ever meet Volker Schlöndorff ?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Of course, yeah. He directed *Salesman* [*Death of a Salesman*, 1985.]

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, but he'd also directed—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right. *The Tin Drum* [1979], yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: [Inaudible.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: We get back to film all the time, it's interesting. Volker—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, we were thinking that was because we were talking about surrealists who lived up there, and then I was just mentioning Arthur because that was somebody I'd met up there. And—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, he—Schlöndorff was there quite a bit while they were doing the *Death of a Salesman* film.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. Well, they were friendly.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, no, they were.

MS. BARTLETT: They became close friends.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And Inge Morath, of course, who was Arthur's wife and a great lady and a wonderful photographer. But that whole area had also—who was up there—Miloš Forman lived up there.

MS. BARTLETT: I didn't know that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You know, the Pilobolus [Dance Company] was up there. A lot of—it's, I guess, a different kind of Hamptons [NY], sort of, enclave of artists. And Bill Styron lived up there, Philip Roth—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, he's still—he's still up there, and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, yeah, and Warren [CT], Cleve Gray and Francine Gray and—

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, right. Yeah, I was up at their place once.

MR. MCELHINNEY:—and Honor Moore—a lot of interesting people up in that part of the world. So—but you're—

MS. BARTLETT: Now, it's—[inaudible.]—and Ann Bass and—[laughs].

MR. MCELHINNEY: So you were first influenced by Gorky. What brought you, sort of, to become more interested in the grid? And by grid, I assume you mean like the right-angle grid.

MS. BARTLETT: Mm-hmm [affirmative], though I've tried—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Others.

MS. BARTLETT:—other kinds. [Laughs.] They were too complicated for me. And they weren't worth doing, because the thing about just the right-angle grids is, well you can just organize anything with a grid. I don't, you know, care what it is—a pile of vomit—you know, whatever, you could organize it—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Whatever.

MS. BARTLETT: —and understand things through looking at them in those terms. Excuse me, I've got to get a glass of water.

MR. MCELHINNEY: OK.

MS. BARTLETT: Do you want one?

MR. MCELHINNEY: I'd love one. How about you, Chelsea [sp]?

MS. : Yes, please. Thank you.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Transcriber, we are going to pause the recording.

[END OF TRACK AAA_bartle11_1512.]

JAMES MCELHINNEY: We took a break.

JENNIFER BARTLETT: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MR. MCELHINNEY: But before we took the break, we were talking about your relationship with the right angle grid. And that occurred at Yale, or did you already start flirting with it when you were at Mills?

MS. BARTLETT: No, I think—yeah, I think it started probably at Yale.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How did you—how did you—I mean, it was everywhere, obviously, in a lot of the abstract painting.

MS. BARTLETT: Everywhere, you know, it was the push-pin art and the grid were the—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And my, you know, use of the plates was simply hard grid paper that was impervious to me. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Enameled cold-rolled steel instead of graph paper.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So how did that—how did that evolve and how did that shape your painting? How did that shape your approach to space in painting? I know at the same time, everybody was talking about space. I remember going to a lecture by the late Philip Pavia where they had the publisher of *It Is* magazine, and he—

MS. BARTLETT: What else did he do besides—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, sculpture. He did a big portrait of Kennedy back in the '70s, and sculpture, mainly. He was a sculptor. But he gave a talk at Skowhegan, and in it, he was talking about how in the early '60s, everybody was talking about coming up with a new space. I—[inaudible]—you know, he'd say—Larry Poons would say, I changed [Jackson] Pollock's space, or Bridget Riley came up with a new space, this talk about space.

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] I remember—

MR. MCELHINNEY: So how did the grid change your space? You remember that, that kind of—

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, yeah, I remember it. I'm thinking that probably I wouldn't have listened too much to that. I found that too complex, you know. It was sort of like—it was also—wasn't it just after the "painting is dead" sort of issue?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And I don't know, those things just make me tired. [Laughs.] And—

MR. MCELHINNEY: All that verbiage and—

MS. BARTLETT: It is. Like, I think that the best art thing that was written, and also probably one of the great poems of the late 20th century, was Sol LeWitt's *32 Rules for Conceptual Art*. You know, I think it's a marvelous piece of work, you know, right or wrong. And that kind of talking interested me. But nothing else did, like all of Don Judd's stuff and everything, it just—

MR. MCELHINNEY: So your engagement with the grid was less critical and just purely visual, that what it could do for you—for your pictures.

MS. BARTLETT: All I can say is it seemed like a good idea at the time—at the time, and that it was a good idea in the—and also in the sense that I never got rid of it. [Laughs.] I mean, even these paintings, which are very clearly landscapes, still have a big grid element in them.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Although they have a sort of an almost a textile-like warp and rift.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, which is a grid.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Which is a grid, yeah. And it's less the severe—you know, the T-squared triangle grid, but it is a grid nonetheless.

MS. BARTLETT: I don't know. It comes close to being a T-square if you look at it. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], overall, it has that effect.

MS. BARTLETT: I'm just going to get some cigarettes. I'll be right back. You don't even have to turn it off. You can ask me something from there.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay.

MS. BARTLETT: [Inaudible.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay, we're back, so—

MS. BARTLETT: Grid. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Grid. So look, I mean, a lot of ink has been spilled in a discussion of the grid, the importance of the grid and what it means spatially, and one thinks of everybody from [Piet] Mondrian to Agnes Martin to—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. Sol LeWitt.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Sol LeWitt. And for you, what is its value?

MS. BARTLETT: I was just thinking of something about Sol, whose work I like very much, and always have, that there always is a freshness to his work, a quality that doesn't date for some reason. It's not locked into what something means. It really is simply what it is, you know? Curved lines on a right angle grid, you know, 4,000 blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and there's always something extremely calm, and who has that quality also is Mondrian.

When I went to a show at the Modern [Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY], which was how many years ago? A lot. Gorgeous. It was really John—what's his name? [Laughs.] This is—he was the chief curator for a long time, and he retired recently. Oh, I'll remember it. And I felt like I was just swimming. It was just wonderful, and I think Sol at his strongest has that quality too, and actually, for me, much more in the two-dimensional pieces than in the three-dimensional pieces, though I like those very much. But I've never really been interested in the meaning conversation, do you know?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, or the music of it, or the poetry of it.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, yeah. Oh, I can talk about that, but—

MR. MCELHINNEY: I mean, one could look at the right angle grid as being—as being multiple echoes of the edges of the rectangle, you know, crossing the space like, you know, the ripples in a pond.

MS. BARTLETT: Or the square. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Or the square, yeah. Or a—yeah. Square, rectangle.

MS. BARTLETT: Triangle, a circle.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But—yeah, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: Anything can be seen in terms of a grid.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It's a repetition of the form or the shape.

MS. BARTLETT: It's also—by having two lines intersecting, you have a little small defined space, you know, and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], so it creates a different kind of visual rhythm than one achieves, let's say, with the shape or the color or the contour.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, yeah, but that's even—you know, on a plate, that's just dotted. You're going to get a variation in the thinness or thickness of the paint, you know, as it gets used up from the brush, and that creates its own rhythm, which is not in the least a mechanical one. I mean, it's mechanical in the sense that a brush is full and then it's not, and it goes through that process, but the thing that it sets up in your mind is something entirely different than that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How would you characterize that?

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] The single-color dotted plate?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, the emptying of a brush talks about the passage of time.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I think that time is a[n] important thing to me. I mean, even as simple as how long something takes—[laughs]—and how long should it take and—

You know, and the relationship of the size of the space to the—to the mark that you're putting on the space becomes a—you know, an issue. Have you ever seen that big piece I did, *Rhapsody* [1975-76]?

MR. MCELHINNEY: At MoMA [Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY]?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, it's up at MoMA now.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: That still looks fresh.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yes, it does. Well, I think the best artworks always are going to greet us as sort of old friends and—

MS. BARLETT: I was thinking on another person, a lot of—in his larger paintings, is [Henri] Matisse always has that quality of freshness, but not in the small-scale things.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Why do you suppose that is?

MS. BARLETT: I don't know. I think that he kind of naturally—his natural talent was a larger-scale format. I never thought about that before.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So you think that there are artists who—that scale is a function of personality as well—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY:—that it's important for an artist to find what their scale is.

MS. BARLETT: I don't know if that's important. I think it's more sort of realizing just how big or small you like to work—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT:—[laughs]—and whether it's easy or hard to fit things in. Like, I can do single-plate things forever and ever, and they're small, but I couldn't do an oil painting on that scale. And I suppose more than the scale thing with me, it was always more than one.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Multiples?

MS. BARTLETT: In a sense. I mean, even probably what interests me in these paintings are—which all come from the garden out there, which I planted two years ago—

MR. MCELHINNEY: These are diptychs, these are large diptychs of paired squares --

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY:—and of floral, and this looks like a stone in the snow.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARLETT: It's that stone behind the tree.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Lovely. And the grid that runs—

MS. BARTLETT: Because I didn't have any ideas. When I moved here, I just didn't have any ideas what to do next. And I was going to do a version of a series I had already done called *Air: 24 Hours*—there's a book on that, and—which was all different times in my then-new house on Charles Street.

And it just sounded so boring to me, so I got even more boring and decided just to do what was in the garden.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It worked for [Claude] Monet.

MS. BARTLETT: What?

MR. MCELHINNEY: It worked for Monet.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah—[laughs]—it did.

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.] So how long have you lived here?

MS. BARTLETT: About two years, maybe—yeah, two years, two falls. I moved in in the fall.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And what—was it all—was it all renovated like this, or this is all your—

MS. BARTLETT: Very different than this. It was—this is all my stuff. And upstairs, I have another studio. And that's nice. And I have no proper living room. I only have a big kitchen. I'll show you later. But it's sort of stripped down.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, it's certainly quite lovely for stripped down. I mean, this is—this space here—is this a space in which you work?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So—

MS. BARTLETT: I work upstairs, too. It really depends. But I prefer working down here because of the garden and the fireplace.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It must be interesting to heat this in the winter. So what was this building before—

MS. BARTLETT: It's not bad. It's radiant heat.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see.

MS. BARTLETT: Which is great. It was—says on the outside it was a candy and confectioner's local—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, that's right. We should have—yeah. So it was a candy factory?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, it was the union hall for, I supposed, candy factories.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh. Brooklyn was for a long time the world's capital of sugar refining.

MS. BARTLETT: Really?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: Because of the boats that would bring the sugar in?

MR. MCELHINNEY: The East River. Jack Frost, Havemeyers [of the American Sugar Refining Company]—

MS. BARTLETT: Oh my god.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And yes, the big, big sugar fortunes.

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I think this was sort of mafia-based situation. I know that Joe Pepitone has his offices here.

MR. MCELHINNEY: In this building, or—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, really?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. [They laugh.]

MS. BARTLETT: At the time it was a union hall. Then, I don't know how soon after, but when I got it—oh God—oh, the Medgar Evers, you know, preschool was in here. And so the ceiling—I had no idea that the ceilings were this tall until I ripped them down, because there was at least a 4-foot drop—

MR. MCELHINNEY: And acoustic tile?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, of just junk. And so I ripped both out. The ceilings are even higher in the upper part.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, it's a wonderful—it's a wonderful renovation.

MS. BARTLETT: Thank you.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Let's go back, sort of, to our chronology and back to your early years in New York. You were—where did you live?

MS. BARTLETT: On Greene Street.

MR. MCELHINNEY: On Greene Street in SoHo?

MS. BARTLETT: 78 Greene Street. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: In SoHo. So that was—

MS. BARTLETT: There are certain things I remember.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —Chuck Close and—

MS. BARTLETT: They lived on Prince Street, just around the corner between Greene and whatever the next street is.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And Jack Beal—did he live by there?

MS. BARTLETT: I didn't know him.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You didn't know him? I interviewed him recently, and he was—he told some story about how a lot of the people were living—a lot of artists were inhabiting these spaces illegally.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And that there were all of these inspections that would happen.

MS. BARTLETT: I think that all of us were inhabiting them illegally. I just have no idea at this point. I remember when Henry Geldzahler got the—that AIR thing passed or something. [In 1977, SoHo, and NoHo, were zoned were "joint living-working" spaces, meaning properties there are for so-called artists-in-residence (AIR) only. -JB]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And I'm sure I got that ranking. But I don't know if I ever put it on my building or—the building I was living in or anything. So I think lots of people—you know, no one was—

MR. MCELHINNEY: It was just done but not enforced?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. I mean, it was a desert down there. You know, at the time I first moved in—I mean, who lived across the street from me is Jon Borofsky and then in the same building was Paul Waldman, who was at School of Visual Arts. And I don't think there was anyone else in our street. A block below that was Joe Brainard. And then a block up on Prince was Alan Saret and, you know, and Chuck and Joe and those people. John Torreano lived across the street from me. I mean, it was a huge—I'm trying to remember where—oh, Elizabeth was living at that time over where LeRoi Jones and Hettie Jones—Hettie Jones was still a—were living in that building. I think it was—must have been on the Bowery.

MR. MCELHINNEY: What about Donald Judd? Was he—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. I'm trying to remember when he got the building—was it Prince Street or was it Spring Street? I'm not sure which it is—[inaudible]—

MR. MCELHINNEY: I think it's Spring. I don't think it's up on Prince.

MS. BARTLETT: Really?

MR. MCELHINNEY: I'm trying to imagine—it's on a corner with—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, right.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But that was—1968 this would have been, or [196]9?

MS. BARTLETT: One of the two.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, an interesting period. So you were really among the first inhabitants of SoHo.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And who would imagine that in another 10 years it would be—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, the only place—there was—there were two places to eat. There was Finale's—the old Finale's—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Old Finale's.

MS. BARTLETT: And then there was—I always called it—oh, and I can't remember what I called it—but—

MR. MCELHINNEY: The Broome Street Tavern?

MS. BARTLETT: What?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Over in West Broadway?

MS. BARTLETT: No. It was on Spring Street and it was only open until six or something, it was a worker's restaurant. And I don't even know at this point what it's changed into or not. And then I remember the Spring Street bar, which I can't remember what we called it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: On West Broadway?

MS. BARTLETT: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Corner of West Broadway and Spring. And—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Vesuvio Bakery, I guess, down the street.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. Alex Katz has lived at West Broadway and Prince for years. And Antonakos in that building and, you know, it was—and a lot of people are still there.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But the neighborhood, obviously, has really changed a great, great deal.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh yeah, dramatically.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So do you find that throughout your life that where you are, geographically, has sort of been marked by—and each time you've moved—has been marked by some kind of change in your work? Like for instance from Mills to New Haven to SoHo, what were you—what happened to your work being in SoHo? What—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, what happened was, you know, I developed the plates there.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And you know, it was just—that was about a year or so after Yale. And I think I got rid of all my work that I did at Yale.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Just—how did you do that?

MS. BARTLETT: Just getting rid of it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Out in the trash on the curb?

MS. BARTLETT: No, it was too big. [Laughs.] So I had to have it hauled away.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh. Hauled away to where?

MS. BARTLETT: I don't know. A dump?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh. There's just a—[they laugh]—just a dump service that can come and take all your bad pictures away—your old pictures away.

MS. BARTLETT: Some of them weren't so bad.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That's a good idea.

MS. BARTLETT: And so I guess that meant that I wanted a clean start in New York and nothing was worth taking

with me. And so it was a year of agony until I developed something.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And how long were you there? Ten—

MS. BARTLETT: At Greene? Pretty long.

MR. MCELHINNEY: 78 Greene Street.

MS. BARTLETT: A long time. I was in this last place on Charles Street almost 20 years. So I was probably at Greene Street about 12 to 15 years, something like that. Do most people have a memory? Where they remember?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Some of the details are researchable by other means, obviously.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You've been interviewed before, there's a record of conversations, articles, et cetera. A lot of the trivial minute facts of your daily life, I mean, might not be as important as data to an interview like ours, as they might be as triggers to access other ideas you want to discuss. I mean, at this point—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I'm at a stage in my life where I don't like to discuss anything with anybody. [Laughs.] I just went from being incredibly verbal to not being verbal.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How did this transpire?

MS. BARTLETT: I don't know. It just got boring to me.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, maybe people were asking you the wrong questions.

MS. BARTLETT: Well, it's not—it's not even, I would say, just in an interview situation.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, right.

MS. BARTLETT: It's just every aspect, you know. So I guess you really have to think about things and carry those memories on. And I just don't stay too long in the past.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, let's try—let's try talking about what you're doing now.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh. It's not—we can do the past. I was just curious, myself.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, it's an interesting question. But it might work—it might be easier to play it in flashback. I mean, in other words, to find the triggers in the present or the doorways in the present that open up something that you want to retrieve or that would help illustrate what we might speak about in terms of what you're planning next year or what's in the studio now, if that would please you more.

MS. BARTLETT: The studio now—those are just a few of the paintings from a body of work that I did. That's up in Philadelphia at this point, at the Locks Gallery. And so I've been working flat out for, oh, year and a half, two years or something because I had this show at Pace which was, say, like 150 piece was 150 feet long. Then I had smaller pieces in the backroom. And it was all on plates. And so they—so for some reason that has sort of closed things off for me. You know, I don't know what I want to do next.

I keep thinking I'm going to do a whole series of drawings. But again, it's like anything else I do, the project becomes big very fast, you know. So I'm just mulling things over, and of course, you know, with age you come up to that horrible thing of what—you know, selecting what you want to spend your last years doing. [Laughs.] And I don't like that kind of pressure. So I would X that out of what I—how I'm planning and just do what I feel like, whatever it is.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, this sort of leads me to a question which would be: Do you think about bodies of work? I mean, do you envision individual pieces or you think about bodies of work?

MS. BARTLETT: Bodies of work and also very large individual pieces. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Very large, right.

MS. BARTLETT: Like the piece that I showed at Pace was called—I'll give you a book, if you see it—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Lovely.

MS. BARTLETT: Was called *Recitative* [2009-10]. And I suppose it was sort of a answer to *Rhapsody* which had all sorts of figurative and totally abstract and, you know, all sorts of problems solved in it. And this was just completely abstract—[laughs]—as nothing was solved.

Thank you for just the remark—

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JENNIFER BARTLETT: So there's a large fold-out. Plus, I think there's a—no, maybe—it's just awful, though.

JAMES MCELHINNEY: Oh, terrific. Oh—[laughs]—this is—

MS. BARTLETT: See, it is large. Did you see—you didn't see this show? That's why I got this out.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, I didn't, alas. This was at Pace?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. Before that, it was in Colorado.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It's—where, at the Denver Art Museum, or—

MS. BARTLETT: No, it was at a gallery called the Baldwin Gallery [Aspen, CO], where I've shown a lot.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And where is that in Colorado?

MS. BARTLETT: Aspen.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, Aspen, OK.

MS. BARTLETT: So this was one piece, and then there were 13 paintings in this series. And I wonder how long those are compared to this. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: It's quite a—quite a piece of work. So clearly, the answer to my question is that you're not—you're not conceiving these individual pieces except within, you know, the vision of the whole body of work.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So that's—yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: But the idea is developed in terms of a what-if structure: What if you did this; what if you did that? And what is that, the subjunctive?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, it's conditional. It's sort of—and it's interrogative.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So are we having a look at the progression, temporally, in the process of the creation of the piece from left to right?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. Yeah. But also, I've never—I can remember Paula Cooper thinking I was a nihilist. And—[laughs]—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Why would she say that?

MS. BARTLETT: Because she's very fond work of Sol's work, and so on. But I became interested very early on in things that—if I was doing a nine-plate piece, I'd try and think of a system that would have to be more or less than nine plates, you know?

And so a lot of the systems that I come up with are to keep me entertained. And they're quite casual in their selection.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Dare we say playful?

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, no, you can say playful. [They laugh.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: So what were—would her objection be? That the work is too marky, it's too—the hand is evident in it too much?

MS. BARTLETT: No. At that time—which is—it was a long, long time ago—I think that people had an idea about

conceptual art that was maybe slightly different than mine that you postulated something or you hypothesized something and that something would end out—end up in a very recognizable and—you know, it's like, if you do 100 marks on a paper as opposed to 2,000 marks on a paper, if the 1,000 look less dark than the one that was 4,000 or 2,000, that would be normal. You would expect that.

I think a lot of times, I just went along with—I know *Rhapsody* was really based on a conversation, how you can have a conversation and you'd digress and you'd come back and blah, blah, blah. And I said, well, I'm still doing that. Like, *Recitative* is that boring part in an opera where, you know—[sings] don't go there—where it's all spoken. There's some different idea of the vocal sort of thing, where it's not acting. It's also not really singing. And there isn't any background.

And for some reason—I don't know how it relates—that kind of interested me. My daughter named it, actually. And a collector called Max Gordon, and a wonderful architect, named *Rhapsody*, which actually I had to look it up in the dictionary, because I—you know, I knew what one was, but I didn't know what it meant. And it was bombastic. And that suited exactly what I had accomplished, or—

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.] Would have been interesting to have a bit of the conversation there, in the—in, you know, the presence of the work. But we were concerned with the audio and—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. Well, that's not—I just would hope that you'd have an opportunity to see it—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: —because it looks pretty good in the atrium, and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: It does. That's amazing.

MS. BARTLETT: And this is the second time it's been up. And I—which shocks me, with the Modern—a work that large, you know, to have them—I didn't think I'd see it again in my lifetime.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, they've got that big space now, to—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, they have for a long, long time.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: And I guess they don't like much of anything in it, do you know, or it doesn't work too well.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It's curious—it's curious; a lot of museums today seem to be needing to have that kind of a space in them, whether it's for social functions or just, you know, the branding of the institution as entering a new era with a big, empty white space.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: But we were recently in Austin, Texas at the Blanton Museum, and they've got one of those too. And you go to Denver, and they've got one.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So—yeah, it's all—sort of seems to be the trend today.

So getting back to the process of how *Recitative* was executed, how it was conceived and executed, you would start out with working with one piece at a time? Or would you put out a dozen surfaces to work on, like over here?

MS. BARTLETT: I think really it's built out of nine—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Nine. So like the check—like the tic-tac-toe.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, a small—a medium—a large, medium and small.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Like this.

MS. BARTLETT: I know that's atypical. That was because there were so many tertiaries. It's primaries, secondaries and tertiaries, so—

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see—so red, yellow, blue, green, violet, orange; and then tertiaries.

MS. BARTLETT: And then all of those. And then I decided I didn't want to do all of the tertiaries—[laughs]—I just would do three each time, but it would be a tiny bit arbitrary which ones I pick.

And so this piece was done when I was living—or, a lot of it—was living in Amagansett [NY] while this was being built. And that's, you know, so tiny. The entire house is like 24 by 36. And so in the summer, I work out on this 7-by-24 foot deck with an awning—[laughs]—which is very nice. And so I do this in sections, because I built a suitcase wall that folds out so there's three surfaces you can work on.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You mean like a standing screen, like a—

MS. BARTLETT: No, like a suitcase, where—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, like a suitcase.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. Well, that's what I call it, where you just—but it's not vertical; it's just—it just opens like that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: OK.

MS. BARTLETT: So that's a surface to work, and these two surfaces are to work. So everything is done in sort of sections. And then I transferred them from that outside wall to an inside wall that I covered with nails to receive these things. And every—you know, when I had done sort of, oh, six segments or so, those would come back to New York—in this case, they were just stored, you know—and then I finished this piece here, in this place.

And that was—sort of another year went by. But that was from—do you see the cross-hatching ones?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: From that point on was all done here.

MR. MCELHINNEY: OK. So everything up till that point, the—

MS. BARTLETT: Was done in Amagansett.

MR. MCELHINNEY:—sort of dots, stripes, sort of the marking works, the yellow and the red—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY:—and then these that sort of have sort of—

MS. BARTLETT: Sort of Jasper Johns—[laughs].

MR. MCELHINNEY: —a little Jasper Johns, yeah, a little quotation of Jasper Johns, and then back to a brushed kind of surface and then back to dots again, or—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. And then back to a line.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Then back, ultimately, to the line, like a mat, almost, which is not a grid at all.

MS. BARTLETT: What?

MR. MCELHINNEY: It's not a grid at all, it's—

MS. BARTLETT: No, but it's held by a grid. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, right. That's fascinating. I think it's interesting, the tension—I was talking to someone recently about drawing, teaching people how to draw from observation. Two ways to do it, as you know, are to map sort of extremities of the object with sightlines and then place them in the page. The other way is to, of course, use a grid and use plumb lines and horizontals to line up the parts of the object.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: What's interesting is, one brings you back to the frame and the other puts you into the interior of the object, which is that Yale drawing-from-the-inside-out idea that Albers used to espouse.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, but if you're—if you combine the two—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, there you go.

MS. BARTLETT: —by making your own grid as you go along where you need lines, which is what Brice does—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right. That's—it's flying across America, even, if you look out of the airplane—

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, yeah, fabulous, isn't it?

MR. MCELHINNEY: —before the Appalachians flying west, it's all metes and bounds. It's all triangles, and then west of that, it's all right-angle grid. And that's—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. And I always wonder, every time I fly over, did they use surveyors to block out all those lines? Because how did they make it as accurate as they did?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Actually, they did. As early as 1800s, there were men with theodolites and compasses; and axmen, teams of axmen, cutting a 10-foot-wide swath north, south, east and west to actually—

MS. BARTLETT: Wow.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —verify those surveys—

MS. BARTLETT: Coordinates, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —which is completely crazy, when you think about it, if you're going into Ohio, which is woods everywhere, and just clearing like a—like a corridor for hundreds of miles just, you know, to stick a line on a map. But it's interesting—

MS. BARTLETT: That's one interesting thing that Volker [Schlöndorff] is working on right now, is—I don't know if you remember when all the Western powers, the sort of king of so and so and—who was it, was it Otto Bismarck or Ludwig that was representing German—where they all met in Munich or Berlin to divide the African continent.

And so that's why you're left—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —with these totally meaningless divisions that have caused nothing but trouble. And I don't know, it just sounds like a terrific movie that you could have different people playing those parts. But I love that kind of idea.

And actually, I did a whole series on Africa. And I still have no idea why, but I was kind of interested in shaped paintings, I suppose like Elizabeth's, but the shapes were determined by being something else, like by being a map, do you know? And the campuses are built with that sort of structure in mind.

And so I guess that when Volker came along with his idea, that that interested me a lot, since I was very—I haven't been to Africa, but I was very familiar with all those different shapes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So Schlöndorff's working on that film now?

MS. BARTLETT: Now he is. Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Now he is. Who's in it, do you know? All German actors?

MS. BARTLETT: No, he's working—no, I think it will be a—you know, probably an international cast, and—because you're dealing with the different nationalities, too, which makes it fun.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, the Belgians and the Germans and the French and the Portuguese and—

MS. BARTLETT: And the Portuguese and the French, the British—

MR. MCELHINNEY: —British. Very interesting.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. And I'm sure there were some Americans around, not representing the big powers, but—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Certainly, commercial interests.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, well, oil interests, even then.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That monster is still with us.

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So a piece like this really speaks about the unfolding of an idea over a period of time, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: A period of time, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So and like the format of the book that we're looking at, which is now spread out across the floor at its full open length, it's using that Japanese model of sort of, you know, the folded book that opens up to —

MS. BARTLETT: Mm-hmm—[affirmative]—and screens, too.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And screens, as well. How did you—how did you come up with the idea for this format of the catalogue, of the book?

MS. BARTLETT: I think because there—Houston [The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, TX] had shown *Rhapsody*, you know, like within the last 10 years. And they did a photo—there was a book that existed by Roberta Smith. They did a fold-out version of it. So I think it came from that.

And then there's a piece that came between *Rhapsody* and this called *Song* [2007] that was all black and ivory that Aggie Gund bought for—I think it's Cleveland Museum [of Art, OH] that's building a new space. And it—but it was only 99 feet or something like that. [Laughs]. And—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, it's—

MS. BARTLETT:—actually—and so we did a fold-out for that piece, too.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Have you ever—have you ever contemplated working on this kind of a format directly, actually working—

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No?

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Always pieces are on the wall, because recently I've seen a number of younger artists' work—people who are working in books. Obviously, that's a form of exploring this whole—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, what's his name all—did all that, the German guy—

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Anselm] Kiefer?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, yeah. So yeah, only his are made of lead and they weigh a thousand pounds. [Laughs.]

MS. BARTLETT: But I think there's other ones besides that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I hope so. [Laughs]. Why don't we take a break? I think we are about out of time on this disc.

MS. BARTLETT: OK.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And is there anything you'd like to add?

MS. BARTLETT: Do you guys want to go to—go get lunch or something?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, maybe so. That would be good.

MS. BARTLETT: Like, if you walk down—and what I'll do is take a nap—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Brilliant.

MS. BARTLETT: —because I always take an afternoon nap, and—[laughs].

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, this would be a good moment for that.

MS. BARTLETT: So the—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, this—so how do you feel about carrying on this kind of conversation, about your work, about the—you know, the ideas in your work? I mean, I'm finding it exciting.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, no, I'm fine with any of it. I think you misunderstood me, because—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, I'm just being cautious. I want—I want it to be a process you're comfortable with.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, yeah. No, I would tell you if I became uncomfortable, which I only think I did once, at the very beginning, do you know? And I don't like talking about my past personal life.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So we'll talk about everything in the present.

MS. BARTLETT: Or the present. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Or the present? Well, we can talk about it all in the third person. I guess that might make it easier. [Laughs.]

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] I'm not good at, we have decided to say this.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, you do have somewhat of a regal demeanor with this divan, and—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, lying down. That's another thing I do all the time, too.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Like a Roman empress. [They laugh.] Well, very good. Let's pause and resume.

MS. BARTLETT: OK, all right. And I was just going to tell you where is okay. If you go left when you get out, you'll be on Lafayette Street, which down at the bottom is—Bam. But if you go one block to Clermont, the next block will be Adelphi, and there'll be a place on the corner and you can sit outside.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Terrific. We'll see you in a little bit.

MS. BARTLETT: Okay.

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JAMES MCELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney, continuing the interview with Jennifer Bartlett at her home in Brooklyn on Friday, June 3rd, 2011. Good afternoon.

JENNIFER BARTLETT: Good afternoon.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Again. So I'll pose the question to you again. We talked earlier about your influences— influences that you had from looking at works by Arshile Gorky and then how that changed when you encountered them in person. We talked a little about your education.

We started having an interesting conversation about grids and about using these kinds of patterns that measure space and animate space and how they have been sort of a backbeat in all of your work. And I was curious: At what point in time did your interest in bodies of work or your imagining yourself doing bodies of work instead of individual pieces—at what point did that really occur to you?

MS. BARTLETT: From the beginning. But can I interject something at this point?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Sure.

MS. BARTLETT: I was remembering a grid problem that I had. At that stage of time—I don't know if you remember—we were going to go on the decimal system for sure.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay, let's talk about this. This is great.

MS. BARTLETT: And so I had to make a bat, because I wanted—I made the first plates with the idea of them being a unit of measurement that was absolute, like one foot. But the smallest one of that—not a yard, for example. So I had all of these criteria, one of which—would the plate itself be based on the foot/inches system or would it be based on the decimal system?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, the metric system.

MS. BARTLETT: Metric system. Finally, I gave it a lot of thought and I decided that we would stay on the foot-and-inches thing, and we did.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And how did that resonate afterwards, that you were—

MS. BARTLETT: I thought that I was glad that I made the choice I did.

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.] It's useful to know. I mean, but was there some kind of conceptual satisfaction that came from making that choice, other than the decision itself?

MS. BARTLETT: You know, sort of—not wildly. But it amused me and I liked it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You could elect to accept the existing standards of measure or not and you chose to stay with the—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I just didn't think we Americans would adjust easily to the metric system, period.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, we don't seem to have yet. We're still dealing with quarts and gallons and—

MS. BARTLETT: No, but this was years and years and years ago.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, I remember. So you're talking about the late '60s, when there was a move afoot to sort of standardize everything or at least have a duplicate. It's in quarts; it's in liters; it's—after all, wine bottles come in metric measures and—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, many things we use come in metric measures.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Grams—all the pharmaceuticals.

MS. BARTLETT: Yep. So I always have a metric—most of my rulers have a metric system on one side and the feet and inches on the other.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Have you ever explored, you know, the metric option or you made the decision and that was it, you just moved on?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, no, I have, because sometimes, the metric system worked—I was doing a temple ceiling in Japan [Choshi-shi, Japan, Homan-Ji Temple Commission, 1991-2], a huge one, and the space between the joists were 50 centimeters exactly, where the feet and inches didn't fit. So I used that, and I did a whole series of word pieces, plate pieces, that were 50-centimeter plates. And I did all of these word pieces on those plates.

But I'm trying to think what was the original centimeter thing. Oh, I was doing a series of drawings in France and—a huge series—and the paper that I got there was in metric. So it came out to be much better for dividing it, because everything had two images—or most of them did—with the metric system, rather than the—so I always saw it as another—some things fit better into that and some fit better into the feet and inches.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But given your druthers, you'd rather stick with the native system.

MS. BARTLETT: No, wasn't that. I just didn't think that it would change that soon—you know, what they were saying at that point. So what I was betting on, I mean, was just—I didn't want to switch and I wanted to use the normal measuring system of the place that I was residing in.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, when in Rome, I guess, use, you know, the measure—standards of measure in force because that's how everything is packaged—paper, bottled water, food, everything.

MS. BARTLETT: Yes, that is true. But now it's all confused here, now, that so much of what we have is imported.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And so we have both liters and gallons. It's interesting, having just been over there a week ago and—

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, what was going on over there?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, I was in Ireland and not much.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, that's right.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, no, there was a lot going on, actually. The queen was there doing her, sort of, apology to the Irish people for all the martyrs who were—

MS. BARTLETT: For killing them all.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, the killings in Croke Park [Dublin, Ireland]. And [President] Obama was there.

MS. BARTLETT: That was quite an occasion, wasn't it? The Irish Obama.

MR. MCELHINNEY: The Irish Obama. Well, I have an African-American friend who says, Obama's not a black guy; he's an Irish guy from Chicago with a Kenyan father. [They laugh.] So there are many opinions. I think that—

MS. BARTLETT: Do you like him at all?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Of course, yes, I do. I think he's—I'm reminded of *The Onion*—you know, the magazine, *The Onion*. And the headline after the election was, "Black Man Gets Worst Job in America." [They laugh.]

MS. BARTLETT: I didn't see that one.

MR. MCELHINNEY: A very clever, very clever magazine—sort of our American Punch for the 21st century.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, I remember screaming with laughter over things in that. The other—were they associated or was there a different thing—the international brigade of comedy or something? They have a place in New York. You know what I mean?

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, I don't, actually, to be quite truthful. But I know there are a lot of—

MS. BARTLETT: It was hilarious, if they still are in existence. Or they were hilarious.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, yes, I see them in a kind of British, you know, beyond-the-fringe and, you know, the Monty Pythons—that kind of humor. So back to—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, what about the early *Saturday Night Live*?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, early *Saturday Night Live* was also—[inaudible, background noise]. But back to bodies of work—okay, coffee is arriving. Brilliant, thank you. Now, earlier you had said that intuitively, this is the way you thought: That you imagined whole bodies of work—like, dare I say, painting a show or—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. That way, though, I usually have something I'm dealing with like—no, Mulligan, dogs don't eat chocolate. You know, say, I remember early series of plate pieces where—they were called nine-point pieces. And they were all nine plates and they had nine generating points on each plate, and those were selected at random—well, not total random but the plates measured 48-by-48, and so I'd have a copycat with two sets of 48—[They laugh.]—and I would draw them and that would give me where the point was.

And so you know, there was—that's when I—talk a little bit about nihilism, that was the section where, after I went on for a while and they were all perfectly logical to me—they all had to do with the nine points and different ways of connecting them, blah, blah, blah, blah, you know, pulling the—they exist on the edge—pulling them down first to, you know, one of the points and—

But that was where I started thinking, well, what would be a nine-plate piece that had to be eight—[laughs]—things, that one was left out? What would be a nine-plate piece that would have to be one extra? You know, that kind of thing. But that was—and I thought of it as a series. [Dog growls.] No, that's not yours.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, dear. The very large, delicious-looking brownie just appeared.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So explain again how you located the points. I'm trying to imagine.

MS. BARTLETT: Well, 48 across, 48 down. So there's a latitude and a longitude.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Got it.

MS. BARTLETT: I hung up two, in my case, coffee cans with the numbers written down on the little pieces of paper. And I'd draw out and maybe came out with 24 and 25, so it would be the 24th square from the left—things started on the left and ended on the right, like reading, which I do a lot of.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, like your book we saw before.

MS. BARTLETT: And then it would be 25 down. So that would be where the point was—at 24, 25.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see. So it was a random—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I always liked Merce Cunningham very much and John Cage—[laughs]—at that point, so I think I picked up that from them. What was that thing that I always remembered? Oh, if you get lost, to stay in the same place and someone will find you. I always thought that was just remarkably intelligent.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So like them, did you ever use any other instruments of chance, like *I Ching* or—

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, I did the *I Ching* before, but mostly about me, and I didn't do it very often. But no, I didn't use it as a device.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Because I remember John Cage giving a lecture, which I attended, where he was describing using the *I Ching* as a way of organizing music, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: And Merce had lots of different ways. I mean, when he got into computers and stuff like that—

MR. MCELHINNEY: So does this—I guess intellectually, you could connect this back to Gorky and the surrealists, although he was not really a surrealist. He was influenced—

MS. BARTLETT: I don't—yeah, I never really liked the surrealists. And just, I didn't like their work. And I didn't think of Gorky as doing that kind of thing. Probably, I thought of him more as an early, very early de Kooning.

MR. MCELHINNEY: AbEx [abstract expressionism], yeah. Well, they were friends, I gathered.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, yeah? I didn't know that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, knew each other. In fact, there's a quote from Stuart Davis that Gorky was the only artist he knew in New York who had a studio other than where he lived. And I asked for this to be corroborated by Will Barnett, who is 100 this year, and he said yes, that was true. He was a student of Davis' and knew Gorky.

But I think that a lot of critics, when they're talking about his work, are talking about a kind of hybridization of sort of the abstractions of Picasso, that abstract period of Picasso kind of—a kind of process aesthetic that we now associate with AbEx and an element of surrealism.

MS. BARTLETT: What was the—what abstract period are you thinking of?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, like in the '30s, the big—

MS. BARTLETT: It never seemed completely abstract to me, so—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Never completely, no. But even somebody like the late Richard Diebenkorn was, in some way or another, painting the roof of the bungalows out, you know, the back window of his studio in Santa Monica [CA]. So it was just rearranging it, in some sense. But anyway, there's a lot of conversation about AbEx being a kind of fusion—

MS. BARTLETT: I've never heard it called AbEx.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, really?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, who all calls it AbEx?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, a lot of people do now. I guess it must be part of that—

MS. BARTLETT: What about A&E?

MR. MCELHINNEY: A&E, yeah. It's like ABC, NBC. It's the logo-ization of everything. I think I heard AbEx when I was at Yale, actually, in that acronymic mania period of Yale where we're going to the GSY [ph] and the—

MS. BARTLETT: No, I had never heard of it, or that I—

MR. MCELHINNEY: —abstract expressionism. But yeah, it's a kind of hybrid of abstract painting and cubism—or no, of cubism and surrealism in an abstract mode. Like you said before, it's verbiage—not terribly interesting to you. But I mean, there's a little kind of a link there, I think. But the other thing that occurs to me that would be interesting to discuss is how you see the rigor of the right-angle grid intersecting with what you said Al Held called the decorative envelope.

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] This is really bad. I probably didn't care.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You're just using them. They're tools and you find your way.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, and what did I think of Al saying that to me? I knew that it wasn't a compliment, but I guess I didn't much care. I would care more if Al thought I was the best in the class or not the best in the class. I would care about that. But whatever means I used to get there—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Whatever worked. I mean, they were tools; you could use them as you saw fit.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, I just wonder what he would have said—whether he would have said that or posed the question to Matisse or to—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I doubt it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Out of respect or—not out of any timorousness on Al's part but—

MS. BARTLETT: No, I think probably out of respect, and also, I think he would have an idea of the decorative as something that's more associated with women than with men. Men didn't do decoration, just like Brice's paintings aren't decorative in any way.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Are they not?

MS. BARTLETT: [They laugh.] I'm not saying one way or another. I'm just saying that what's good for the gander is not necessarily good for the goose.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see. So now we enter the realm of gendered imagery. Do you believe there is—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Do you think that imagery is gendered?

MS. BARTLETT: I don't have any idea, and I certainly won't in my lifetime have that idea because, one, I have no distance from it whatsoever. Two, I grew up in the same art environment that you did, and so the—where I would judge myself from is that environment. So it's one of those kinds of things that I would choose not to think about, in terms of my actual functioning, because it's not going to get me anywhere that's comfortable or nice.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, yeah, I understand that, that you're—that you don't want to admit that kind of self-awareness based on gender into the work as something that defines what you do.

MS. BARTLETT: I remember Kynaston McShine said to me once after the Truman Capote thing, when—was it Gore—oh no, Truman Capote said it about Vidal Gore. He said, that's not writing; that's typing. Do you remember that line? Well, Kynaston said to me, that's not—[laughs]—that's not painting; that's knitting.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Ow.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, ow, but that's just what Kynaston's like.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, how did you feel about that? Did you feel that was very—that was a dismissive remark?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. But there was a lot of that. You know, I can remember who was pretty awful about it was John Cage. And he would say things to me—"I don't know. You always are with such beautiful boys. And what is it you actually do?" [Laughs.] I said, "Well, I'm an artist." Merce was always nice, you know, but both Jasper and John Cage had quite an edge. So it was just part—I think it's part of any female artist's life, or at least ones that I know. And it's very sort of different treatment if you're a man or a woman in the art world, you know?

MR. MCELHINNEY: How would you characterize that?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, one, I would think that if you make more money than a man, that's a very bad thing and it means you're a brat. But it goes to everything. I mean, I've seen—most of the people I know that are men go through about eight relationships, and that's not true of women because you lose your attractiveness and you lose the ability to attract that kind of thing, you know, unless you're gay. And they have, maybe, a little more tolerance about aging and clothes and this and that. So it's just like what any woman goes through anywhere, and we're all housewives of one sort or another.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But what about how the work is regarded?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I've been working forever, and the women that seem to have really, you know, achieved something that are relatively contemporary are in photography, some conceptual art, but never painting and never sculpture, per se.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Sculpture does seem to be a very kind of macho medium, partly because it is so physical and it is so—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, think about Richard Tuttle. Anybody can pick up a toilet roll, you know.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Anybody can do that. Right, of course.

MS. BARTLETT: And what's he going to do now that we don't have those toilet rolls anymore? We're switching out of those, too.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, right. The cardboard tubes are now obsolete—tubeless toilet rolls. Well, but what about people like—

MS. BARTLETT: Or Barry Le Va or, you know—I mean, there's—or what's his name, Burdick, Scott Burdick. You know, even Dennis Oppenheim or—you know, there are millions of examples but I can't think of—the people that came the closest was Jackie Winsor and what's her name who had a show, Von Rydyngsvard or—do you know who I mean?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, Ursula—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, Von Rydyngsvard. And interestingly enough, both of them used wood that they break up into elements one way or another, which is sort of—I had never thought of that. Lynda Benglis and—but now even when she's gotten, recently, this big rush of publicity, which is certainly well-deserved, the thing that is in every single article, you know, is wearing the dildo and being oiled up and that sort of thing, which I adored that thing. I was in Italy when I saw it. I was on a train and I just screamed with cheerfulness and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, and don't forget the sunglasses, too, right?

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But that did become sort of a canonical image and that's the image that everybody says that —

MS. BARTLETT: I know, well, the point of that is that Linda's done a lot of other work that I think has been influential as well, and that's really secondary to that image, or it's received as secondary or something. And part of that is the one-piece idea. Everyone has one piece that they've done, or accomplished, and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: You say there are no women painters or sculptors.

MS. BARTLETT: Okay, I said that and we thought of some.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Lee Bontecou, Louise Bourgeois.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, who didn't get well-known or really well-known—Louise Nevelson—until she was much, much older.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Nancy Graves, Mary Frank—there's a bunch of them I can think of. And what about people like [Grace] Hardigan and—

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, Peters. Oh, I think, you know, there are a lot, but there aren't that many, when you really think what you're doing is the pinnacle and the history of who we know or who's taught or who's done—so you know, I don't think—I mean, Elizabeth has never had an easy time of it, did never have an easy time of it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So I'm sure the people in the past wanted to talk to you about—especially in the '70s, '80s—about things that were being done by people like Judy Chicago, you know, Elizabeth Sackler—

MS. BARTLETT: I don't know who Elizabeth Sackler is. I'm sorry.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Is it Elizabeth Sackler? I believe so. The Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum [NY], this new—

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, I don't—yeah, where Kiki [Smith] had her show?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Exactly. So in earlier conversations or interviews or articles, I'm sure that people tried to sort of find out where you stood in relationship to—

MS. BARTLETT: I think I probably had a relatively difficult time, you know, because I wasn't ever particularly programmatic about my thinking. And I had many ways of avoiding anything that I didn't want to answer. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, I'm not eager to repeat their failure to interrogate you on the subject but—

MS. BARTLETT: No, I'm just saying that that's probably, one, why I wasn't particularly attracted to that kind of thinking about things.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Was it that it was too polemical or that it was—

MS. BARTLETT: I think I probably didn't agree with the assumptions but I also didn't disagree with them. I didn't know.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But you didn't see how it would be that useful to your own practice as an artist?

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, that's important.

MS. BARTLETT: I don't think that I would have been very interested, had it been important to me. I can't imagine that. But I can imagine—for some reason, this makes me think of arguments at Max [Weber]'s Kansas City with Carl André when he'd get drunk on champagne wearing his overalls.

And you have to remember that I kind of grew up around a very programmatic group—do you know, I said Carl and Bob Smithson—and there were a lot of opinions in art at that time—what was art, what was not art, you know. And it was really strict. And I just didn't feel that way. And you know—[laughs]—like, all artists are just mean about each other, too.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Why is that?

MS. BARTLETT: I don't know.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You know, this is—we both know—

MS. BARTLETT: It's a little arena.

MR. MCELHINNEY: We both know people in the performing arts, you know, and what always struck me about people in theater, people in the movie business, the music business: Whatever privately their opinions are of someone, that they're always sort of publicly generous to each other. You very rarely hear of, like, Liam Neeson saying, "Oh, Brad Pitt, that Rob Lowe is an idiot." You know, they don't talk about each other that way.

But it seemed like the visual artists, at least of a certain generation—I call it, you know, the generation of my teachers at Yale, people like Al, who you also had, who was also a teacher of mine, Bailey and others—I call them the yes-but generation because they would have a discussion but they would always have to have the last word would be "Yes, but maybe this is really nonsense. Maybe you're wrong." And that could have just been a pedagogical stance that, there, the teacher—

MS. BARTLETT: I don't know what it was. No, I don't know if it's—well, I can remember—wasn't it Richard Serra and Julian Schnabel getting into—Richard punched him or something at a bar and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, there are stories like this. There's the story about Jackson Pollock getting drunk and sort of getting into it with Gorky. And this could be apocryphal, but I knew a lot of the people of that generation who told stories, and the story was that he was drunk, started to assault him verbally and pushed him around a little bit.

Then Gorky pulled out a knife and Pollock stepped back and then he pulled out a pencil and he started to sharpen it. And he said, "You know, Jackson, you're an asshole." This is just—but this is probably urban legend stuff, but it personifies the kind of Wild West, cowboy kind of—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I remember Jack Tworokov told me that de Kooning became an alcoholic out of admiration—[laughs]—for Pollock, do you know? That he was the only person that knew that took on a vice strictly for a sense of identification—

MR. MCELHINNEY: But there were stories. I remember talking to Lester Johnson and he said that Joan Ward would come to parties with her own bottle of whiskey.

MS. BARTLETT: Who was Joan Ward?

MR. MCELHINNEY: She was a woman with whom de Kooning had a child, I believe. I'd have to confirm that fact, but she was one of the people on the scene at that time. But I guess the question—

MS. BARTLETT: Those people, I find very sad—like, what's her name, the woman who was with Pollock and that

was in the—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Lee Krasner.

MS. BARTLETT: No, that was in the—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, Ruth Kligman.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. Because I just saw her, you know, around after Pollock had died and, you know, she'd lived on that and it was very, very sad. And even Wilke, Hannah Wilke, had that quality, too.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But she is now regarded as a kind of—

MS. BARTLETT: Feminist.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, an icon of, you know, the feminist movement or the women's movement.

MS. BARTLETT: But that's women's movement people developing that. Agnes Martin—I'm just thinking of women painters—Georgia O'Keeffe. And I always thought of Nancy more as a painter, Nancy Graves.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Helen Frankenthaler.

MS. BARTLETT: It's not a ton, you know? That's all I'm saying.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So did you have any role models, even historical ones?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, ones I think of are, like - when in doubt, dot—Seurat and those drawings and Matisse and Picasso and Manet, I loved, and Monet and not so much [Georges] Braque or [Fernand] Léger or—you know, I sort of like the whole modern canon.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And you spoke earlier about the importance of achieving, in the work, a kind of freshness, a kind of immediacy, a kind of—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, that's something that I like, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Like you're seeing it for the first time and that it's unlabored—that it's there.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I think Seurat had that quality, too.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah. He's not—

MS. BARTLETT: The drawings are just gorgeous.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, the drawings in that show at, you know, the MoMA a couple of years ago. It was very hard—you were speaking earlier about looking at Gorky paintings in the magazines and in the books. Seurat, when you have a look at the drawings in the magazines and in the books, you have no idea what those drawings are like.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, they're incredibly physical and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: You look at them and you can see he's putting a wash under a certain area. He's scraping other areas with a razor. He's working them. They're not so obvious and they're very, very intriguing—very physical. And for as beautiful and as exquisite as they—

MS. BARTLETT: Who else is a cheerful artist? There was somebody on my mind. I think recent past. Maybe it was some of Barnett Newman.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], the kind of openness and a kind of airiness—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, and Ellsworth Kelly doesn't have it, though I like his work very, very much. It's a very funny, specific thing I'm trying to talk about.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So identifying that particular—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I mean, I never tried to do it before. This is my first attempt.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Matisse, you said.

MS. BARTLETT: Piero della Francesca.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Piero, excellent—and very transparent, almost, very light.

MS. BARTLETT: And Giotto, too.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Giotto [di Bondone], yeah, yeah. So that kind of almost having an idea take shape for the first time, there's almost a primitivism to it. It's not quite defined yet. It hasn't become slick. It hasn't become polished.

MS. BARTLETT: And it's not a thing—well, now the Fra Angelicos that are in the—is it San Marcos [Florence, Italy]?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yes.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, I just think those are—I mean, there's just so many fabulous, radical things, like how they take place all over the walls and the shape is so peculiar. Yeah, definitely.

MR. MCELHINNEY: A couple of the other artists of whom you spoke—Mondrian. But his work is very classical, in a way, and seems very—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, but there's just something either about how he used color or the size of things within the painting that—because a lot of other paintings don't have that quality, do you know? They don't have that—I'm trying to think of who almost has it but doesn't, but I can't think of anyone.

MR. MCELHINNEY: The instant we walk out the door, we're both going to have a dozen names in our heads. So are you having an opening tonight?

MS. BARTLETT: Not that I know of.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Who said—somebody told me—so you're not having a show anywhere this evening?

MS. BARTLETT: No, not this evening—not that I know of. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Somebody told me that there was some of your work at Matthew Marks [Gallery, New York, NY]. Is that possible? Forget about the question. Skim over it. So Piero, the early Italians, you're talking about —

MS. BARTLETT: Isn't Jasper's show still up at Matthew Marks?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, maybe that's what—why would I conflate that with you? I don't know. Anyway, but Piero, Giotto, Fra Angelico, Matisse, Seurat. You're talking about people who really, kind of, are inventing a different language, sort of doing things out of the tradition but in a completely new way. They're not sort of in the manner of anybody.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I was thinking, you know, when you think of Seurat and the impressionists and, you know, they're reducing their strokes to a kind of pointillist sort of thing, it was still totally different.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But if you look at the volumes within—

MS. BARTLETT: Also, there's a kind of calmness and tranquility to those works that I like.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, you look at, like, you know, the *Une Baignade, Asnières* [1884] of Seurat and, you know, the bathers on the edge of the slide there and the bodies within those volumes are almost like Piero. They're filled with air. They're not—

MS. BARTLETT: I maybe feel that way about all the Cezanne's, too, *Mont Sainte-Victoire* [1895]—you know, that those, and particularly—they're not busy at all.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No. There's a clarity and there's a certain—there's a structural integrity.

MS. BARTLETT: And a willingness to be boring.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Or to demand more of the viewer.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, but I think that's to be boring.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, I think boring in our ADD-afflicted age means that you spoon-feed the viewer, and of

course, this may be a challenge to painting until people rediscover the—thank you, would you like some—rediscover the values of paying attention to something. And maybe you could put that over. And you know, if you agree, I think boring could just mean needing a little more attention to get to the exciting bits.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, it reminds me, too, of—that the experience of boredom is usually, you know, associated with feelings of anxiety and the need for distraction. And those things don't have that anxiety in them. So I guess that's the serenity and the quietness of them.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, maybe we could say that boredom is—

MS. BARTLETT: I haven't smoked this many cigarettes in—

MR. MCELHINNEY: I don't mean to make you nervous. But—

MS. BARTLETT: No, it's just that when I'm just talking and I'm not doing something—Like before you came back I went to clip roses, but—

MR. MCELHINNEY: So would it be safe to say that boredom is meditation experienced by a person with no imagination? [They laugh.]

MS. BARTLETT: Maybe. That's pretty good.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So we're going to continue this conversation. I don't want to keep you too long today because I think that we've started a lot of interesting threads here that we can pursue. And just, whatever you want to talk about tomorrow would be great. And I think if you have anything to add before—

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —we conclude. So thank you for your time today.

MS. BARTLETT: Okay, and what time tomorrow?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Eleven again?

MS. BARTLETT: Okay.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay, we'll see you then.

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JAMES MCELHINNEY: This is James McElhinney speaking with Jennifer Bartlett at her home and studio in Brooklyn, New York, on Saturday, the 4th of June. Morning.

JENNIFER BARTLETT: Morning.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It is just morning. It's 11:59, so—

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, God.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So enjoying a late cup of coffee, and it seems like the dog has quieted down a bit.

MS. BARLETT: [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Mulligan?

MS. BARTLETT: Mulligan.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How did you pick the name Mulligan?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, it was an Irish dog, and I—you know, I actually had this kind of dog when I was a child. And my younger—one of my younger siblings, my brother Roy, always thought that he had let Mulligan out the garden gate and Mulligan had been killed.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh.

MS. BARTLETT: And so they're very independent dogs and—[laughs].

MR. MCELHINNEY: And insistent, as we saw, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: Yes and they don't forget. And you know, in other words I was—Donald Lipski and Terri Hyland live next door to me in Amagansett. And I don't know if you know his work, but—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MS. BARTLETT: So Mulligan got under their deck one evening, and for three days after that he would disappear with some regularity going back under the deck—[laughs]—you know, to resume his search for whatever it was he found under there. And so Donald just started grabbing him and tying him up—[laughs]—until he stopped. So our expeditions to the park are really basically about squirrels.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see, of which he must be extremely fond. Has he ever caught one?

MS. BARTLETT: No. I don't—I wonder if any dog has ever caught one.

MR. MCELHINNEY: They're pretty—

MS. BARTLETT: Do you know, because it's such a total interest on their parts, and I certainly have never heard about one catching one, nor have I seen it, witnessed it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I've seen a cat—I've seen a cat catch a squirrel.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh yeah?

MR. MCELHINNEY: And then have the squirrel attack the cat.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh my God. Well, squirrels are pretty scary.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It happened to one of my cats, yeah. The cat caught the squirrel and then got a big surprise.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. Well—

MR. MCELHINNEY: And promptly let it go. [Laughs.]

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So today I wonder if we could talk about—a little bit about your views on feminism again. When I came in, you shared a piece on page 16 of the current *The Week* magazine—

MS. BARTLETT: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MR. MCELHINNEY: —on whatever happened to feminism, and that sparked kind of a pre-interview conversation about these issues. And I was just curious if we could—if we could try to reconstruct that conversation.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. You have the responsibility, I believe, of reconstructing it. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: That is true. That is true. So in response to the article, you shared that you have a daughter who's now 25, and there are anxieties about sort of changing views on gender.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And you expressed the opinion that we are in somewhat of a retrograde moment—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: When it comes to women's rights. And how in particular do you see that manifesting itself?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I think all of the sort of usual suspects—you know, any of the media—I would say the whole hip-hop kind of thing, which I like the music.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: But it's not—you know, the message of everything is—[laughs]—disturbing. I think the sexualization of everything, I think the sort of kid—not the sex trade, the international sex trade is a very chilling kind of thing and really the numbers are enormous, you know?

MR. MCELHINNEY: You're talking about people from let's say, Eastern Europe, who are—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, well, Eastern Europe yes but also Asia, also America.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: This is happening sort of—

MR. MCELHINNEY: This expansion of the hospitality industry, if you will.

MS. BARTLETT: Yes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, in this direction.

MS. BARTLETT: And so there is sort of—I just—you know, I just feel, from when I grew up, a difference. You know, you were still supposed to be really attractive to guys and stuff like that, but if you wanted to do something, you could drop it in a sense. Do you know? You could just figure, oh, well, I can't do that, I can't go there, I can't—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And you had something else to sustain you. And you know, I see the anorexia as part of it, the bulimia. Do you know? I mean, they are very kind of disturbed kids—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Beauty mania.

MS. BARTLETT: More both men—boys and girls. I don't think they're having an easy time of it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And just—I don't know. What did it say in the article, the kinds of things that were failing or going—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, it was talking a little bit about the opening of a Playboy club in London, the sort of—which seems a little ironic, a little retro.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You think about, you know, there was a Playboy club in New York across from The Plaza Hotel.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And that was very—

MS. BARTLETT: When was that, though? Because I think it was gone by the time I got here.

MR. MCELHINNEY: 1950s, right?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: 1950s, and that was the place where Gloria Steinem worked as a cocktail waitress, right?

MS. BARTLETT: Oh right.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, and then wrote about it. But they talk about “slut walking” in which, quote, “Women march around town wearing naught but their underwear or a tight t-shirt with a provocative slogan.”

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY:—and then other examples. So you're saying that the media is giving young women dangerous role models.

MS. BARTLETT: Instructions, yeah. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, instructions. So it's not just Madonna or—

MS. BARTLETT: And I just remember various Halloweens, you know, where really after they were 10 years old, the costume of choice was usually a version of a prostitute, do you know? And gone was the princess, gone was the trick-or-treat bag, gone was all of that. But it was a chance to dress up as a whore, do you know, and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Or a vampire whore.

MS. BARTLETT: That was a little later.

MR. MCELHINNEY: A little later.

MS. BARTLETT: But vampire whore is important, you know?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, right.

MS. BARTLETT: And it just is sort of distressing. I think it would be hard, say, for me to become an artist and have to worry about giving so-and-so a blowjob so I could be popular at the same time.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Understood, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: And it seems to be more and more like that, that—

MR. MCELHINNEY: So as a young woman, who were your role models? Who did you say, I'd like to be like her?

MS. BARTLETT: Van Gogh—[laughs]—various writers, as I would read them. I mean, quite early on in the seventh grade or something I wrote on [Fyodor] Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* [New York: Modern Library, 1996], misunderstanding the whole thing but I wrote persuasively and I think in a convincing manner. [Laughs.] So you know, I don't know how they decided what grade I'd bet, whether it was 'B' for effort or whether or not it would be for content.

So I guess, you know, my role models were really in the arts and music too and generally classic music but when I was really young I always liked rhythm and blues first when it came out. And so I always liked the Stones better than the Beatles, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, right.

MS. BARTLETT: And that whole kind of thing. But this is one of the things that is interesting about the Keith Richards book [*Life*. New York: Little, Brown, and Co, 2010], which is long. And I read it in two days. So I wasn't bored. And but you know, everything in it was the old lady, you know, all of that sort of '60s and '70s, you know, idea about women and there were no female artists that he really acknowledged or talked about.

And actually, the only ones that he seemed to like were Howling Wolf, Muddy Waters. There's about six of them, but then other musicians would come up periodically, people I didn't know.

MR. MCELHINNEY: All men?

MS. BARTLETT: No, not old men, you know, sessions—

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, all men.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, all men?

MR. MCELHINNEY: All men, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah and one of the most interesting things to me was, there is a lot about music in there, you know, like how your guitar's tuned and justifications for a certain kind of open tuning and stuff like that. Though I didn't understand it at all because I'm a musical idiot, it was fascinating to me. I liked the language that was used in there to describe the kind of thing.

And then in it is a real—a lot of it is like junkie literature. You know, there's a big aspect of drugs. But all the stuff you've ever heard junkies say about what they're doing—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: You know, at first they always have it in control, they don't mainline, you know, and give up the pop for a steady kind of thing.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And then, you know, no one stays up at two in the morning unless you're drinking or taking drugs, period. You know, just is—it goes that way.

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

MS. BARTLETT: So then—

MR. MCELHINNEY: So he doesn't have—yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: What?

MR. MCELHINNEY: So he doesn't have, like, heroin-use tips for, you know, the gourmet, right, the gourmet junkie's guide to—

MS. BARTLETT: Well yeah, they all have kind of tips, you know, to regulate the amounts you take. You know, and then it turns into, which he's quite honest about, where the only thing you're concerned with is if you can get needles and junk in the town you're flying to without getting addressed. Also there's that whole bad boy aspect, you know, that he's terribly fond of.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: I mean, I like him a lot. [Laughs.] But I'd be glad that he didn't pick me at the dance.

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

MS. BARTLETT: I like someone like Patti Smith who just really—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —was 100 percent. He never mentioned her. The only one he mentioned was Marianne Faithfull because—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Of course.

MS. BARTLETT: —she was with Mick [Jagger].

MR. MCELHINNEY: Mick.

MS. BARTLETT: And evidently Anita Pallenberg had a habit as bad as Keith's. But then he got into—sort of simultaneous as he got into the heroin aspect of his life, he started criticizing Mick Jagger, do you know, and he had some sort of term that's—

MR. MCELHINNEY: He was Mr. Clean, right.

MS. BARTLETT: Leading vocalist, something, monster.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, he jogs, he eats fruit, you know.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, and I mean, he took plenty of drugs. But as Keith is getting deeper into it and you hear exactly what he thinks of Mick Jagger in terms of his control aspect and stuff, I think Mick Jagger might have had some feelings about Keith being completely out of it most of the time—[laughs]—and only wanting to work, you know, 3:00 in the morning until 5:00.

In other words, there's that lack of perspective in a sense, that—whether you're on drugs or alcohol or whatever—where you just don't do it. And then you tend to see—or socially, people who share whatever addiction you have, do you know, whether it's going to the gym 14 times a day and doing 36 million sit-ups and stuff like that. Those are the people you see that share that kind of interest.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And I don't even know how I got started on this. How did I get started? [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, it was a digression, but it was an amusing one. But we were talking—I was asking you about role models and—

MS. BARTLETT: Oh I was—yeah, and it really goes back to that where I loved the Stones and I thought Mick Jagger was really sexy. But I wouldn't base my sort of reality on working towards that as a goal, do you know?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right. It's a form of amusement. You find it sort of interesting to read about the bohemian—you know, the demimonde, but you're not really part of that.

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: At all.

MS. BARTLETT: And never was. I mean, Patti Smith's book [New York: Warner Brothers, 1977] was terrific too and very well written. But and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: So do you think a lot of artists use this idea of being sort of on the edge as a brand—as a way of sort of trying to sell their brand?

MS. BARTLETT: I think it's more music and writers. It's not performers, because performing is too much work and you really have to be kind of intact to do it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: Whether, you know—whatever that means. And I haven't known, like, many junkie artists. And I know people who've gone through a big cocaine phase or something like that, cocaine and alcohol. But I don't think you can do your work—

MR. MCELHINNEY: No.

MS. BARTLETT: —you know, except you die young like [Jean-Michel] Basquiat or someone.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: But I just didn't—you know, I know drinking seems to be an occupational hazard which I've enjoyed enormously. But you don't see sort of heavy drug use and you don't see real alcoholism, you know, where people are bingeing for two or three days or something.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I mean, isn't it true that artists who inspire a lot of popular interest like Van Gogh, like Gustav Klimt, like Caravaggio, like [Henri] Toulouse-Lautrec had sort of these terribly self-destructive lifestyles?

MS. BARTLETT: Well what about, what's his name, *Kubla Khan*?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Pollock?

MS. BARTLETT: It was part of poets too, like [Charles] Baudelaire and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Arthur] Rimbaud, yeah, right.

MS. BARTLETT: All of those people. Rimbaud was kind of interesting. [Laughs.] And I think that was a whole different thing. It's very complex. But I don't think those were always roll models, like amount the artists you just mentioned, the only one that stands out to me is Van Gogh.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: Who I thought was a wonderful artist and drank.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, he was one of the least—

MS. BARTLETT: But he was crazy.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, right.

MS. BARTLETT: You know, I think that was—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Or Alfred Jarry, perfect example, poster boy for that kind of—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. But then you can go into the music too and say Satie and the whole early generation of—

MR. MCELHINNEY: But—

MS. BARTLETT: There was Piaf.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, Piaf, yes.

MS. BARTLETT: And Billie Holiday.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, and the list goes—gets longer and longer.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But artists—

MS. BARTLETT: Or what's his name, the one all the musicians like, Parker?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, Charlie Parker, Bird.

MS. BARTLETT: Charlie Parker.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah. It seems like—

MS. BARTLETT: So it seems like more in music or stuff. You know, I don't associate, says, Barnett Newman with heavy—

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, but Pollock—

MS. BARTLETT: —alcohol.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, but Pollock—

MS. BARTLETT: But I only associate him with drugs.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right. But somebody like Jackson Pollock. If you think about the major films about artists, and they're all people who had this sort of—who had a substance-abuse profile or some kind of mental health—

MS. BARTLETT: Or craziness.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, yeah, and—

MS. BARTLETT: I mean, probably cutting off his ear was the thing that made Van Gogh's sustain itself for so long, long enough for people to get really interested in what it looked like.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Or now a scholar has proposed that the ear was actually a wound caused by a brawl with [Paul] Gauguin who was wielding the razor.

MS. BARTLETT: Well, it was—it had something to do with Gauguin.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Of course.

MS. BARTLETT: But my impression was that it was a spite thing, that he cut off his ear because he and Gauguin had had a huge fight, which I can certainly see.

MR. MCELHINNEY: See, see.

MS. BARTLETT: Now, Gauguin had his own sort of thing.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, this whole—yeah, this whole romance of social diseases too, like all of—you know, the vampirism that we see in entertainment is like it was in the 19th century a metaphor for AIDS, like Dracula was a metaphor for syphilis.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And so it's this forbidden love and this sort of—you know, the dangerous eroticism and a lot of these themes. But they—

MS. BARTLETT: But that was mostly about not being married and quantity.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Promiscuity, yeah, right, right.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: But I guess I'm asking you if you feel that this kind of bohemian archetype which is so popular and so much part of our popular-culture image of what an artist is, is a negative role model to, like, young people.

MS. BARTLETT: No. I think that you're drawn to a certain kind of role model, and it's not because it's just cool, but it's very comfortable to wear shitty clothes, do you know what I mean, with paint all over them and not have

to spend a lot on a wardrobe, that kind of a thing.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, right.

MS. BARTLETT: Or live in a loft or do that and do that. There's something wonderfully freeing about it, and it's more interesting.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And I know that when I haven't seen an artist for a long time, I've been somewhere or something, I miss them. I miss, you know, having a group where you have the same frame of reference, you know. It's like any field, I suppose. You know who the players are, and also those kinds of—a lot of artists are extremely funny. And that's something that I've always enjoyed a lot is a kind of—[inaudible]—Elizabeth was great for that.

So I think that the bohemian life has a great deal to say for itself, and, you know, many of its practices are different, and some can lead to some dicey situations. But then you always have—you have the thing with—I mean, alcohol and art have been an issue in American art for a long time, if you think of all the people that drank a lot, I mean, Pollock being one of the top ones and de Kooning.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Gilbert Stuart.

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] Was he? I didn't—

MR. MCELHINNEY: He had a big problem.

MS. BARTLETT: And you can just go right through huge lists of people that—Rauschenberg and Johns. I don't think Warhol did anything. Do you?

MR. MCELHINNEY: No.

MS. BARTLETT: Because he was always more of a voyeur.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, he was a fly on the wall, as it were, but in a white wig.

MS. BARTLETT: Blonde. Wasn't it a blonde wig?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Was it blonde? Wasn't it white as he got old—blonde, white.

MS. BARTLETT: Platinum.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I think I don't imagine him in color though. I always imagine him in black-and-white. I think that's—

MS. BARTLETT: Why was I thinking last—I was thinking last night. I was thinking about the thing—we were talking before of a certain kind of openness in art.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right. Oh right.

MS. BARTLETT: And I was thinking, did Warhol have it or didn't he? And it was yes, in a sense he did. But it was sinister. There was something not nice, and I'm not talking about the subject matter. I'm talking about—his removal from his own work was I think disturbing in some kind of a way that didn't let him qualify for my categories. But I was thinking of him. I was thinking the closest it came to that was the electric chairs.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And it was leaving those images alone, you know, because I think he left those images alone.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, without the manipulation, without a sort of artistic aestheticization of it.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That's an interesting concept, sort of his absence was his voice.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: His ability to absent himself from his own activity.

MS. BARTLETT: And it's one of the things that makes him so kind of universally popular.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: You know, which is an interesting thing too, where Rauschenberg and Jasper are much homier, do you know? Say, any kind of artist can probably understand that activity more than—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, it's more physical. They were actually doing things in a physical—

MS. BARTLETT: Way, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —way, things that couldn't really be delegated, certain choices that needed to be—yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. But then you have somebody like Don Jones.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: You know, who really did delegate. But Robert Morris was a little different. He kind of made his, you know, and they're clunkier.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, his work also went through a variety of different changes from his earlier work—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, the minimal.

MR. MCELHINNEY: With the minimalist or the minimal -

MS. BARTLETT: Rectangles, grey rectangles.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, the grey rectangles and his performances to those things he did in the late '80s and '90s, these great, grand—

MS. BARTLETT: The fire things.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, you know, the black friezes.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Very different. So he had almost—or three or four different identities in the work, almost like [Philip] Guston. Everybody talks about sort of the three phases of Guston.

MS. BARTLETT: Guston was from Long Beach too.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh really? I never knew that.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I knew people who studied with him in Boston. But he was from Long Beach too?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I met him in Detroit before he died. I love all the the last paintings, they're—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: You know—[laughs]—there's—hilarious, but—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Did you see the Nixon pieces he did?

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: There's a whole—Philip Roth is a friend of a friend, and years ago I was in his house—

MS. BARTLETT: I have to tell you, I can't stand Philip Roth. I've never been able to and—[laughs].

MR. MCELHINNEY: I haven't seen him in a long time and he barely would know who I am. I was just sort of a friend of a friend, another—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, a friend of mine was just going out with him and another friend—David Plante, a novelist—is a very close friend of his.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But he has a series hanging in his—or he had hanging in his house in the '80s these little

paintings, gorgeous little paintings in gouache, of Nixon and Bebe Rebozo, these funny—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —wonderful pictures.

MS. BARTLETT: Were they Guston's?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, they were all Guston's.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, my God.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And I don't know. They had some kind of a friendship too. They knew each other in some way. But there was this whole hilarious—I hope they're exhibited at some point in time.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: Because I don't know them at all.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, they may be—they were exhibited. But anyway, we're just pausing to look at the machine to see if we need to change. Are we good? The transcriber can ignore all this banter.

[Side-conversation]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay, good. So could we go back to how we started this conversation this morning—this afternoon now—about feminism now and sort of the—sort of, like, loss of sensitivity and the sort of increasing evidence of—that you're seeing of young women, you know, feeling like they have to play the slut or whatever in order to get ahead.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, the slut and get good grades and have an interest and have talent.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And be ambitious.

MS. BARTLETT: Which is an exhausting proposition.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And be, like, working all the time, too. So what advice would you give? What advice do you give to your own daughter, if I might pry?

MS. BARTLETT: She doesn't like any advice that I would give her.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, that's to be expected, I would imagine. [Laughs.]

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] So that answers your questions.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But let's say someone comes and is working with Leah as an intern and gets to know you a little bit and seeks advice from you as a mentor, begins to look at you as a role model, is inspired by your work, by your career, is very impressed by your persona and enters your employment as an intern sort of awe-stricken and—

MS. BARTLETT: I can't imagine that, but go ahead.

MR. MCELHINNEY: What?

MS. BARTLETT: I can't imagine that, but go ahead.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, let's just say she asks your advice. She begins to seek advice from you. Let's say she's the same age as your daughter but she has a different outlook.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, well I just always have given the most boring advice possible: Just work, and even if you don't like the idea or how the thing looks, just keep working, because I've always gotten my ideas through working. But I don't know if that's particularly good advice.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I don't know. It's advice I hear from a lot of great artists whom I've known, that the best ideas come when you're working and—

MS. BARTLETT: And then you have many more ideas when you're not working if you're working.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And—

MR. MCELHINNEY: When you take a break—in other words, when you're working—

MS. BARTLETT: Literally doing it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You're always working, even though you might be resting. You might be reading a book or walking in the park.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, or you're more responsive to things that you see or you read or you hear, whatever.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: When you're doing your own work, you know. So that's probably my only kind of thing.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So you just say, forget all of that, like, you know, the heels, the hair, the paint, the—you know, the,—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, well get rid of what's really a waste of time.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And if that's not a waste of time for you, you're going to have to figure out how to fit that in with doing your work. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Understood.

MS. BARTLETT: But I mean, there isn't any way, I don't think, as an artist of getting around making things. [Laughs.] Do you know?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right. Now, people try. I think that there is always a certain number of students who enter the art schools because they want to dress like Johnny Cash and they want to be cool.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But the minute they realize that it's about work, they all turn into Maynard G. Krebs and they go off in another kind of direction. But one sees this all the time, I mean, as a person who is still teaching.

MS. BARTLETT: Right. Well, I taught for a long time.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Of course. So you've also seen this. And I guess there are just some people—I guess the people who heed that advice—

MS. BARTLETT: Or not even heed it, but it's in their nature, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It's in their nature.

MS. BARTLETT: I mean, all of my friends—[laughs]—they really worked all the time, you know?

MR. MCELHINNEY: So why do you think you love to work so much? What is it in you—

MS. BARTLETT: I don't think I'd probably be—I hate to admit this, but I think if I didn't work and hadn't started working really early, I'd probably be nuts. But I think that, you know, it's a kind of focus and discipline that's just interesting and rewarding and, you know, something you never totally feel good about yourself or that you've really achieved anything.

But the effort is interesting—I mean, attempting to do it. And then you have a whole thing to think about, artifacts from other countries, from other cultures, from the whole Western tradition. You have quite a rich field to think about. And one thing that art always does is expand those notions to things you hadn't considered before, even if you don't like them. I mean, I always pay attention to things that I hate.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Like, what do you hate?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I first hated Vito Acconci. He was back and he had, like, a fortune teller's booth at some event, and you had to go back there and talk to them. Well, every aspect of that was hideous to me, do you know, that kind of proximity. I like a big distance.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] And talking personally was not one of my favorite things. So I just really didn't like it. But then I found myself defending him against people saying the same thing. And I began really liking his work and finding it very amusing. I know I keep saying that, but you know, the ideas certainly were. And then I became friends with him.

I haven't seen him in years though, really since he started concentrating on the architectural thing. But he was always interesting to me and that started out with hating him. I mean, disliking the work, not wanting to participate in it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So but when you did, you were able to find some kind of a positive entry into his world.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And that was rewarding.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, it was different and then I wonder about a lot of artists whose aesthetics are totally different than mine, like John Currin.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Let's talk a little about John Currin. He's a Gagosian artist.

MS. BARTLETT: Or Elizabeth Peyton.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So what's your opinion of John Currin? How do you read his pictures and his—

MS. BARTLETT: I don't know. I have to wait a little bit longer. At first—I mean, certain aspects of the work I just find troublesome. I don't like to look at it, do you know what I mean, all the girls—the same thing with Will Cotton's work, or someone.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: There's just that kind of very overt subject matter that I don't like, do you know?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Like pin-up art.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. But I don't think either one of them are what that's about. I mean, I think both of them are very obsessive painters, do you know what I mean? And to me, that's the real issue of the work.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, what about somebody like Lisa Yuskavage?

MS. BARTLETT: Lisa Yuskavage? What is her work like?

MR. MCELHINNEY: She does—she and Currin were in the same class at Yale in the '80s I think and they—late '80s or I can't recall which year. I wasn't there. But Lisa Yuskavage—Yuskavage—however you say it.

MS. BARTLETT: I can see the word, but—

MR. MCELHINNEY: They're very intensely colored, very highly stylized pictures of women very often with big breasts.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, anything like Marilyn Minter, except—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Little—not so—I mean, very sort of smooth tight forms, very sort of atmospheric—I don't know.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. It doesn't—

MR. MCELHINNEY: I'm trying to describe them, but they have a kind of pin-up sugary confection-like, pin-up-like, Will Cotton, all the sort of spun-cotton, pink clouds with a—right, with a—

MS. BARTLETT: A babe-a-licious.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Victoria's Secret model, yeah, this—

MS. BARTLETT: What about—see, I'd be more interested in someone like Cory Arcangel. Do you know what I mean? Because I just don't understand at all what he's doing, do you know?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Or Matthew Barney. Like what about—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, well that seems like a while ago, do you know?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And that wasn't that difficult for me to relate to. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: So what—is it the images of the women in Will Cotton's work or John Currin's work that you find—

MS. BARTLETT: I don't know if it's just the women. I think the women sort of indicated certain attitude towards things, do you know, say that the whole influence of Warhol and that kind of thing and taking it a bit farther. But I don't know. It's true. I feel I have to wait because I don't feel that's all there's going to be in either of them.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So you feel that they're still kind of developing their identities.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I can be totally wrong on those things and usually am.

MR. MCELHINNEY: What about some of—speaking about, you know, the new figuration, somebody like Neo Rauch and the Leipzig School, those German—

MS. BARTLETT: I don't know who Neo Rauch is.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Neo Rauch, R-A-U-C-H, German painter.

MS. BARTLETT: Describe one to me.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Sort of a combination of pop art and Soviet social realism. And there was a show of his at the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY] a couple of years ago in that little gallery.

MS. BARTLETT: R-U-C-H?

MR. MCELHINNEY: R-A-U-C-H, German for smoke, anyway.

MS. BARTLETT: [Telephone rings.] Hello? Hi, I'm just in the middle of an interview. So I'll call you back. Bye.

[Side conversation.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well—

MS. BARTLETT: I don't know about—the new figuration doesn't seem like totally new to me.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, it's not.

MS. BARTLETT: And there's some American woman—Deana—her name probably isn't Deana—but a figurative painter, who's good. She's pretty well known now and I can't remember her name. I'm sorry. Her figurations seem sort of interesting to me. I think Currin and someone like that, it's the static-ness of the kind of images, the absolute quality of them that makes me nervous. I tend to sort of like things that I just really don't understand.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Something that engages you, yeah, that challenges you.

MS. BARTLETT: You know, or even Christopher Marclay, where I didn't really understand just the record pieces, the CD, you know. I thought the movie thing was extremely entertaining and very beautifully done.

And that's something that's really quite easy for me to understand. You know, I suppose because there's something to see and the frame of reference is something I'm familiar with, do you know?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Time-based media. We talked earlier about film.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Your interest in film.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, and this is—you know, takes that to an interesting place, do you know, where based on just that idea of what time it is and then, you know, it coagulates and what do people do at 11:00 in the morning.

A lot of people are getting up for breakfast in movies. It's just sort of interesting, because it changes your ideas of certain things. It puts things in a relationship where you haven't looked at something like that before.

But plus, there's all the familiar faces and all the familiar movies and all the unfamiliar ones but that you kind of know where they came from. So that was interesting to me. I'm trying to think of other young artists.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, artists—artists whose work challenges you, who you find difficult. You were saying that you—that you enjoyed discovering something of interest in work that your first response was—

MS. BARTLETT: I didn't really understand.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —was negative, that you didn't really care for it and that upon interrogating it your opinion changed.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So what is it in a work of art that you value, that when you—like, what is it in a work of art that you need to find in order for you to be convinced of its value?

MS. BARTLETT: I like seeing artists that I know that do something different. Say, Joel Shapiro's last show at Pace, do you know, of the planes of color that were suspended but very obviously so with simple fastenings and fishing filament and stuff. And I was delighted to see that after the things that he stuck with a very long time, the figurative big bronze things and stuff like that.

And that had a quality that his earlier work had that had more—for me, more openness, more—it's like we all want to be this fantasy of our self. And I think Joel's figures got to a point where I felt that he was really trying to do—to be Richard Serra in a kind of way but with his own imagery. And I think Richard has that area covered.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And so it was a pleasure to see those new pieces. And then Paula Cooper [Gallery, New York, NY] had a show of small works which were quite—very beautiful that were earlier. So it was nice to see those two in relationship.

And that's an interesting thing, how, you know, what is—[laughs]. I was just thinking who Brice liked. And I think the most I've ever gotten is Ellsworth Kelly and a sculptor—squares and lay it on the floor—not Richard—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Andre?

MS. BARTLETT: Andre, Carl.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Carl Andre. I remember a story. One of my teachers at Yale was John Walker.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: A British painter, and he told a story about going to Hampton Court [Palace, Surrey, United Kingdom] with Brice Marden back in the early '70s I guess and going to go see the *Triumphs of Caesar* [1486-1505] by [Andrea] Mantegna. And I forget the punch line, but somehow that that, you know, the [Jean-Baptiste] Greuze paintings with those earth tones manifested itself in one of Marden's pictures, which were then those encaustic triptychs.

MS. BARTLETT: The Grove Group or whatever that Larry showed, you know, maybe 15 years ago. [The Grove Group is the name of a series of paintings created by Brice Marden in the early '70s. -JB]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, this was back—

MS. BARTLETT: Before that, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Or really early on. So clearly both, like, Walker and to a degree Marden, I suppose, and other people were looking at historical artwork to get ideas.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, always.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So who really turns you on in the—in the—you know, in the grand history of art. We spoke about Piero.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Paolo] Uccello would be another one too perhaps.

MS. BARTLETT: I like Uccello, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, Fra Angelico.

MS. BARTLETT: I like the Giorgiones [Giorgio Barbarelli], the very few that are there.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh Giorgione, yeah, and Giotto.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. We talked about a number of people.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: You know, then there's a whole string of others that don't have the quality we're talking there—Tintoretto. There's some fabulous ones of his that are just weird beyond belief.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, they're weird beyond belief. You know the crucifixion in Scuola di San Rocco [Venice, Italy]?

MS. BARTLETT: No, I don't know that one.

MR. MCELHINNEY: The big giant painting. I watched students reduced to tears in front of that.

MS. BARTLETT: Really?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Because they were—you know, you drag them around to, you know, the Museo Correr [Venice, Italy] and the Accademia [Gallerie dell'Accademia] and the Ferrari [Museum] and then you take them in there and they don't go in that little room and then before they leave, you say, "Oh, before you leave just have a look in there."

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And you walk in and it's this insane painting with—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, what about that one—I think it's in Venice with the fish.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh yeah, well this is in Venice, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: Which I think is just an amazing painting.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, you know, *The Crucifixion* [1565] is like no longer the man of sorrows hanging on the cross. He's like the boss on the cross. He looks very buff and it's this—it defies all of the laws of nature and physics, and it's like this incredible invention. It's the brilliance of Tintoretto, don't you think, is just his compositional acrobatics.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh I just think he's—I think he's terrific. And I've never liked Caravaggio.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Tell me why.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, I don't know. A lot of the boys in his thing look so effeminate in a particular way that's not very appealing to me. [Laughs.] And I guess the dark and light, it's sort of too much for me. He did it too much, the chiaroscuro.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah. It's the same quality that you were talking about of sort of static, frozen—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, Elizabeth liked him a lot.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right. Well he's—

MS. BARTLETT: And I can remember we were doing something at Dalton, do you know, and we got in a big fight in front of the class about it. [Laughs.] [Dalton is the private high school Jennifer Bartlett and Elizabeth Murray's daughters attended. Jennifer and Elizabeth volunteered their time at the school. -JB].

MR. MCELHINNEY: About Caravaggio. I think there's certainly more impressive in person and I did—went around Rome and tried, you know, to time it to see—

MS. BARTLETT: I like Mantegna a lot.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, Mantegna is brilliant, yeah. But so there's a kind of—what's emerging in the artists you're speaking about is a kind of—there's a kind of—there's a kind of classicism that's also animated, that has movement and has that openness.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, but then I like the northern artists too, do you know? I like [Jan] Bruegel and I like [Hieronymus] Bosch.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh yes.

MS. BARTLETT: And [Jan] Van Eyck and who was the master of the blah, blah, blah—the *Isenheim Altar* [1506-1515]? That's who did it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Matthias Grunewald.

MS. BARTLETT: Grunewald.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: But that was—that's a fantastic piece.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: And you know, it's true. It's what you see in real life that is fabulous, I mean, it becomes sort of crystal clear in a way.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Someone—I can't remember who—said that—

MS. BARTLETT: Grunewald.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, Grunewald—that originality is something you already know seen in a way you've never experienced before, something you already know but seen in a new way. Does that work for you?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, that reminds me again of the—of the week—of a section that I don't like—pithy quotes from people.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Pithy quotes? Is there actually a section called "pithy quotes"? [Laughs.]

MS. BARTLETT: No, they call it something else. I'd have to find it for you.

MS. BARTLETT: It's such a little magazine. You'd think I could turn right to it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, I used to get *World Press*, but I'll have to check this out. Is this—is this—

MS. BARTLETT: You can have this.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Is this a subscription you have? Is it a magazine you subscribe to?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. Oh God. I'm sorry. You're just going to have to wait until I find it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That's perfectly all right.

MS. BARTLETT: Which I will.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Just for the reader, Jennifer is looking through *Week Magazine* to find pithy quotes.

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] And what you just said about originality reminds me of this column, "Wit and Wisdom."

MR. MCELHINNEY: "Wit and Wisdom"? Is there a particular quote here or just—

MS. BARTLETT: No, just all of them.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay, well we'll just read one which is from Abraham Lincoln. It's, "The best thing about the future is that it comes only one day at a time."

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] Well, that's what your originality comment made me—

MR. MCELHINNEY: I think so. He was full of pithy quotes, Abraham Lincoln.

MS. BARTLETT: There are lots of people and people that you haven't heard of that have a lot of pithy quotes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I think human beings are known for pithy quotes.

MS. BARTLETT: Pithy quotes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: We enjoy pithy quotes. So try to wrap up this conversation, which started with an article in *The Week* about feminism.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So do you think there is such a thing as a gendered eye?

MS. BARTLETT: I think we went over that—

MR. MCELHINNEY: A little bit.

MS. BARTLETT:—yesterday. And I would think that there probably must be something, if only from the kind of cultural—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —you know, raising of boys and girls and transsexuals and homosexuals, that there is a specific gender thing. But I don't think it's particularly visible.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Not quantifiable other than just as a sense of things.

MS. BARTLETT: I don't know. I don't even—I don't know the answer to that, because as I said yesterday that I've grown up in a culture that's very, very specific and I've seen that ebb and flow. But I have never seen anything like Victorian England.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And I haven't seen anything like Shakespearean and Queen Elizabeth I. So I don't know. You know, we're just a little blip.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It's not all pink and blue

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So it's—

MS. BARTLETT: You know, and the whole thing—I don't think you can talk about those cultural differences as much as you talk—as I think that the influence of religion and the church over that—our whole period of time, the last 2,000, 3,000 years is as critical in how it's been used. And it's not just against women or rules for that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: It's WOGs, you know.

MR. MCELHINNEY: WOGs?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, white oriental gentleman.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: Indians—you know, Indians and American Indians.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Of course.

MS. BARTLETT: And anybody that isn't—

MR. MCELHINNEY: People of color.

MS. BARTLETT: White.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: British or French man.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, I knew as a kid a British man who had served in World War II as an officer in the tank corps and he was fond of uttering that Welshmen, Scotsmen and Irishmen made good soldiers, but only when led by white officers.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. [Laughs.] I know.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So this kind of idea of race or color is not—

MS. BARTLETT: Or culture, you know.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Or culture is not—or WOGs. The other thing was, WOGs started Calais [France] was another —

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You've heard that one.

MS. BARTLETT: That's a good one.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But it's all very British, and this idea of race I think in a lot of ways—I don't know if you'd agree, but I think a lot of ways the ideas about race which we hopefully have emerged from, these prejudices and other wrongheaded ideas, were really—are really not that old. They're only a couple hundred years old and have to do with colonialism.

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I don't know.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I think colonialism has a lot to do with it, but within the Asian world, you know—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Ah, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: There's the fight between the Japanese and the Koreans.

MR. MCELHINNEY: The Koreans, absolutely.

MS. BARTLETT: Do you know, and you have a kind of uneasy relationship between the Chinese and the Japanese. And certainly you have it in any kind of tribal culture in Africa or—

MR. MCELHINNEY: India, and you know, the caste system.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, so I think it's not just—I think it became—it's stupidest in the colonization program, I mean, where it was truly horrible. And one of my favorite writers is Dickens. and having read everything he's written, I just have to go by the racial—the anti-Semitic kind of stuff that happens.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right

MS. BARTLETT: Even though some of the Jews in there are really quite nice. [Laughs.]

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JAMES MCELHINNEY: OK, we're resuming our conversation with Jennifer Bartlett on Saturday afternoon, June the 4th, 2011. Hello again.

JENNIFER BARTLETT: Hi.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Let's talk a little bit about—during the break we were chatting a little about a number of things, and we had a tour of your home and studio, and I think it would be interesting to sort of explore your

studio practice, how you work and where you work.

And I think at one point we were speaking about Arshile Gorky and how he was one of the only artists who had a studio other than where he lived. And you live, really, in a way which is very, very close to your work. There's almost no division between, you know, the living area and the studio area.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I have always done that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So, when did you begin to live in this way? Was it when you moved to SoHo?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, after I finished Yale and that kind of stuff.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And so—

MS. BARTLETT: And at that time I had a studio that was separate from where I lived.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, you did, at Yale?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And that was—

MS. BARTLETT: Right after Yale.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right after Yale you had a studio in New Haven. You said you were living in Derby or Ansonia —

MS. BARTLETT: Chester.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Chester.

MS. BARTLETT: Cheshire [CT].

MR. MCELHINNEY: Cheshire. Cheshire.

MS. BARTLETT: And I had a studio on Chapel Street.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, of course. That's the commercial "high street" of New Haven. Where was it on Chapel Street, just out of curiosity?

MS. BARTLETT: Actually, like sort of a block away from the art school, or two blocks at the most.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Going towards the common, the green?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, OK. So that whole strip, which is down towards the Taft Hotel, all of that, that's all become quite—

MS. BARTLETT: No, it was before.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It was before? Yeah.

So you moved to New York and moved into a loft at 78 Mercer Street?

MS. BARTLETT: Greene.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Greene. Greene Street. And how was that space organized?

MS. BARTLETT: It was—[laughs]—it was very simple. As you can imagine, it was just really one space. But for a bedroom, I built a cube on wheels that I thought was a great idea. And, you know, I slept inside of it. There was room.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How big was it?

MS. BARTLETT: I'm thinking 8 by 8, but maybe it was bigger. And then it had room to sleep on top too, like a kind of—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Guest room, right?

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] Yes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Like a bunk-bed cube.

MS. BARTLETT: As you can imagine, it was very heavy. So the whole idea of just rolling it around willy-nilly did not work out so well. But I did move it occasionally. And that sort of separated what was the living room with parachute curtains and stuff that I picked up somewhere.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How did you build it?

MS. BARTLETT: A friend helped me. And just, you know, sheetrock and studs and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: It was a regular room—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —just with wheels on it—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —and a roof—

MS. BARTLETT: —Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —upon which a guest—

MS. BARTLETT: Yes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —could sleep. Was there a ladder on the side that you could climb up or—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. But I don't—yes, there was.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That's very interesting. So you would just basically crawl into this—

MS. BARTLETT: Cube.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —8-foot cube and nod off, and houseguests could climb up and—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I've never heard of that. Were there other people who did that?

MS. BARTLETT: I don't know of anyone.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Neither do I.

MS. BARTLETT: I mean, you know, people would be very amused by it, by the cube.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I would think. So was there a door in it—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —or was it open on one side or—

MS. BARTLETT: No, there was a door.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You could close the door?

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It was just an open door. So how large was the space? How many square feet?

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, I don't know. Inside—I wouldn't—

MR. MCELHINNEY: I mean in the whole loft—in the whole loft.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, 2,500.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So big, that's a big loft.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, well, at that time it was a \$300 loft, yeah, so—

MR. MCELHINNEY: That was expensive in those days.

MS. BARTLETT: —that I think went up to 375 [dollars].

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, my god, usurious.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: So you said you lived in there for about—you lived in that loft for 15 years or so?

MS. BARTLETT: No, I don't think it was that long, but I honestly don't remember. I moved next to Charles Street, where I—no, not Charles Street, Lafayette Street, where I bought a loft in a building.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay, so moving east a little bit. Just out of curiosity, when you left—

MS. BARTLETT: Greene Street.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —Greene Street, did you leave your cube?

MS. BARTLETT: Yes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And is it still in use?

MS. BARTLETT: I have no idea.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That would be something for someone to investigate.

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: So you had this mobile cube, and the rationale was so that you could move it inside the loft to allow you to use it—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, it would be—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —you know, a separation between spaces.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So like a dormitory taboret.

MS. BARTLETT: Yes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Interesting, very interesting. And how about the kitchen and bathroom and—

MS. BARTLETT: Now, the bathroom, I just put—I think there were originally two toilets, you know, small, because it was an old factory building. And in one of them I put a bathtub, so you'd walk up some stairs and go into the bathroom—bathtub, and the bathtub would totally fill that room.

And down the line I think I may have had a cabinet on wheels too, like the kitchen counter. And, you know, then there was just Sydney Lewis stuff that comprised the—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, all of the appliances.

MS. BARTLETT: Yes, exactly.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, the dishwasher, the refrigerator.

MS. BARTLETT: Elizabeth was funny about that. She said, “you know, these totally run-down lofts, and in all of them were these sparkling new”—[they laugh]—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Courtesy of the Best and Company. So did you ever trade art for paint with Lenny Bocour?

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Because he did that too.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. No, I didn't do that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Just appliances for paint with the Lewises. Interesting.

So how was your studio organized at that time? I mean, here we're in this big, square, plain white room opening onto a garden, and there's a big table in the middle of the room.

MS. BARTLETT: Well, the studio opened onto an air shaft, in which pigeons lived. And it was just an open space, and in the middle of it I put the guest bed. And that was just a rectangle with a mattress on top. And then the rest was studio.

And I did that first big piece, *Rhapsody*, there. And it filled my studio I think three or four times. And I had no idea, so—what it would look like together. And I didn't know if it would fit in the—I was with Paula Cooper then. I didn't know if it would fit in the gallery, and it did, just shy of seven feet, you know? And so that was sort of interesting.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So the way you work now, you've got just to try to verbally describe—you've got—on three adjoining walls you've got—large walls, which are—what's the height of the ceiling here, about 12 [feet] to 15 feet?

MS. BARTLETT: No, probably, in parts, 11 ½ [feet] or 12 [feet].

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, 11 ½ [feet], 12 [feet]? OK. So, 12 [feet]—

MS. BARTLETT: And it goes up to 14 [feet].

MR. MCELHINNEY: Twelve [feet] to 14 feet. And then on each is hung a work in progress still? Are these—

MS. BARTLETT: These are done.

MR. MCELHINNEY: These are done. These are done. But if you were working on them, they would be where we see them?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, no, they'd be much more crammed up. There would be a lot more paintings up.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see.

MS. BARTLETT: And then when things got finished, they go up to the upper studio—

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see.

MS. BARTLETT: —you know, if they really were finished, or maybe they weren't finished or something. And then I hang more of them.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So I'm observing that you paint on the wall.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: There are no easels, there are no—

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —fixtures of any other kind. You paint on the wall. And there's a big table here in, like, the middle of the room, and then you've got about four or five of these—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, it's not one table; it's several.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And they collapse. They're great. So usually those wouldn't be up. I mean, some would be, but there would be two upstairs and two downstairs.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see. I see.

MS. BARTLETT: You know, they become dumping areas.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So you shove them together, you know, to create a bigger surface.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, right. I was doing some plate pieces on there.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And then you've got also these four taborets, these sort of wheeled contraptions—

MS. BARTLETT: Carts.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —carts, like dim sum carts.

MS. BARTLETT: Hospital carts or—yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, hospital carts or whatever.

MS. BARTLETT: Or food carts.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I imagine, you know, going to Chinatown and, you know, the dim sum—

MS. BARTLETT: Right.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —being wheeled around in these things. So these become your surfaces for the pallets and also for paint.

MS. BARTLETT: Pallets for paint and the shelves for brushes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right. So you're still working with wheeled contraptions.

MS. BARTLETT: Yes, I am. [They laugh.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: So, would your studio at that time, when you were on Greene Street, would it have had, you know, the same organization as this?

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No.

MS. BARTLETT: It was smaller and it was, you know, very funky. You know, I don't know where my storage space actually was on Greene Street. I have to sort of remember. I have a feeling it was—there was another wall with shelves around that bathroom complex—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —I talked about. And one was for hanging clothes. I think the other ones became art shelves—material shelves. So it's really quite, you know, different than this.

And then Charles Street—I'm skipping off—it was much more complicated than this, you know, but I have the basement and the first floor is studio and office, so there were a lot of studios—a lot of studio space. And the second floor was living. And then there was a pool room on the top that became my bedroom at a certain point.

I think, you know, one of the really terrible things I've done in my life is my interest in building things, you know, and I've spent an awful lot of money on it that I shouldn't have. But there you go.

MR. MCELHINNEY: What kinds of things? You mean like—

MS. BARTLETT: Gardens—

MR. MCELHINNEY: —rolling bedrooms, gardens? [They laugh.]

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, starting out from the beginning, you know, there was some expenditure—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Where did you get this idea of having everything on wheels?

MS. BARTLETT: I didn't—it wasn't an idea. I just have—

MR. MCELHINNEY: You just did it.

MS. BARTLETT: When I needed—you know, when I had a bigger studio, that was just nicer to roll things around, you know. And I know that I put things on the bed that I described in the studio on Greene Street. So I'd take the mattress off if no one was staying there and it would become kind of a table.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Another work—

MS. BARTLETT: It wasn't on wheels—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —I don't think.

Then Charles Street, you know, it was like building a kind of home and having all these studios. I'd had my daughter at that point, and then putting the pool in, which, you know, these were things I could never afford. I could pay for them just, but with a lot of help from friendly bankers.

And one of the reasons I sold Charles Street—which I liked very much was because I was just—my mortgage nut was so huge that I didn't want to go into old age trying to earn \$22,000 a month to pay a mortgage. So when I sold Charles Street, I paid for this building in cash and I, you know, did it—I mean, did it off of cash too, which meant that I spent much more than I should have on this place.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: But it's not encumbered by any debt.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, so you only have the maintenance costs and taxes?

MS. BARTLETT: Yes, which is just a fortune, you know, of course, but I don't think of those things when I get swept up with planning something.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: The architect's name that I worked with, recommended to me by Deborah Berke—and his name is David Berridge. And we work really closely together.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And you're happy with his choices. There were no—

MS. BARTLETT: I would say that a lot of them were our choices.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So it was done sort of in a collaborative way?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How did you find—oh, you found him through—

MS. BARTLETT: Deborah Berke, who built the new art school—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —at Yale. And I really wanted something plain.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, its simple—its simplicity is admirable. I see also that your heating—you explained before that you had heating of the floors—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And I see what it looks like. The ductwork at the top of the walls—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —is long horizontals. And you also have a fireplace here in a corner of the studio, and a stack of cordwood in the corner. So it's all tidy, and old paper for kindling up there. So it's very organized. You're very, very organized.

MS. BARTLETT: It can get disorganized. I'll show you my bedroom, and on top is Dennis' bedroom.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Hang on a minute. Let's just move this.

MS. BARTLETT: I haven't made—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Hang on. Hang on.

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MR. MCELHINNEY: There we go. It's running. It's rolling. Yeah, please continue.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, we're mobile now.

MS. BARTLETT: So this is my room. And there's more of those, and a kind of double closet. And there's—sort of the kinds of things that I make are like that—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, this—

MS. BARTLETT: —because I gave away all my books.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, so the door to the studio is like a sliding—sliding shelf.

MS. BARTLETT: Bookcase.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, bookcase. It's a set of shelves that's suspended from a rail above, so it's like a—

MS. BARTLETT: So it's not wheels but it has—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, it's wheels above—

MS. BARTLETT: And then these were the kind of things I had to talk the architect into, like I hate door handles and stuff. So I don't mind looking down and seeing clothes—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —or something, and drawers. And I like just being able to pull them out.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So the drawers all have—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, fingers.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —a gap at the top.

MS. BARTLETT: Because we made this in the studio—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —and all the furniture upstairs was made on Charles Street.

MR. MCELHINNEY: What kind of building was Charles Street?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, Douglas Baxter, who is at Pace Gallery, said that I found the only building devoid of charm in New York.

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

MS. BARTLETT: So it was kind of all brick and painted white. And it was industrial. It was built in 1912 by the railroad and serviced things down on the track—

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see.

MS. BARTLETT: —because it was right near the river. And so what was it like? Well, it was a lot of space. It was 13,000 square feet interior.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Huge, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: And then I had about 4,000 square feet of garden on the rooftops.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And so this room opens onto the garden—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —which is—what's the direction? This would be north?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So north light and another door opening onto a corner of the garden—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, which would be east.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —to the east, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: But with south light.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And you've left the joists exposed and the bottoms of the upper floors exposed.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, aren't they nice? Except—

MR. MCELHINNEY: And the ceilings—yeah, they are.

MS. BARTLETT: You know, it's not the kind of thing that I wouldn't plan for is—there's a lot of sound that comes down to this area, but I don't mind it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, this is—as you explained, when this was a school that there had been some acoustic tile —

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —hiding all of this.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, and just when I got that ceiling down, the ceiling seemed so beautiful to me and such perfect condition that I left them.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Could we take a look at the garden too?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Because after our tour yesterday, I really have to—I really have to consider that this is sort of like one of your works.

MS. BARTLETT: I suppose so.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well—

MS. BARTLETT: It's—yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, you're a landscape architect now too.

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I got interested in gardens because of an art project that didn't go through.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So could—

MS. BARTLETT: See, there's trouble with that tree at that point and it's just new, and I have no idea what's causing it where it's browning.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Where? This—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, on the pendular spruce.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see.

MS. BARTLETT: Do you see the brown on the top? And then you see it—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, yeah, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: —in between the little—

MR. MCELHINNEY: That could be acid rain or—

MS. BARTLETT: I think it got it from this tree, which was an absolutely glorious and beautiful Tanyosho Pine that lost most of its needles—its needles, and now it looks like it's going to live, but you can see how many branches were cut off.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: So there's always a tragic aspect of gardens.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So how did you plan this—what was your strategy? Did you do drawings or—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, and what I did first was that person I mentioned, Rob Besser, we first started just looking for trees to get ideas, where the last garden I did with Madison Cox, it was more normal. And this one I wanted to be primarily evergreens, which I like. So it was going around and looking at those and then just—and there are a lot of fastigiate trees like the Liquidambar and the beech tree and the yews.

And so it just kind of grew and probably—eccentric pines, which I think are quite beautiful. I'm just—see, I'm concerned with why those are falling off of—if it's an animal that got in and they're being taken off.

MR. MCELHINNEY: At least you don't have deer in Brooklyn—

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —at least not here.

MS. BARTLETT: Not yet. [They laugh.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: They're everywhere else.

MS. BARTLETT: And this I was really worried about. I'm not cutting off any of this deadwood until the fall.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And what kind of tree is this?

MS. BARTLETT: It's coming back. It's an Otto Bismark spruce.

And then there's a lot of grasses and Hinoki and privet and Japanese white pine. And this is the old guy, which needs trimming, from Charles Street. There are just two from the garden at Charles Street. These are both viburnum, so they're very highly scented and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: And in the edge of the garden next to the hedge there's a little steel bridge.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, that's—

MR. MCELHINNEY: What was—

MS. BARTLETT: That's an old piece of mine. There's quite a lot of them around the garden.

MR. MCELHINNEY: There was another—

MS. BARTLETT: They'll just—yeah. There are two starfish there, but they're kind of hidden.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, I see. Yeah, there's—

MS. BARTLETT: And then there's—if you go over here—

MR. MCELHINNEY: There's a starfish. Are those iron? Are they iron or—

MS. BARTLETT: I'm trying to remember what I made them out of.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Is it a different kind of a bronze patina? It looks more—

MS. BARTLETT: No, it's not bronze. It's probably iron.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, it looks like iron. There's a lovely red part.

MS. BARTLETT: And that one house that's not as rusted as the other house—I'm just looking over at the neighbors—[laughs]—is pretty highly polished.

So let's go in here, because—

MR. MCELHINNEY: You have a rose bush.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, there's lots of them all on there. Look at those. They're great.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Beautiful.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. See, they're all alone.

Have a seat. But I always like this kind of view because you feel—oh, and this kind of view too, sort of totally isolated. [Dog barks.] Mulligan, come here.

MR. MCELHINNEY: He's protecting the—

MS. BARTLETT: He's either barking at a squirrel—and the squirrels are the enemies.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, you told us yesterday that these large stones you've moved into the garden—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —are glacial erratics?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Where did you find them?

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, god, at this really expensive nursery—this is—called Marders [Garden Center and Nursery] in Long Island [NY] and Bridgehampton [NY].

MR. MCELHINNEY: Wow.

MS. BARTLETT: They were sort of like buying a piece of jewelry, you know.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So they sell glacial erratics.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Interesting.

MS. BARTLETT: And those had to come in from Long Island and be brought into the garden.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, tell us what was—

MS. BARTLETT: And that was with a Caterpillar, and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: This heavy equipment.

MS. BARTLETT: It was totally terrifying, because one sort of started slipping over a car that was parked. And, you know, they were in slings. But most of these trees, like, were huge too. You can see by the trunks. You know, then they had enormous root balls. There were a few casualties, Japanese maples who had their top sliced off, you know—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, dear.

MS. BARTLETT: —and properly secured. And the other stones down there, the two boulders, are from Vanderbilt Avenue [New York, NY], and my contractor saw them being taken out of the earth in a site they were excavating.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, really?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, and they had a Caterpillar. So he said, "Well, how much would you charge to bring those down Vanderbilt to 315?" And it was \$700, and so I said yes because I—

MR. MCELHINNEY: That's probably cheaper than hauling the other one in from Long Island. Good lord.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, geez, don't. We can't go there.

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.] Well, but the effect is that this is sort of a wild space in the middle of Brooklyn.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, that's what I like, because when we were doing the drawings, when I was drawing things up, I kept putting these patios in, and they just looked awful, you know. So, really, the stones are the patios. And then this was just this little corner that—

MR. MCELHINNEY: So what stood here when you bought the property?

MS. BARTLETT: A children's playground—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —with, you know, one of those climbing things, and a surface with—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, got a padded surface.

MS. BARTLETT: —asphalt under—yeah—underneath it. And that went all in this area. And this area, I think it was sort of asphalt too. And what we found when we dug into the earth was I think they used to throw their coal out in this yard because there are just areas that it's so dense with old, old coal.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Just—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —hunks of coal. And the building, you explained earlier, had been a union for the candy and the—

MS. BARTLETT: Confectioners—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, the confectioners' union—

MS. BARTLETT: —workers local.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —and the mobster clubhouse.

MS. BARTLETT: That's what I think.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah. Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: And I know that the people across the street—I mean, in this building really were trying very hard to get those trees taken out, because they were dropping things on the cars. So there was some kind of early neighborhood battle that—

MR. MCELHINNEY: We have to protect the cars.

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] Yes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I have a friend, Jim Kunstler, who wrote a book, *The Geography of Nowhere* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993], in which he describes outer-space aliens arriving and seeing houses in the suburbs with the door, the great opening for the garage—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —and that they would infer that in fact, the inhabitants of the houses were the cars and the people were the slaves who had to clean them and feed them. [They laugh.]

MS. BARTLETT: Take care of them, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So it's funny.

MS. BARTLETT: Isn't that a Stephen King idea too?

MR. MCELHINNEY: I found—it could be. It could be. Yeah, he did a car—

MS. BARTLETT: Yes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —like a couple of car novels.

MS. BARTLETT: Yes, and there were a couple of movies made from it.

Oh, that's pretty, Schizophragma. That just sort of really blossomed recently.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And you called that what?

MS. BARTLETT: Schizophragma. And this is Deschampsia, which is a lot on the High Line [New York, NY], that grass, and sporobolus. Those are native grasses.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So you have two of these—you have two of these sort of troughs of moving water.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And—

MS. BARTLETT: There were going to be three. I paid for that too. But it was just chopping the space up too much.

MR. MCELHINNEY: We had spoken about you maybe putting in some koi.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, because—oh, this took such a beating this winter, the globular spruce.

This is an old piece. We were sitting by an old piece, that sort of island with a house and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: What can you tell us about—what can—what can you tell us about, you know, the bridge we just crossed?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, that was an old piece.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That was an old piece.

MS. BARTLETT: It was a puddle.

MR. MCELHINNEY: A puddle.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I see, with raindrops.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Again, iron or—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —steel.

MS. BARTLETT: Iron.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Iron, cold-rolled. So which one of the boulders—

MS. BARTLETT: I want to see what he's doing. Do you want to come with me? What?

MR. MCELHINNEY: So—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, these are from—those two—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Those two are from Brooklyn.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, down the street.

MR. MCELHINNEY: They're local. These are imported.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, OK.

MS. BARTLETT: From Long Island.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And this iron plant?

MS. BARTLETT: This what?

MR. MCELHINNEY: This here, this—you know, the metallic plant?

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, that was an old piece—

MR. MCELHINNEY: That's another piece of yours.

MS. BARTLETT: —called *Shrub*.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Called *Shrub*.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. [Dog barks.] I'm going to get that dog.

MR. MCELHINNEY: He's raising a ruckus.

MS. BARTLETT: Yep, he is, and it's not unusual. Mulligan. Oh, you're caught. I thought you had your leash on. So you just weren't—

MR. MCELHINNEY: He's wound himself around a gas jet or something?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: Okay, you're free.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Poor Mulligan. It's quite amazing.

MS. BARTLETT: What?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, all of this. It's only a few years old, too.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I know.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It looks like it's been here for—

MS. BARTLETT: So it's going to, I think be a pruning garden, because everything is growing together so much. Do you know, all the pruning will be to provide a little space between things that are adjacent.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, it's really interesting because it's got a kind of a mini-Olmsted effect of these sort of view shots and then corners of sort of intimate space.

And this is a kind of topiary. I mean, I assume—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, that's from Charles Street that I brought.

MR. MCELHINNEY: OK.

MS. BARTLETT: I haven't trimmed it this year, but I will. I like to prune.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So when you planned this—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah?

MR. MCELHINNEY: —did you have in mind any other artists' gardens like, obviously, Monet?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I did the Monet's, yeah, which I just thought was gorgeous, particularly the nasturtium lawn. But I think that probably what was the most interesting was the garden as some kind of fantasy, do you know? And I looked at a lot of gardens like Vaux-le-Vicomte [Paris, France] and took a trip around Europe looking at gardens when I was doing the project for Battery Park City [New York, NY] that was cancelled as a political thing.

Now he's got his leash stuck in—good. Should we just go back inside?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yes.

[END OF TRACK AAA_bartle11_1518.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: So after having a look at your garden, I'm really curious about how this space is now affecting your work. I mean, obviously it's an extension of your work.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It's a piece of work—it's like a living painting or sculpture.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, and that's what this whole series of, say, 13 diptychs that are at the Locks Gallery right now.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, at the Marian Locks in Philadelphia [PA].

MS. BARTLETT: All the imagery is from the garden at different times of the year.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So do you feel a kind of—kind of a—

MS. BARTLETT: So that's what I always liked about Monet, is I like the simplicity of Monet's ideas, do you know, like *The Haystacks* [1890-1891] in all different seasons and weathers; the same with the pond, though you—I mean the—yeah, the *Water Lilies*.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, the *Rouen Cathedral* [1892-1893] too, the same—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, actually, remembering our conversation last night, our conversation of yesterday—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —I'm remembering it myself—last night, it occurred to me that the whole concept of the decorative envelope and, you know, the tough painting in the decorative envelope made me sort of curious about whether or not you were inspired at all by, you know, the Monet paintings in the [Musée de] l'Orangerie [Paris], that—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I think they're—it's incredible, and there's a reason why all of those things like van Gogh, like—a reason why they're so remembered, or the Cezannes, is it was an incredible period of painting, I think, and it was a big, big change from what it had been before in Western art.

And we were talking about scale too. He's really good at big paintings. I don't know if you saw the show at Gagosian [Gallery, New York, NY]—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, yeah. Sure.

MS. BARTLETT:—which was sort of a lovely show, and mixed, and there were some terrific things in it. But again, it's not the same as those big water lily—or the whole haystack image was always great to me because it was very contained, you know, and it was so improbable those would work out as terrific paintings, just a haystack, you know, sort of straight on. And—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, somebody once—maybe it was even Al Held made a comment at a crit [critique] that the best idea is like a dumb idea; you know, something that's so obvious that you might, upon pondering it, dismiss it—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —but that it needs doing, and in doing might be—the fan is up.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. I'm trying to use my beach technique to—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Your beach skills.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah—[laughs].

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, your Long Beach, your—yeah, you had to learn that back in your surfing days, I would think, right? [Laughs.] Did you ever surf?

MS. BARTLETT: And I wish I had. I was fascinated by—I loved surfing, you know. And I think one of my boyfriends at the time—that I was probably more attached to than he was to me—was a serious surfer. And so I saw a lot of those early surfing movies, those Bruce Brown and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And it was so incredible.

MR. MCELHINNEY: *Endless Summer* [1966], right.

MS. BARTLETT: Another sort of kind of cult possibility when it started out, like the different aspects of music and —

MR. MCELHINNEY: Did you own a wet suit?

MS. BARTLETT: I still love to watch certain—like the extreme surfing now—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, yeah, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: —with the big—out at sea where they take—it's a team, really. They take a guy on a jet ski and

—but I mean, it’s just thrilling.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Did you ever own a wetsuit or ride around in a Woody or—

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, yeah, I did that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay.

MS. BARTLETT: And, you know, of course I lived out on a peninsula—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —so I was sort of in the water all of the time from June through September. I liked that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, getting back to Monet haystacks, the idea that sometimes, you know, the best idea is a dumb idea that you couldn’t imagine would work, but when you do it, there’s an “ah-ha” moment.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: The light bulb goes off. And in those haystack—

MS. BARTLETT: That reminds me, sort of, of what’s-his-name too, Guston—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: —and the Ku Klux Klan paintings. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, yeah, yeah, from that same late period, the sort of, like, white triangles with the black eyes. But that takes him back to his earlier work in the WPA [Works Progress Administration] as—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —a muralist.

Some people—I think I told you—I mean, last week having dinner with Rebecca Miller, and she said at one point in a conversation about everything, she said, “Sometimes artists really only have one big idea,” and that when they’re younger it seems to be—it seems to them that, you know, it’s not just one idea, but that over time you begin to realize that really—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —there’s this one—so what’s—

MS. BARTLETT: It just sounds like wisdom. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: We could shape it into an aphorism—

MS. BARTLETT: A column of the week.

MR. MCELHINNEY: We could—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —we could wake up Oscar Wilde—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, a lot of people say that, you know, and I think that it’s true. And I think as you grow older, also you’re aware of the fact that you don’t have a lot of ideas, you know, that probably there is one, and that you’ve been doing that for “x” number of years, “x” number of hours per day.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: I mean, when I look back, I spent my basic life working.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, but—

MS. BARTLETT: —and I don’t even know what to think of that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But if we take the writing/typing thing, it’s not just about working. You were—you quoted yesterday Truman Capote—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —speaking waggishly about Gore Vidal.

MS. BARTLETT: I think about Gore Vidal.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, that's not writing; that's typing. And I think Rebecca was speaking about her dad, saying basically, he had this story he had to tell in various different ways.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So right now—

MS. BARTLETT: But I think that's really very—

MR. MCELHINNEY: True?

MS. BARTLETT: —true of Henry—I mean of—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Arthur.

MS. BARTLETT: —of Henry Miller too, but Arthur Miller—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —that it was specific, it wasn't as far-ranging or as complicated as [Norman] Mailer was, do you know—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —and not—a sort of change of focus within the same idea. So—

MR. MCELHINNEY: But it's more classical too, and more sort of archetypal somehow.

MS. BARTLETT: Hmm, I don't really think so. I certainly don't think it's more archetypal. I mean, the ones—Mailer's that I wish had turned out was the one about the CIA—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh.

MS. BARTLETT: —on Mount Desert Island, but it just didn't somehow gel. I mean, he—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Is that the *Tough Guys Don't Dance* [New York: Random House, 1984] or one of those crazy stories that he wrote?

But I guess I didn't mean—I mean, I meant sort of a big form, the artist who is very interested in the form of, you know, the narrative. And—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I don't know, because *Death of a Salesman* [Miller, Arthur. New York: Viking Press, 1949] is really about a family and the disintegration—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —of the father. And you take—what was the one in the—the witch one.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, *The Crucible* [Miller, Arthur. Santa Monica, Calif.: Los Angeles Theatre Works, 1994], but that was about the McCarthy hearings in a way.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, but also it was about the specific witch trials—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —of a long time ago in the same part of the country in which he was living, you know. So—

MR. MCELHINNEY: And he did go to Salem [MA] and read all the transcripts of the actual trials as research.

MS. BARTLETT: You know who lives on my street in Amagansett is Arthur Miller's sister, who was an actress.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Of course.

MS. BARTLETT: And I was—that just occurred to me. Yes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: How is she?

MS. BARTLETT: She seemed fine.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Joan Copeland.

MS. BARTLETT: Is that her name?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah, Joan.

MS. BARTLETT: I know it's Joan, but I didn't know the last name.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Joan Copeland.

Anyway, this whole idea of sort of an artist having kind of one big motif that they're exploring, one narrative, one kind of—for Cezanne it was Mont Sainte-Victoire. For—

MS. BARTLETT: And the early still life, too.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And the early—yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: And then there's all those weird early Cezannes, you know, that are more figurative in the sense of having figures in them. But I have a feeling we're probably not in very much disagreement about that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No.

MS. BARTLETT: We would each fight to base up our case, but I don't know what the case is exactly. You're in favor of the wider view and the—

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, I think—

MS. BARTLETT: All of them look like sort of wider views to me.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I mean, I think—you know, you're talking about, you know, the Miller-Mailer thing. I think that the idea of sort of the—you know, the classical form, that I know he was—

MS. BARTLETT: If you had your choice about what body of work you would have wanted to write, and you had to choose between Mailer and Miller, who would you choose?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, I think—my sensibilities?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Probably Miller.

MS. BARTLETT: See, I would choose Mailer, without question. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: But then I would also—I would have also chosen—I mean, I would have also, like, wanted to emulate that life too, being active in social issues and being active in International Pen and trying to do things around the world—Amnesty International—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —sort of being a—using one's artistic—

MS. BARTLETT: And marrying Marilyn Monroe and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, that—no, no, no.

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] No, I know.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, not that. Not that at all, but just the idea of a person who felt a responsibility—

MS. BARTLETT: Really, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —as an artist to try to shape things in a positive way. And I think it was brave and exemplary in a lot of the things that he did, more so than the other guy we're discussing. But—

MS. BARTLETT: Well, see, I probably wouldn't—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Henry Jack Abbott is—

MS. BARTLETT: I probably wouldn't—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right. I have a biased opinion.

MS. BARTLETT: I mean, I don't—yeah, I just told you what I'd choose.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: You told me what you'd choose. I'm not feeling any desire to justify my choice—

MR. MCELHINNEY: No.

MS. BARTLETT: —you know? It's just it would have been more interesting to me to write those things, you know —

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —certain ones of them.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Perhaps. Perhaps.

MS. BARTLETT: Me, not you.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah. Not me; you. Right. So it's a difference in sensibility—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —but I think that—well, I guess the question is, leading up to what if it is true that we all have, like, one great story in us, what's your great story?

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I think a great story, if it could be a great story, is pretty prosaic. I think it was sort of the development of the plates and the way of doing something that interested me that I was able to do, and the fact that that somehow led back to all these series and a sense of having oil on canvas and figuration in terms of drawings.

I mean, I've done really huge—lots of bodies of work, like there was a group of drawings and I guess there were 200 that I did when I was in the South of France, called *In the Garden* [1981], and John Russell wrote a book on it [*In the Garden*. New York: Abrams, 1982]. And, I mean—[inaudible].

Then that generated for me an interest in landscape, though the landscape was very restricted and very limited in terms of that cycle of drawings. You know, there has just been continually, over and over again—there's probably a batch of work that you don't like—that you don't know called *Earth*.

There was *Air*, which was the 24-hour paintings [*Air, 24 Hours*. New York: H.N. Abrams, 1994]. There were 24 of them, and they were all 7-by-7. Well, the *Earth* [1996] paintings were all starting a painting like this grid, that I didn't pick up until later—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —but they were all painted like that. And they were all remembered situations. But again, that was a whole body of work that I did, I think well over 100 drawings for the—with four images on some page and one on others and stuff like that.

So everything turns into a sort of production, do you know? And I have no idea whether that's good or bad, but that's kind of the way my mind works.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, we established yesterday—or I asked you if you thought in terms of individual pieces or if you thought more in terms of, you know, the body of work—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —and you answered that you—you know, the latter, that you were more interested in, you know, the body of work, which seems to apply—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, a body of work that's one piece.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: The drawings work.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But it's very—it's very narrative then because—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —you have 100 pieces, and of course one moves from one piece to the next and one—a viewer who takes time—we were speaking about people taking time to sort of let the work affect them—reading from—

MS. BARTLETT: There is the three-minute gallery visit, you know, where you take enough time where you look at all four walls and then you walk out.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, that reminds me—

MS. BARTLETT: And then you stay the same distance from each wall.

MR. MCELHINNEY: At a lecture at Skowhegan, Philip Pavia, of whom we also spoke yesterday, said in his sort of Scorsese-esque Italian accent, he said, "Fifteen seconds; all you get is 15 seconds, you get it? You don't get it. It's 15 seconds." Three minutes is a lot of time. That's a—

MS. BARTLETT: The galleries are bigger now.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That's a 45—that's a 45 record, three minutes. He was saying it's 15 seconds, and I guess—

MS. BARTLETT: I'm sure he's right.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And Warhol said 15 minutes—

MS. BARTLETT: Minutes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —but that's for your whole life. [Laughs.]

MS. BARTLETT: But that's different. That's, you know, your whole body.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So in a way, your work is time-based. You're reading from one piece to the next.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I'm beginning to see this connection between art and film, not that it's an overt, not that you're quoting the form in any way—

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —but that this—you spoke about how going and watching Truffaut and Godard—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —and these people, when you were in school, was a formative experience in this sort of whole idea of sequential imagery.

MS. BARTLETT: Well, and I remember too that that's where the New Wave was so different than anything we'd seen in the United States at that point, where you actually didn't know, one, because it was a foreign culture most of the time—you didn't know what was going to happen next. You didn't know the story.

And so everything was a surprise, but it also—there was that leisurely quality to it, which unfolded slowly like Doniel getting to the ocean.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: And that was different than anything in American film. So I never knew it in terms of a what's his name movie, Italian?

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Quentin] Tarantino?

MS. BARTLETT: No, no.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No.

MS. BARTLETT: Italian—Italian.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, I thought you were implying a contrast with—

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, OK. So—

MS. BARTLETT: No, not [Vittorio] De Sica, not—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Visconti?

MS. BARTLETT: No. Oh, I love [Luchino] Visconti, but, no I wasn't thinking—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Not De Sica, not [Roberto] Rossellini.

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Frederico] Fellini?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. You never knew what was going to happen—

MR. MCELHINNEY: No.

MS. BARTLETT: —in a Fellini movie.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, there's a surrealism about it too.

MS. BARTLETT: There is a surrealism, but it's grounded in a very specific thing and a very cultural thing. So I don't think of it as surreal, though there are elements of that. I agree with Giulietta—what was her name, Masina or something? It was—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Giulietta Masina.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. But I remember—what was flying over Rome in the helicopter?

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, yeah, yeah, in *Roma* [1972]?

MS. BARTLETT: What was that? No, in—

MR. MCELHINNEY: *La Dolce Vita* [1960].

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: What was that? Was that a picture—was that a statue of Christ or was it—what was it?

MR. MCELHINNEY: I can't recall, but it was something—

MS. BARTLETT: You remember it was a startling—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —image within the context of what you thought you were watching. You know, that's the kind of thing that I've been talking about the whole time that I suppose interests me.

MR. MCELHINNEY: The—

MS. BARTLETT: I like to be surprised.

MR. MCELHINNEY: The surprise. Well, he was full of surprises, Fellini. And his—that sense of freshness and reality—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —the image in *Amarcord* [1973], the cruise ship, you know.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But then he had other themes too. He was very clever in the way he used, for instance, in *Amarcord*, you know, the guy on the motorcycle. He was constantly interrupting—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —everybody's activities.

MS. BARTLETT: But I found all that interesting. I suppose I still look for the same thing. It seems like I've been talking, you know, that I like things that I don't understand—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right, take you by surprise.

MS. BARTLETT: —they surprise me. And so that's probably what I do in my—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —own work, you know. And I said yesterday, it's a what-if situation. What if you do this and that? And then it's something totally different than you thought it would be. That's another interesting thing.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, you work out of the process. That was another very important point, I think, that we discussed, that you're about the work.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You go into the studio, and what comes out comes out. It's not a matter of planning the outcome and then creating the outcome.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, and I think that all this labor-intensive business is that's something I need to do, the idea of, say, like being Donald Judd, whose work I like a lot, and just planning something, and then sending it off to the fabricator would not be very satisfying to me.

MR. MCELHINNEY: There's a difference between an artist—so in a way you're talking about being an artist in a very kind of mysterious traditional sense—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —unlike Warhol, who sort of took being an art director to the point of that being how an artist is supposed to conduct oneself is you're an art director, you're—you know, you go and you have a meeting with people. You decide you're going to do a body of work. You do the body of work. You exhibit it. It looks the way you planned it.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: There was a very interesting film that I recently watched, and you talk about hating things—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —I hated the first hour of this—

[Dog barks.]

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, the mail. That's what—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Dogs hate mailmen. I've heard about that.

MS. BARTLETT: Come here. Come on. It's all right. It's just the mail.

MR. MCELHINNEY: There's an interesting movie that is called *The September Issue* [2009], about *Vogue*.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, I loved that. I know Anna [Wintour]. But—

MR. MCELHINNEY: I hated the first hour of that. I thought—my wife was watching this—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —and saying, no, come on; hang in there. And actually, after about the first 45 minutes—

MS. BARTLETT: Minutes.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —I found myself realizing that's what the work is, because I was watching their behavior and the sort of whole—sort of the way—

MS. BARTLETT: The fashion—

MR. MCELHINNEY: —the way they conduct themselves and the sort of superficiality—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —and the sort of self-importance and all of this. And then I finally—it gets you into the process where you realize that, well, these people really are artists on a certain level.

MS. BARTLETT: Well, I think they're fashion people—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: —but that's fine. And I found the movie quite touching.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yes.

MS. BARTLETT: Do you know—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yes.

MS. BARTLETT: —the relationship between Anna and Grace Coddington, do you know, and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Is she, you know, the red hair—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: See, she was the one who—with whom I identified—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —in the movie more. She's sort of in vain for the aesthetic—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —and there's always, you know, the dollar hanging over every decision. And, you know, the committee aspect of it too.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It was a very fascinating movie.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I meant to write Anna that I really liked it—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: —but of course I've forgotten it and didn't do it.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, perhaps we can remind you.

MS. BARTLETT: I'll do it, yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You're reminding yourself right now.

But that whole idea that the art comes out of a process—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —that the art is the process, but not in a kind of overly verbiaged, self-conscious way, which —

MS. BARTLETT: Her father was a journalist, Anna's, I think, and I know that she said at one point that all of her

brothers and sisters think she's an idiot, do you know, what she's chosen to do.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That it's too whimsical or—

MS. BARTLETT: Too fashiony.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Fashiony.

MS. BARTLETT: You know, and fashion, say, isn't as important as war journalism or something like that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, it's more humane. They aren't killing people.

MS. BARTLETT: Yes, exactly. [They laugh.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Or getting killed.

MS. BARTLETT: I always thought that was kind of amusing. But that doesn't seem like art to me; it seems like fashion. It was really interesting to see how a magazine is put together and—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: —what the different roles are and who's wielding the power and who's doing what. I liked all that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, isn't that sort of the point of the difference between being an AD like Warhol or Tom Judd or—not—pardon me, Donald Judd—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —who are sort of art directing their work and being a person who is sort of involved in it in a shamanic, poetic kind of hands-on way.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I don't know if that's really a good decision, because I like both Donald Judd and Warhol. I think they're terrific artists. So it's a different way of getting there. I was speaking really more personally.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That's what I meant, but—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But like you were saying earlier—

MS. BARTLETT: But it's not like shamanic or anything like that, to me.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, it's—well—

MS. BARTLETT: A dot's a dot.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Alchemy—is there a little alchemy in it?

MS. BARTLETT: No. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: No mystery at all?

MS. BARTLETT: I don't think there's a lot of mystery. I think there's a lot of mystery to the idea of why something looks like something instead of something else. But I don't—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, it might—

MS. BARTLETT: Alchemy is a word that wouldn't slip from my tongue easily.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, you did okay just then.

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: But you wouldn't want a person to sort of try to build an argument to suggest that that's what you're doing.

MS. BARTLETT: To do what?

MR. MCELHINNEY: You know, be an alchemist or a shaman.

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Okay. Well, that, for the record, is a fact, so—but you are clearly committed to sort of the process and the work.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It was like you were saying before. You were talking about your nature. You're not—you don't feel alchemical or like an alchemist or a conjurer—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —or a shaman, but, you know, you feel like a worker, and that that's your nature. And you were saying earlier about students. I think I'd made a comment about encouraging people to—you know, to be that way, and you just said, "Well, they either are that way or they're not."

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Like there's a quote of [Josef] Albers to a student—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —who was trying to paint like Albers. He said, "Don't paint like me; be like me." [They laugh.] So that's a good quote.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But I can't do the German accent.

So a lot of ideas in this conversation. I guess that's the purpose of it, to sort of throw out a lot of questions and explore them. We don't have to answer them. I don't think—

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —they're questions that one can answer, really, the most interesting ones anyway.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I don't think you can answer them yes or no or maybe or I believe or—you know, I find it a difficult road to hack, because it seems like you're excluding too many things, too many possibilities.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So conclusions are less useful than the starting points.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, see, in your work it does seem like there's this element of time, reading from one piece to the next.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: There is this sort of, you know, the revealing of a thought process as one walks through a piece or an installation of yours, and that it's not finite, it's not enclosed.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It's open-ended and it's unfolding.

MS. BARTLETT: Where it appears to be logical, it's not, or there appears to be an order, and there is but the order can change—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —quite frequently within the piece.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, the pieces that we have around us here could be read—and also the piece upstairs, you know, the big landscape—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —could be seen as sort of final and could be seen as sort of, you know, a totality, not as open-ended perhaps as other works. Or are they just in conversation among themselves in a different way?

MS. BARTLETT: I think kind of that's it, because I kept thinking, you know, over and over, because I've done it, why am I doing diptychs? Why don't I do one? Do you know what I mean? Just one image.

And I guess I've always done them because it's—I remember someone telling me a story once about a Japanese screen that they'd seen, and the only thing that happened within all the panels of the screen was that the wind came up. And so it was blowing the bamboo or the trees, whatever it was, around, and that sort of just summed up things to me.

So you know, I guess I feel you need two of things to—then you can hypothesize three or four. There was a painting I did called—was it called *Wind*? Yeah, where the—it was something like five panels long. And the only thing that happened was that the trees—it was all sort of those French trees—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Poplars, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: No.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Cypress.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. And the only thing was is that they were blowing in different ways.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Sideways. [They laugh.]

MS. BARTLETT: And then there was another one called *Shadow* [1985]. That was after all those *In the Garden* drawings I did, which was, I think, about five panels also, in which just the shadow would change, the shadow of the trees.

MR. MCELHINNEY: But, again, it's talking about the passage of time, and there is some kind of temporal thing happening. And also, like these are binary, but then other pieces, like for instance in *Recitative*, there's this repetition of sort of the nine-unit—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —three-over-three-over-three grid.

MS. BARTLETT: But then it changed as to—

MR. MCELHINNEY: But then it changes.

MS. BARTLETT: —all one size—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MS. BARTLETT: —and those squares, you know. And I guess it would be interesting just to take—the difference in one of those big passages in *Recitative* is like—they're a bunch of colors, single colors, and they're painted. And one is mixed with—one is just the color. Then two is the color mixed with white. Then three is the color mixed with black.

And that's all that happens. That can be riveting to me. But if I had to sit down and think of putting a lot of different colors on the canvas, I need a kind of reason to stimulate me, a desire to see something happen. And

MR. MCELHINNEY: You're looking for a surprise.

MS. BARTLETT: I like surprises. I don't think I would like scary surprises—

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, no.

MS. BARTLETT: —you know, like an ax murderer or something.

MR. MCELHINNEY: I don't think that's—

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, a terrible dream I used to have. I can't remember; I think I was in my 30s. I would dream constantly that I was involved in this murder of somebody else. And I'd wake up just absolutely not knowing how to find out whether I had done that or not.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Terrible.

MS. BARTLETT: It was terrible.

MR. MCELHINNEY: That's what comes from reading a lot of Mailer, I guess.

MS. BARTLETT: [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Heads in gym bags and stuff, yeah.

MS. BARTLETT: Well, when you think about it, Henry James, in things like *Portrait of a Lady* [1996]—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Of course.

MS. BARTLETT: —can just be as brutal and terrible.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Very much so.

Do you have any thoughts which you might share with a young artist who might be inspired by your work and life? What would you want to say to them?

MS. BARTLETT: The same thing. You know, just keep doing—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Work?

MS. BARTLETT: —your work. And, I mean, one thing that's nice about going to school with different artists and doing that is you get—it's a very peer-related thing where you get both extremely harsh and brutal criticism, but also you get interest that you don't even see in your own work. And so that's pretty interesting and that's always a surprise. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: It was one of the things Al Held said once in standing around the pit with a bunch of people—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —smoking and holding cold coffee in cups and whatever—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —was he said, "You know, you people are not going to have an audience like this for years once you leave"—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —"this environment. You're not going to have—"

MS. BARTLETT: You're not going to ever have it again.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, that's the truth, isn't it?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: He also said, he said, "You know, how much are you spending to go to school here?" I think at the time I was there it was 2,800 bucks a year. He said, "Well," he said, "14 weeks a semester, a hundred bucks." He said, "A hundred bucks you could take any artist to lunch at Lutèce. You eat soup, you feed them. And they come and, you know, they do a crit in your studio." He said, "I'd call Jasper Johns, call any of the"—

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —"they'll all do it for a good lunch." He said, "You don't have to come here and spend this money. Why are you here?" He said, "Well, the reason is that you're not going to get this ever again." So that was true, you think?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, I think it was true.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And even now you just said, not—he said for another 10 years, another 20 years, but you're saying it never happens again.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So that's important.

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah, it's kind of a training in some sort of way.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, we're talking about—

MS. BARTLETT: You can find out about the brutality of the world you've chosen to enter, you know, and sometimes artists are very generous. You know, you were saying it was more with musicians, but not really when you think of Merce and John Cage and Jasper's foundation for the arts, which they've given tremendous amounts of money over the years to that. You think of Rauschenberg's kind of thing. Do you remember that? You could apply for \$500?

So there are, I think, a lot of very generous artists, and generous in different ways. Those are money ways, but also there are artists that are known for sort of their generosity, and seeing a lot of other artists who are going to see their work, you know, all sorts of things like that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: And you're very generous to share your time in this way with us. It's much appreciated.

MS. BARTLETT: But you can see that it was a very divergent conversation, that it covered lots of aspects of lots of different things.

MR. MCELHINNEY: In hindsight, you know, the conversation has been not unlike going to an exhibition of yours—[they laugh]—where one sees many things in juxtaposition to each other and digressions here and there, and explorations and backbeats that move through, and themes that repeat. So, it's a—this maybe was a performance piece. We can say this was one of your performance pieces.

MS. BARTLETT: It was an awfully long one. [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: Are you okay? Do you—

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, yeah, I'm fine.

MR. MCELHINNEY: —feel fine?

MS. BARTLETT: Yeah.

MR. MCELHINNEY: OK. I don't want to—

MS. BARTLETT: No, it was painless.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, that's—we hope it was more than painless. Was it surprising?

MS. BARTLETT: Oh yeah, it was interesting.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Good.

MS. BARTLETT: And lots of good stories. I enjoyed that.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Well, you're a good storyteller.

MS. BARTLETT: What?

MR. MCELHINNEY: You're a good storyteller.

MS. BARTLETT: No, I'm not a good storyteller.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Oh, yes you—

MS. BARTLETT: You're a good storyteller.

MR. MCELHINNEY: No, no, no. You tell good stories and you tell them well.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, OK.

MR. MCELHINNEY: You're far too modest. But I suppose at this point in time the thing to do would be to say thank you for your time.

MS. BARTLETT: Oh, you're welcome.

MR. MCELHINNEY: It's been a great pleasure.

MS. BARTLETT: I hope it turns out.

MR. MCELHINNEY: Of course it will. It already has.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]