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Oral history interview with Consuelo Jimenez
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Consuelo Jimenez Underwood on 2011 July 5 and 6. The interview took place in Cupertino, California, at Underwood's home and studio, and was conducted by Mija Riedel for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project For Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Consuelo Jimenez Underwood has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Consuelo Jimenez Underwood at her home and studio in Cupertino, California, on July 5, 2011, for the Archives of American Art[, Smithsonian Institution]. This is card number one.

Good morning.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Good morning.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, before we actually get into the work, I think we'll be wise to take care of the early biographical information. Where and when were you born?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Sacramento, California, in April 29, 1949.

MIJA RIEDEL: 1949, April 29th. Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And for me, it's interesting because I was born in the Taurus, the Euro system of metaphysical calendar—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and in the year of the Asian calendar, the year of the bull.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Oh, that is interesting, isn't it?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So, yes. [Laughs.] Double power. In both systems, the Earth, and strength from the Earth is prominent.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: That is interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's when I was born.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. And your father, what was his name?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Ismael Jimenez Aguirre. Aguirre was his mother's name and Jimenez was his father's name.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: And your mother?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Francisca Cruz Jimenez. Jimenez was her married name and Cruz was her father's name.

MIJA RIEDEL: And did you have siblings?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. I'm number 11 of 12.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, my goodness.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: So you were born in Sacramento. And did you grow up there as well?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That would be our winter camp.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: My mom bought some property, I guess in the mid-'40s. Actually, it was the edge of Sacramento at the time, and it became one of the many suburbs near the downtown of Sacramento.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: We'd go there when there was no work or when it was raining. But it was mostly occupied by my older siblings, which did not really—but we mostly—because my father was not the father of the other kids—my mom had three marriages.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: He was her last husband.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: My sister and I were number 11 and 12. Basically, the number one and two and three would live in the main house. I always felt that I never really lived there, but we would have a room or the garage.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, my goodness.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But that was where we would be when there was no work, meaning there was no place to live in any of the ranches that were in the valley. So—

MIJA RIEDEL: Your father was—now, correct me if I'm wrong here, but he was part of the early bracero farmers?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, he was one of the first ones that came during World War II.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: He remembers landing in—he was in Mexico City, drifting around as a young, I would say, late teenager. Then he heard of an opportunity, that Mexico and the U.S. had come up with this deal, taking workers over there. He signed up, and took the train to the border from Mexico City—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and then from the border they took him on a bus. And he landed here in San Jose, actually.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: From San Jose, then he started working in the crops in this area, picking—some kind of orchard work. He remembers picking strawberries on the coast. Then one of the times, he was working in Vacaville/Fairfield, and that's when he met my mom. I think they must have met around 1947, and I was born in 1949.

My mom, on the other hand, was a California girl—born Hanford, California. She had a migratory lifestyle as well; she remembers crossing the Grapevine on wagon train. It would be so wet or rainy sometimes, that they—it was a neat story because they would push the wagon train up, put some rocks behind the wheels, and then push it again and put rocks further up, and that's how they would cross the Grapevine.

MIJA RIEDEL: This is going the Grapevine—crossing into Los Angeles.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And the other base—her base was Mexicali/Calexico—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —in Imperial Valley. Her family came from Durango, and they fled the war,

the Mexican War, and went to the border town of Mexicali, where they and my husband's family were also refugees from the same area, and they landed in Mexicali in the '30s—or the '20s. By the '30s, my husband's family had already become *ejido* ranchers, where they would get land and they would farm it.

My mom's family ended up in the Sacramento area because they liked it over here better. But my grandfather and my mother liked the Mexicali area. My grandfather got some land—when he finally settled down—because he was a gambler.

MIJA RIEDEL: This is your grandfather on your mother's side?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. Yes, he was a gambler. He liked gambling; he liked roaming. He was the one that would always be bringing the family back and forth, which is why my mom remembers always going up and down between the borders, up to this area and down to Mexicali.

So then my grandfather's brothers ended up in Mexicali being farm owners—small farms. But he ended up living on both sides—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —had a base in Sacramento, and most of my mom's sisters and brothers ended up living over here. A couple of them ended up living in Mexicali.

So I was used to the corn tortilla in Mexicali and the flour tortilla here in Sacramento; English spoken by the young kids in the Sacramento area and Spanish spoken by the kids in the Mexicali area. My mom couldn't make up her mind which one she wanted, where, everybody else, they made up their mind.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The ones that stayed up here rarely went down there—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and the ones that stayed down there rarely came up here. But my mom was one of those restless spirits, and so she kept—

MIJA RIEDEL: —traveling back and forth.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. It was so bad that during my high school years we lived in two homes, one in Mexicali and one right across the border in Calexico.

After school in Calexico, I had to cross the border to go to Mexicali, and in the nighttime, around 10:00 or 11:00, we'd head back to the house in Calexico. Then we'd go to sleep and get up—because my mom couldn't make up her mind either.

She loved the Mexicali lifestyle, which is very indigenous—dirt floor, chickens coming around, the vegetables being sold by carts—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —on the street. And Calexico was a little town that has pavements—a modern little town in California. She liked the convenience and she wanted us to go to school in the U.S., but she loved the lifestyle. So we were always, da, da, da, da, da, you know, back and forth.

That's during high school pretty much—because my mom and pop separated for a while when I was in fourth grade through eighth grade.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: During those years we would just visit Mexicali—not very often, but we would stay with my dad up in the farms in Fairfield, Suisun, Vacaville. And there's where I had my—whereas, up until the fourth grade, it was schools anywhere.

MIJA RIEDEL: So were you actually then just moving around as a child?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Totally. Totally.

MIJA RIEDEL: Until the age of junior high?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Just traveling with your parents, following—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, we'd just pick up and leave, following the crops: "No more work? We've got to go to another place." We'd usually live in camps. We'd usually live in tents or abandoned garages or sheds on the ranches. So I remember that, and thinking, I only have to do this until I'm 18 and then I can leave.

MIJA RIEDEL: And as a child, did you find that a grand adventure? Did you find it exhausting?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was horrible.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was horrible. Horrible. Never enough to eat, never knowing where you're going to sleep, never knowing what school—you could never get attached to a school or people—and then we weren't allowed to talk to other kids because my mom was afraid of having my father being busted because he was illegal. And then, I was a stutterer, so I couldn't—you know, I was very traumatized in many ways.

Then the most horrible thing for me was, the dress that I had to wear was my crop-picking clothes, because we would have to go to the fields in the morning and then go to school. The bus would pick us up at the fields, and then the school bus would drop us off in the fields, and we worked until the sun went down. So I had to wear the same clothing the whole time. Meanwhile, all the other kids were having good times.

But I always thought, You know what? I know I'm smarter than you, because at first grade I went in there to the school in Sacramento—I didn't know any English—and by the second month I was reading: "Run, Jane, Run. See Spot run." And everybody else, who had really nice, cushy lives, were like, "See"—you know, they couldn't read.

I was like, This is so easy. Oh, my God, we're going to grow up at the same time! Oh, my God, when I'm older, I'm going to be just smarter than they are! I've just got to remember this, Consuelo, to just learn as much as you can, because you don't know when you're going to leave this school.

So we'd always start school in October after the crops, and we'd leave school, like, in April, because that's when the crops started. By the end of that school year, I was the best reader. I was the smartest one.

I had luck on my side—you know, a spirit looking after me. I really feel it was the Earth spirit, because even though I was picking the tomato, the prune, the onion, I looked at the Earth and I looked at the clouds and I looked at the sky, and they'd be so beautiful. They'd be just so quiet and watching. I knew I could get nourishment from them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I knew I could get a feeling of peacefulness just by seeing the clouds go by; you know, feeling the wind on my sweat. I knew there was some kind of power there that could heal me, and I felt, well, that must be God.

Whereas, the Virgen de Guadalupe, I was like, Oh, what are you doing here? Didn't your son come over here and take all this stuff away from us? Because I felt very indigenous, because I knew I didn't come from Asia, Africa, Europe. I knew I was from Mexico—my dad's people, Indians—and I knew that we had once roamed this whole country with no borders. And I knew that we worshipped the Earth, not a god in a church. And here this Virgen de Guadalupe was so beautiful—so beautiful with the Earth and the sky, but she's the mother of Jesus? This is what I thought.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Huh, well, why didn't you stay—keep Jesus over there, because I probably would have grown up a lot happier not under a Christian rule. So I didn't like the cross. I didn't like the Virgen de Guadalupe. I didn't like Christianity.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: My father, he would always read the Bible in front of us.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: My mom would always make fun of him: "Why are you reading that? A bunch of lies anyway. The only laws are the gun, or *el pistol, el oro, la ley*. You know, the pistol, the gun; *el oro*"—

MIJA RIEDEL: The gold.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and *la ley*, the law.

[Cross talk.]

Those were the only powers in the world.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She was an outlaw. Basically, my grandfather was a gambler living outside of the law, and my mom had that kind of lifestyle, too; whereas, my father comes from *la hacienda*, a very pious kind of guy wanting to go do well.

He gets trapped into this marriage with a woman that's 17 years older than him exactly. She has 10 kids and he's single, doesn't have any, and, voila, he's like, Okay—and I'm like, Huh, my dad's just a year older than my oldest brother. Isn't that weird? Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: So you grew up, then, with an extremely strong sense of the Earth from this time in the fields. And then, how did this sense of religion come about in the sense of identity as Native—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, because—

MIJA RIEDEL: —Native American, Native—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I was really funny because I knew that the Earth and God were interlinked. I know there's to God more than the Earth, because there's other planets; there's universes; there are ideas and worlds that we probably can't see or understand. I knew that.

MIJA RIEDEL: How did you know that?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Through my dreams.

MIJA RIEDEL: Through your dreams?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, I would have incredible dreams as a kid. They were so lifelike—lucid.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did someone suggest that you pay attention to those?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, just by what I saw in the dreams and what I experienced in the dreams, I knew there was something bigger that—because the dreams were incredible, and so I knew there was another reality. And then I knew that there was something that—almost controllable in the dreams. I was a lucid dreamer, and that was, I think, my escape valve. I thought of it as my escape valve from this reality.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But I didn't know about dream control or dream power; I just knew I had dreams. And sometimes I wanted to merge the two together, but it wouldn't work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I went, Okay. As I grew up, I realized there were all kinds of faiths, not just Christianity, out there. One of the first classes I took at junior college—in fact, that was one of my dual majors. At San Diego I got a minor in spiritual studies.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And so one of the things—the first thing I wanted to learn when I got to a college—take a class in Christianity: Where is this guy coming from? Because he even appears in some of our indigenous churches, you know. How did these two get together, because—

MIJA RIEDEL: You mean the Virgen of Guadalupe and Christ?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Both of them were linked, to me, together.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Okay?

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The Christianity—the mother of Christ was—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's who they told me the Virgen of Guadalupe was.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But then during the '60s I read different about the Virgen of Guadalupe. All this stuff started coming out about her, and I would read about how she came to be in our culture.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And it seemed to me, Oh, my God, it's really Coatlicue, and she's being represented as something that is unifying the Mexican and the Indian—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and somewhat the Spanish. Or the other Christians from Europe don't really understand her, but they accept her because it humbles the Indian to come into the fold, and the Mexican too.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So it's a political, but it's a spiritual symbol as well. My God, that's the moon; that's the sun. She's standing on the moon. The sun is behind her and her dress is of the flowers and plants of the Earth, and the shawl is the—oh, my God, she's—ah! No wonder my dad likes her. And the kid is always underneath her.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, I didn't know that.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Little angel—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —is always holding her up.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She's never caught dawdling or, My poor son, you killed him. You know, she has a little baby Jesus. Oh, my. It made perfect sense.

MIJA RIEDEL: Now wait; now we're talking about the Virgin of Guadalupe?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Virgen de Guadalupe.

MIJA RIEDEL: You switched from Coatlicue to Virgin of Guadalupe.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Coatlicue, she appeared on the temple—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —of Coatlicue—that the Spaniards had blown down the temple to Coatlicue—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And on that is where Juan Diego saw her, on the top of that temple that was blown up.

MIJA RIEDEL: So she was considered an indigenous Earth goddess in Mexico. Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because if you read—there's a writing about this in the 1600s. There's these Franciscan writers that write about, Oh, these dumb Indians. They keep referring to our mother as Coatlicue. Our

mother Guadalupe, they keep saying Coatlicue. And I remember reading that going, Ah!

MIJA RIEDEL: There was some connection.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: There was a connection there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Then I saw Coatlicue over there in the anthropology museum in Mexico.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: You've seen her, right?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, I have.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I'm going, Dang, if she showed her stuff to the Europeans and the Mexicans, they'd be afraid of her—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: A woman with—

MIJA RIEDEL: Kind of fierce.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, yes. They can't accept a woman that's fierce.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: There's no way. There's no way there's going to be a goddess that has snakes all over her, death all over her. She's a powerful woman. The Indians could accept that.

MIJA RIEDEL: But you weren't aware of her until junior college.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Until I was in my—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —the '60s. You know, '67, '68. That's when I did a lot of that New Age kind of reading. But I wanted—I focused on indigenous and the Virgen de Guadalupe and pre-Aztec, Toltec, and she was the one that was, Oh, I get it; look at those symbols, because I went and saw the real one—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and when I see images of the real one, there is that Toltec drawing of flowers on her dress.

MIJA RIEDEL: You're talking about the large stone sculpture? Is that what you're talking about?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The one that appeared on the cloth.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, okay. That I haven't seen.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, that's in Mexico City.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And that's the real image. That's the—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Supposedly. There's two stories, but that's the real one. Everybody says, "Oh, no, the real one is really in the archives underneath," that they wouldn't dare bring out the real one. So, in fact—

MIJA RIEDEL: It's in the Anthropological Museum of Mexico City?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, that one's in the basilica, the main church—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —where she appeared.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: There's a church. The old one was so old—the old church that they had was falling apart, so they made this new, ugly 1970s kind of plastic, New-Agey kind of architecture, and there's a Virgen up there.

She's under armed guard. They even have a moving sidewalk where you can stand, and she's here and you're over here, and she's over there on that wall. People can stand on this moving sidewalk and just gawk at her from that direction like a half-moon.

MIJA RIEDEL: And this is the image of the Virgen of Guadalupe?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: On the shroud.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, okay. Okay. Not—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's the shroud.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And then—

MIJA RIEDEL: I was thinking of Coatlicue, but her image is the stone sculpture, yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, the Coatlicue is the stone statue—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —that's bigger, as big as this house but higher.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Exactly.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. But I would see her image, too, in drawings, because I was into embroidery at the time—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I loved embroidering Olmec and Aztec images in Mayan hieroglyphics.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I loved embroidering that. So that's how I saw—came across the Coatlicue image.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. And before we go—we've jumped ahead a little bit to junior college. I want to go back a little bit just more to your experiences still as a child, and elementary school—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, during that whole time I had this, I don't like Christianity—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —I don't like Christ. I don't like Virgen de Guadalupe. She's too pretty. How could she know what's going on in our lives? And, Christ, you belong in Europe. You don't belong here. So I'm mad that you have—the fact is, this great artist—he's probably not a great artist, but to me—I saw him in San Jose Museum of Art, like, maybe 15 years ago.

He had this writing on this installation, and the writing said, "They came over to our land"—and its indigenous artists—and "came over to our land and they gave us the black book. And while we were reading the black book, they took our lands away." I went, That's exactly what happened.

Let's go back now. So that's where I was, except when I read Joan of Arc right?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. You were nine years old.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But Joan of Arc—I'm nine years old when I read her.

MIJA RIEDEL: This is in elementary school?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Elementary. It's before the third grade or something. It was—we were in the fields at Sacramento, and they would come—a book mobile would come—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —to the ranch. And the ranch would—there were some do-gooders, that when you walk into the little trailer, RV kind of thing, it's filled with books, and they'd lend us books. And one of them that I got was the biography—*The Trials of Joan of Arc*. I had heard about it, but I never—it was just like she was this leader and she got burned at the stake, and they burned her because she was a heretic. That's all I heard.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But then there was this book on her trials. Huh, that looks interesting. I wonder why they did really burn her. That's what I read. That's when it blew me away. I was like, Dang.

MIJA RIEDEL: What in particular?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Huh?

MIJA RIEDEL: What in particular?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, the fact that I imagine her at the bottom of this tiered seating arrangement, and she's all in shackles, and they're just throwing all these questions at her, and she answers them and doesn't lose her ground. That blew me away because I would, No, I can't talk. Oh, my God, don't they—but she stood her ground. And then I—14 or 16, she was burned? Oh, my God, I'm nine. That's what got me, was I—Oh, my God, and she led—huh, she led an army and she kicked England out of France, which is what they're all upset about.

Back in those days, women had no power. You know, they were nothing, and here this woman—I mean, this young girl—oh, my gosh. And I'm crying because I'm in the fields? You're going to be 10. That's a decade. I bet you in 10 years you could be out of the fields. You're going to be 18. You're going to be out of high school. And you're going to be able to do whatever you want. You've got it made in the shade compared to this girl.

That would do it. That's when I really went, This is going to be a 10-year—oh, my God, wait a minute; I'm going to be 20 years old. Huh. And double that; I'm as old—almost as old as my mom. They say life goes by faster as you get—oh, my gosh, and after that I'll be 60. I'll be dead, you know, at 60! Heavens. Oh, my God. Life is short. Okay, Consuelo, put it in fourth now, maybe fifth. It doesn't go into fifth. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: So as a child, you would literally—you would work in the fields in the morning, go to school, and then come home and work in the fields again?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And then during the summer, would you work all summer long?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, that's what it was. I would just sit alone, because everybody else would talk about, they're going to go have parties, they're going to go to Hawaii, whatever they're going to do. They were going to get bored. And I'm like, Oh, God. But I didn't talk to anybody because there was nobody to talk to you, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Were you close with your sister at that point?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Only one sister.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Not my younger one—the younger one is the one I told you about earlier.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But there's another one from another father—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —who lives in Sacramento. Her name is Paula Escobedo. And she's now moving down to Mexicali—to Calexico, actually. But she was like four years older than me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I really liked her and I think she liked me. But my mom was very jealous of her, so as kids, we weren't allowed to talk.

MIJA RIEDEL: You weren't allowed to talk to your sister?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Exactly. We were always separated: "You go do the work outside. You work in here. Stop talking." When I got older, all we do is talk. She's my closest one.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So we get together. I can hardly wait to get old because then I can do whatever I want.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Being 18—which is what I tell every teenager and kid. I say, "What is your problem? My God. When you're 18, you can do what you want."

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's why I don't pay attention to these 23-year-olds: "Mommy this and"—"Who cares? Aren't you over 18? Do whatever you want."

MIJA RIEDEL: So it sounds as if one of the sole sources of happiness for you was that nature experience when you were outside.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was my strength. Oh, yes. Then I was alone. Nobody could bug me and all I had to do was pick. I remember when—one of the coolest dreams was, I was picking and—in a dream I was picking, and I was admiring the trees and the clouds and the dirt, and all of a sudden the trees turn into, like, pine trees. These four indigenous people came on ponies, or horses. They came up as a group, and then went right up to me, right there where the TV is, and I'm picking. I'm looking up and I can see them so clearly, and all they did was look at me.

They didn't have to say anything, but it seemed to me saying they're looking after me; you know, they're watching me. These old Indian spirits are looking at me. I've got to keep on learning, and I better keep on working and keep my spirit clean and not talk back to my mom, not talk back to my daddy when I wanted to fight back, you know, and not hit my sister so much—[laughs]—and not get so angry. Just keep it positive, because they're watching you.

MIJA RIEDEL: Was there a sense of relationship with the Native American U.S. communities as well as the Mexican, or no?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, only in my dreams—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and in my readings, and that was it—abstract, you know, like that, but nothing—because we rarely went outside the family—rarely.

MIJA RIEDEL: So when you were in school—where were you in school? Were you normally in school in Sacramento or in Calexico, those two?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: When we weren't picking crops—depending on what ranch we were in—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —we'd go to the nearest school.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: During the winter months, which was the longest stint—two or three months at the place—we'd be in school in Sacramento.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Then when I was in those schools, I basically didn't talk to anybody.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, then in the middle of the year you'd up and move to another school?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, following the crops.

MIJA RIEDEL: It sounds extraordinarily difficult—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was.

MIJA RIEDEL: —extraordinarily difficult.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It broke all my brothers and sisters. But for some reason—and I got to think that it was my dad's love, because I always knew that he loved me. I always knew that. I knew that because my mom would be jealous of me because he would—I remember in front of me she'd say, "You like her more than you like me. Why do you like her so much?"

He always had to buckle under and not do loving things to me. But when we would be alone, he'd sing to me and he'd tell me things. He'd talk to me nicely. [Laughs.] To me, that was love; whereas, with everybody else, [I] would kind of—would hide in the corner—Please don't—everybody just ignore that I'm here, please.

But the thing that would make me really happy, too, was the radio. Remember back in those days, the late '50s, mid-'50s my sisters—older brothers and sisters would have the radio on—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —that music would make me so happy. I remember hearing all these Coasters and the Platters, and then it changed to the Beatles, and all that. Music was just like, Wow, they know what it's like to have soul but yet still poverty and still have a good time singing. Dang, that's good.

You know, Mary Wells. I mean, all the early Motown, but even the Chess Records, with Etta James, all that was just so cool. It really, really made me—even the Everly Brothers, they'd have a rocking good time. And I was like, Wow. That really made me feel good.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I remember, always when I would hear it, I would just start dancing. I always thought I'd be alone. I would always dance when there was nobody watching. Then mid-song I'd see my brothers and sisters watching me, and then I'd calm down: Don't dance.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, because I love to dance with the music. I'd just get into it so much.

MIJA RIEDEL: And there was no dancing on the weekends or in the evenings?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, no. Oh, no, uh-uh. We'd pick on the weekends. That's when you do a full day. There's no school interruption.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. But it was okay, because I was going to be 18. And I'm having a good time now. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. That's sort of clear.

Was there any experience of visual arts—painting—we've talked about music—anything like that for you as a child?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Calendars, magazines.

MIJA RIEDEL: That was it?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Ads. My drawing book was the edges of newspapers or the edges of any magazine. I'd doodle.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was my sketch pad.

MIJA RIEDEL: But you doodled.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, yeah, I wrote little things—or not wrote, but drew little flowers or—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I doodled and that was my art.

MIJA RIEDEL: So even as a child you were interested in drawing.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, I was seduced always, Wow, look at that white space. I could—putting my mark down. I'd go, Wow, look at that one-inch white space around the *TV Guide*. And I would go, Wow, look at that empty space. I could put a mark there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was—

MIJA RIEDEL: That was important to somehow make a mark.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, to feel—to put the mark on that white space. It was actually a white, clean space where I could put a mark down.

MIJA RIEDEL: And what did you like to put down?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Mostly patterns—patterns and try to draw flowers, trees—not people.

MIJA RIEDEL: Not people.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And not man-made things.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No words, either.

MIJA RIEDEL: It seems as if you had an extremely close, profound sense of the seasons and the Earth, that—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Totally, except there's no seasons in California, but yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, that's true.

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But I do know the rain. I know the clouds. I know the heat.

MIJA RIEDEL: The crops, what grows where—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The crops, oh, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —how it grows.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, how it grows, how tomatoes, of course, are going to like the Sacramento Valley. It's moist—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —hot. And the trees, the fruit trees; of course, they're going to be in the foothills. And the Imperial Valley, well, you know, grasses—the garlic and the onion. And the grapes—I guess it must be really nice in the Central Valley. So that was how I—it made sense, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I learned to value and appreciate change and knew that it's inevitable: I'm going to age. Everybody is going to age. You're yelling at me, but you know what? You're going to die before me. And you kids, you're having a great time. I'm going to have a better time because I'm going to be 20 and

then I'll do whatever I want, and you don't even know what you want to do and I know what I want to do.

MIJA RIEDEL: What do you want to do?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Have fun. I want to have fun and learn.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And what did you want to learn?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Everything—

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —especially about spirit.

MIJA RIEDEL: Can you say more about that?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, the first class I took at a junior college—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —Christianity.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Okay—

MIJA RIEDEL: So you were only interested in religion?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, totally. I wanted to understand, how does man relate to the metaphysical? I was really interested in the metaphysical, because apparently I had this metaphysical kind of nature. So I wondered, How do people talk about it? What do they think about it? How do people understand it, because I don't understand it; I just know that I know things and I do things and it's kind of very coincidental. And so I want to put my finger on it.

The first thing was, I've got to get rid of the obstacle that I have against this big spiritual leader, Jesus. Okay, well, let's find out, who is this guy? Who is this? Who's zooming who?

And then that's when I read the history of the Bible, and the different books—the Book of Luke, the Book of John—you know, dissecting them and then seeing, Oh, this guy's a Republican, or, This guy's a Democrat. Oh, I get it. And then I read, So these books were edited. Oh, good. That's good to know.

And then in each of the three different major books there's different quotes that Jesus says when he dies. And I forgot them, but they were very different. One was talking about Jesus, you know, "Why have you forsaken me?" Well, what gall does that guy think—why would Jesus be forsaken by his own God? That's just not a Jesus thing to do?

So that's when I started, Okay, I think I get it. The big one is the Lord's Prayer. I found out that the Lord's Prayer—what is it, "Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name." Cool. "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven." Perfect. "Give us this day our daily"—You're demanding from God to give you your daily bread? But I found out later, from then on, those words were brought in, like, 3[00] or 400 years after Jesus was born, you know? "Give us this day our daily bread."

MIJA RIEDEL: So all the different interpretations, all the different editions of—ways of interpreting religious—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Doctrine—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —that was saying that Jesus was bad. Oh, the guy liked kids; he liked children. And, like John, he wasn't out in the desert of Herod taking—living on nothing. He liked to live it up. He liked to go to parties and have good times—Jesus, you know? Okay, I get it. It doesn't mean I'm—

MIJA RIEDEL: According to—right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. He's a guy that was a really cool—truly inspired by God in his own way, and he was very against—he was a shocker to a lot of people and culture because he's talking about kids and he's—

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you think you were going to go into religion in one way or another? Did you have a sense of—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I knew religion was just an organized way to approach spirituality.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Okay. But one quick question before we get into your junior college. Did you finish school in Sacramento, or high school in Sacramento, or Calexico?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: In Calexico—Calexico.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, the public high school down there?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Public high school.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Okay. And that was what year?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was in '67.

MIJA RIEDEL: '67.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: My daughter was born in '66 .

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And so I dropped out for one year of high school, or one semester, had the kid, and then I was the first one in the school to ever come back after having a child.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you also got married, didn't you?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: In '68—1968.

MIJA RIEDEL: In '68.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: We finally signed the paper.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: We had been together since '64.

MIJA RIEDEL: And what was your—what's your husband's name?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Marcos A. Underwood.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And he's the Yaqui—his father was pure Yaqui.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: He was born in Mexicali, Mexico, and he was one of the *cholos*, tough guys in Calexico, but he was smarter than any of the Euro rancher kids or anybody else. Everybody would always say, "Wow, he's really smart." And I'd go, "Really? Well, he thinks he's smart." [Laughter.] So that's what attracted me to him.

Then when we talk, we could really talk. We talk about yoga, talk about spirituality, talk about astronomy—

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, he was into all that stuff, even more in terms of the understanding—abstract, like mathematics and science. He really understood it, where I was like, I think I get it. Okay, I'm going to get this. He would make it real easy. I was really attracted to that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: He was very smart. I remember the first time I saw him in the library. His cronies were giving me a hassle in the library. I was trying to get away from them. There he was, sitting down

reading a book. And I'm going, What's his problem? How come he's not following me around like all these other creeps are, you know, his buds? Doesn't he think I'm cute? Let me see—he's probably not even reading a book. I wonder what comic book he's reading?

So I went behind him—walked behind him and I looked at his book. He was reading a mathematics book. I went, Okay. I didn't see him again until two months later. Then I knew that, Okay, that's the guy. That's the guy I keep talking about, that he's the only guy, Mexican, that's in the Euro classes. Because in high school it was segregated.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The Mexicans and the Euros did not go to the same classes. The best classes, the best teachers were in the Euros', but he was one—he infiltrated that because the teacher saw that they were so smart: "You've got to be in this class."

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: He would outdo the Euro kids. [Laughs.] Like I always tell him, I shot-gunned him into it. [Laughter.] Okay, I'll have his kid; he'll have to marry me.

MIJA RIEDEL: And what's your daughter's name?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Velina. Velina. And she's the Stanford lawyer, a former editor of the *Stanford Law Review*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Is she? My goodness.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She's a lawyer; her emphasis was Native American law. Now she's moving—she was raising the kids and had a small law practice in Mendocino, but now she's pulling up—the kids could no longer—they learned what they needed to learn, like we had spoken earlier—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —in Mendocino.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Now she's taking them to Tucson—

MIJA RIEDEL: Tucson.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and for them and for herself to get more involved with the Tucson tribe as a lawyer and see what she can do.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

So, Consuelo, how did you—if I'm not incorrect, during—you were at El Camino College in Los Angeles. Is that correct?

MS. UNDERWOOD: Yes, I tried for a year.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you took a weaving class there.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, and I forgot the lady's name, but I was in there for only—I don't even know if I finished a course there, because we were living on the vending machines—they sell chicken soup.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was our meal for the day, the chicken—

MIJA RIEDEL: For the day?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. And we said, "I can't do this." And I did it for only, like, two months, and we had to quit because—my husband and I, we got married in '68. We signed a paper in '68.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Then we took off to LA. I remember everything fit in the back of the '57

Chevy my mom had given me: a box full of records, a box for books, and a box for kitchen utensils, and the little girl in the back.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So we ended up in LA, at \$12 a week in this apartment.

MIJA RIEDEL: Why Los Angeles?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because his sister was living in LA.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And he had already done two years at Cal State LA.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Then we went there, got the apartment on Douglas Street in East LA which was really bad news. It had the shooting gallery in another apartment for a lot of addicts and—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, boy.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —but we were so happy there. It was like, Yes! And it's all we could afford.

MIJA RIEDEL: And your own place.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, yes. We were together. And I remember when my mom visited us the first time. She just went away crying and crying like—I could see her: All this promise I had for her. And I'm thinking to myself, Why is she crying so much? Doesn't she see that we're happy?

We only stayed there, like, three months and then we went to some other place. But it was a good place. The second place we went to I said, "Okay, let's go to school then, finish up, because we're never going to get out of this poverty unless you finish, and you're so smart, Marcos." He already did the first two years, and I had done one year at Imperial Valley College in El Centro, and that was in Calexico.

MIJA RIEDEL: Imperial Valley?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, Imperial Valley, IVC, Imperial Valley College. I did my first year there. I took care of a lot of undergrad prerequisites—the English, the math, whatever they wanted me in. I didn't take any fun courses.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you have any idea what you were going to major in?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did you have a plan?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: No.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I had no plan.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: All I knew is that I needed to go to college, because it interrupted my 20-year plan—my 10-year plan—the child.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because I was like, Okay, I'm 20. I'm married. When I was 18, I graduated from high school. I went back. I remember that whole year that I went back nobody spoke to me except for two girls, because I had the red X on my dress. So I kept thinking about that.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that was because you had a child and had gone off and gotten married and then came back?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, and I came back. And I didn't get married at the time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I didn't get married until after high school.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But I came back after having a child. That was—you never do that. But I had to do it because I wanted to graduate. I was going to get a high school diploma any way. I was doing so well that I could get by by doing a couple of home courses. They allowed me to take the home courses during my pregnancy so that I could finish the year with my peers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's how I did it. But the cost was, I was ostracized totally, which is okay because I didn't care. I was like, Eh, next. I at least I have two friends.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's kind of cool.

MIJA RIEDEL: And now you had a boyfriend at least?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, he was in LA.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I had Marcos—

MIJA RIEDEL: And the baby.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, I had a little girl. My mom and dad would take care of her while I went to high school. Then I finished the one year in IVC and then we got married. Then we went to LA. We got married in the solstice. I thought that was a real powerful—the 21st of June.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I thought, Okay. I remember walking to the city hall. My marriage ceremony was basically just a paper, because that's what I wanted. I knew that. We didn't have a church wedding. It was me and him, walked to city hall. "Oh, you're too young. You need your mother's signature," is what they told him. So we had to go across the border, get his mother, and come back to the city hall. And she signed the paper, and we were married by the justice of the peace.

I remember walking with him, and as he was walking, I saw huge holes on his shoes, because he was poor too. But he had holes in his shoes, really big ones. I'm going, Well, with love and knowledge, we're so poor that we can only go up—[laughs]—no matter what happens. We can't get any poorer than what we are, you know.

So I had total faith, plus we really liked each other. So I went, Love and knowledge is all you need. And then, We're young and I've still got decades to go—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —so what's the problem?

MIJA RIEDEL: Now, you had been interested in painting. Is that correct?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, because that's what artists did. But what do you do as an artist? Because that's when I went to—we tried that school—it was some JC in LA.

MIJA RIEDEL: Is it Palomar that you're thinking of?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, that's in San Marcos. That was later. But in LA there was this school, a JC, and that one I remember talking to Marcos. He said, "*Chula* [beautiful one], take whatever you want. Take what you want to take." But I thought, Well, my dad always wanted me to be a doctor or a nurse, so I guess I've got to deal with chemistry. I'll take a chemistry class, but I'll also take a fun one. That's kind of like a weaving—weaving, I wonder what that's like.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I took that and a drawing course, 2-D design, because that was one of the prerequisites for art. Because it would be nice to be an artist, because religious art, it seems to me, nobody can tell me what to do. If they tell me to do green, I, as an artist, can do red. I like that. So I think I want to be an artist because—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —it's the only profession where I don't have to be told what to do.

MIJA RIEDEL: Independent thinking.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. And so—but medicinal doctor, I guess it could be a good living, and not everybody can do it, but I know I can. So I get into chemistry. You want me to what? You want me to weigh the weight and measure the speed of something I can't see? That neutron—how fast is that neutron going around the middle part? I didn't know, the protons and the neutrons going—this is the basis of the medicine? Wait a minute? Who's zooming who? That doesn't sound like medicine to me. Why do I have to know the speed of that thing and—it didn't make sense.

It did not make logical sense, because I—it just didn't jibe. I went, I don't think so. I don't think I want to spend my time weighing and looking and talking about things I can't even see. You know, there's no way. Then I went, Well, this drawing is fun. This learning how to weave—I don't even remember; I just remember everything I touched—made on the loom, it would be an A-plus-plus. And I would go, I don't know how I did it, you know. You know how—when *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, he doesn't know how he's—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's how I felt on the loom. I don't know what I did. I don't even remember learning how to weave—you know, thread that thing. All I remember is that at the end of the day I had the best thing in the class, and I had no clue how that happened.

MIJA RIEDEL: Now, had your father been a weaver?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. Well, only up until, like, first grade—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —because the step-brothers and the uncles would see—and when it was raining and he'd have to hide in the garage from the INS, from immigration—he'd make a framed loom like the ones I use now, and he'd just make a framed loom like the ones I use now, and he'd just make a frame with nails, and he'd string it up. Then he'd weave me dresses, paper doll dresses, just the front—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and then a back—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and sewed them together at the top and the side, and I'd wear them. And I really liked it because I would hang out with him and that's when he would tell me, children's stories and tell me about—sing to me songs, and we'd have a good time with nobody bugging us.

But I remember a couple of times my uncles or my brothers, some men: "That's women's work. Why are you doing women's work? Told you, Mom," kind of thing. I could feel my dad just like—but didn't say anything, I think because I was there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: By the time I was in first grade he didn't do it anymore.

MIJA RIEDEL: But he—you remember up until first grade watching him weave.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: That—was that part of his tradition from the Huichol?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: From the Huichol, because in the Huichol, men weave—

MIJA RIEDEL: Men weave.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and they embroider.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The baddest—the best wise men, or *curanderos*, are the ones that have the most intricate, detailed embroideries on their costume, on their dress.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, exquisite textiles.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exquisite textiles.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. I remember that—and I knew—I didn't know at the time, but now I know that that's why my dad did it, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: So you didn't understand why he was doing it and you didn't see anybody else doing it.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, I didn't care. Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: But he was—but you used to watch him weave.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, I saw him—yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I remember when I was—

MIJA RIEDEL: And then you wore what he wove.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Then I remember my family making fun of me because they were bright colors. I didn't understand why they would make fun of my dresses. I thought, Well, maybe because of the bright colors. So that's when I started shying away from bright colors.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I remember my mom was crocheting—she was an incredible—you know, back in the crocheting days, she was an incredible crocheter. I remember I caught her one time crocheting. She was kind of annoyed because I was there, but I was just staring at her project.

She says, "You think you can do this?" So she shoves her crochet into my hands: "Okay, well, then do it." I started doing it. I remember kind of like an out-of-body experience, where I kind of like flew around seeing myself crocheting. Then I remember my mom taking it away from my hands and saying, "Get out of here. Go away." It's like it got her angry that I could actually do it.

MIJA RIEDEL: And she didn't want to teach you how?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, no.

So I remember that thread experience. But I remember how easy it was and how out of body it was. I remember with my dad, I didn't even want to do it, you know? I was just happy listening to him and seeing him happy and making a cool dress for me, you know. So that was my thread experience.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Cut to the '60s.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Everything that my kids and my husband wore, and me, was embroidered. [Laughs.] Every bellbottom—I'd talk about, Wow, okay, I can embroider. I knew how to embroider.

MIJA RIEDEL: So you embroidered them.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah, so you were embroidering.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, during the '60s when every—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —the embroidery came in.

MIJA RIEDEL: Everything was embroidered.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I was like, Dang, this is just like drawing. It was so cool that I remember in that little—in that one year, well, not even a year, that I stayed in that college where I was learning how to weave.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Somebody walks up to me and says, "Why don't you come over here? I have a business over here that we design embroidery patches." He must have liked my embroideries.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I went, "Oh, really? Okay." I remember going in there, and it was a cool place—I had a very big culture shock. It was—

MIJA RIEDEL: This was in Los Angeles, the city proper?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: In Los Angeles. It was a big culture shock for me because it was an office. In the back was, I guess, where people would sew or embroider.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They're asking me questions. I remember that I answered the questions. Then I remembered them saying, "I think you're going to work out." I think I was supposed to call back.

I remember leaving and then picking up my son at the babysitter's, and I went, Hmm, I don't know. I don't know what happened to him all day and he can't tell me because he's a kid, and he's a baby. He's less than a year, or a year or something. Hmm. Hmm. If I do that and school, or just that, I'm not going to know what happens to this kid. I'm not going to know what imprinted him. I don't think so. And Marcos doesn't want me to work. He just wants me to be at home with the kids.

He's always telling me, "No, don't work, *Chula*. Just take care of the kids, you know. If you have to work, make it an art job, only if it's art, because that's what you want to do."

MIJA RIEDEL: So he was extremely supportive from the start.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, yes, because he was smart and he wanted me to go to school. It didn't matter to him what I did, but we had a deal: "Okay, you go first, Marcos, and then I'll go."

MIJA RIEDEL: But you study what you want to.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, it was basically what I wanted to do. He knew I wanted art because I had already told him, "Wow, that's the coolest thing because, wow, I can do whatever I want and nobody can tell me what not to do." So he was for that.

He was into mathematics, so he understood the power of abstractness and the beauty of—we have a conversation and he thought that algebra was the queen of the sciences, you know, and he'd tell me about his thoughts about that.

It kind of fed my abstractness of my images, you know, and what they meant—the water and the icons of the old ancients, and mixing them up with my contemporary things. He wanted me to continue that formally.

But I remember getting that job and him saying, "It's going to work out"—picking my son up. Then I realized, Do I really want to do this? My little girl, she's over there, and—oh, and that wasn't the first one. Actually, the first junior college, which we were living on the chicken soup, that was the first year that we were there. Right off the bat, we got into school, but that only lasted a month, because we couldn't survive on the chicken broth.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Then a year later, when he got the job, a job that he got his two years from—there's a lot of stuff that happened. It was late '60s, '69, '70—the assassinations. A lot of stuff was happening. I remember that we went to that first one, and the month I was there it was—we were taking, even, courses together—biology—and we were in the same classroom. I was really bummed because I had better drawings in his biology, but he would get better grades because he had—he had more information—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But that was, like, a month. Then we had to quit because we couldn't live on that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: My daughter was being left babysitting, and I couldn't deal with that either. So then, when I went to that other place, it was a year later.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that's El Camino College?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, that was, like, 10 years after—years after that. That was in '79—'78 when I was in El Camino. Where is—should be in my résumé.

MIJA RIEDEL: Maybe we should figure out what applies here in terms of the art—the experiences that were really formative for your art-making—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and move forward to San Diego, unless there's—do you want to talk about something that happened—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, the art-making was probably that second one—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —where I go that—where I was—

MIJA RIEDEL: In San Marcos?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, just—which was that? I can get that back because I know my husband remembers that one.

MIJA RIEDEL: Not El Camino either?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, El Camino College.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, which is the one in San Marcos?

MIJA RIEDEL: Palomar.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So El Camino College is the one we're talking about—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —where I learned the weaving, the first year of weaving. And that's when I got the embroidery—yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: And there was something that you said about that experience at El Camino in the early '70s. You said, "I discovered a way of expression sanctioned by the ancient elders."

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Weaving.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's when I learned how to weave.

MIJA RIEDEL: And who is sanctioning that? Were you thinking about that in terms of your own ancestry or of your husband's ancestry? What was that in reference to?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I knew—not the Huichol and not my dad, but it seemed to me that all these indigenous images had the most incredible textiles.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely. Absolutely.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They still—I think of them and I'm still, like, Wow. That was—

MIJA RIEDEL: So that was something dream-inspired too?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was more reading—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —reading about it, because at the time we were collecting a lot of our books —

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —on the Toltecs, on the pre-Aztecs, and all these warriors and gods had— Wow. Wow, look at what they're wearing. Oh, my God, compared to what we're wearing now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, and the incredible textile history in Mexico and South America.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, and Peru, you know, the—

[Cross talk.]

—and all those. Oh, my gosh.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I went, Women had to have been doing this, you know? This was an industry. I read that it was so cool that the Peruvians burned their textiles so that the Spanish wouldn't see them, because they heard about what happened in Mexico, and they burned their best. Wow. Can you imagine if I learn how to do that? Oh, my gosh. Oh, but it's craft. Oh, well, but still really cool, Consuelo. And don't worry about it because you're not going to do this anyway; your kids are too small.

MIJA RIEDEL: So you enrolled at San Diego State in the late '70s, then?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. That would be in '70, because I went to—I went to Palomar College in San Marcos, junior college.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I went to San Marcos. What I did there, I finished my prerequisites—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —because I had to drop out of those El Camino—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —because I couldn't finish the semester. I couldn't deal with it. But that's when I learned, I can weave. Every time I would take a thing off, the whole place would glow. It would be like emerging into a dream world.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I still didn't talk to anybody. I still didn't know anybody. The teacher—I don't remember what she looked like. I don't even remember her voice, but I do remember I would keep hearing her voice, but I was so ostracized from people and things that I couldn't really break that shell.

MIJA RIEDEL: So it was hard to even figure out how to relate to other kids—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, yeah, or let alone the older people—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —because I just came literally from the fields to the high school, to the honey [Marcos], and then back to high school and IVC. Then I started learning how to talk to my peers, but they were all Mexican, Mexican-American, and they were more Hispanic than me, and they certainly didn't grow up in the fields.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I was pretty ostracized from that. When I went to El Camino, it was all Euros, very—I didn't remember any other Mexican in there. So that's why I was, like, Ah, I don't know who—I'm just going. What do you want me to do? Okay, I'll do that. That's all I would see, is what I had to do.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right,

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was a big problem, but I was thinking, Well, I don't care. As long as I do the work. But then when I had to drop out—and it was so bad that when I got offered that job at the embroidery place, that I saw my son and I went, Okay, well, don't deal with that because you're going to have to crack that space in the job—crack that wall.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But, you know what? Your son needs you. Don't worry about it, about cracking the wall. Take care of your kids first. Because I remember there was a saying that the nuns say, "Give me a kid for the first five years and they're mine forever."

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I'm going, He's only going to be almost two. My little girl was [six] already. I don't want to go there. I want to know what's in my kids' mind. I want to be there to imprint.

So I retreated, and then we moved out of LA into San Diego, because by this time the honey had already gotten his bachelor's, and he—did he get his master's?—

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I forgot when he got his master's. Oh, I don't think he got a master's. He went into the bachelor's. He was getting to the doctorate, and the doctorate was pretty problematic because he had to work full-time. He took the coursework of a doctorate in mathematics at UCLA, and then he decided to take the job offered because it was paying such a lucrative—and we could move out of the city.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So we went to Escondido, and that's how it happened. So then I enrolled at the JC there to finish up, because he'd had his stint; now it's my turn.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's when I took undergraduate prerequisites, the JC—because I knew I was going to go to either San Diego State or the University of California at La Jolla.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Those are the two that I applied to. And at San Marcos, basically I just got to undergraduate, the drawing out—learning to take the drawing classes, take the philosophy courses—just whatever the undergraduate major needed. I also did the religious studies requirements—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —because I wasn't sure what I was going to do, religious studies or art. I liked them both. So when I got accepted at both UC and State University at San Diego and La Jolla—and it appeared to be, by the curricula that they were offering, La Jolla was going to teach me the theory of art more than the studio practice.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They emphasized the historical, contemporary issues in the arts—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —whereas San Diego State was a studio: how to weave, how to paint—not so much how to weave, but paint, but I knew that there was a weaving class there. Because, What do artists do? Well, they paint or they sculpt. Okay, well, I want to do art so I'll do that. So that's what I did. I said no to La Jolla. I didn't know about Faith Ringgold being there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Oh, you didn't even know?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That she was there, no, not until later.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Wow.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She was there? Holy—but I would not have learned how to master this process.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. It would have been a completely different education, yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Totally. I would have been totally—I'd be like—[inaudible]—[laughs]—writing about it instead of immersed with wires and threads and safety pins.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that was important to you from the start—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, I knew I wanted to know how to do it, because—well, by this time I realized now about Huichol and weaving, and I knew, Okay, okay, roots. I've got to do what my ancestors were doing, would probably want me to do. I assumed that they would want me to know how to make it, as opposed to talk about it.

MIJA RIEDEL: And I want to talk about—you were at San Diego for four years?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, actually I was, two years, junior and senior, and then the first two years to get the master's.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, because it seems that a lot of the themes that have run through decades in your work were already appearing at San Diego—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —during your undergraduate years—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —these really significant pieces and themes. I think of landscape, I think of—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Borders.

MIJA RIEDEL: —Guadalupe, borders—

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Those borders were always there, and to me there were borders—I knew what borders meant, but I also knew there was a border between the physical and the metaphysical. So they would be that—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —the borders that surround the mundane. You need to crack that to get into metaphysical, and maybe then the borders will come down, you know. That makes you overcome the struggle and the angst of the real borders that people put up in front of you. That's what those borders were about.

MIJA RIEDEL: So you took a class with Joan Austin. Is that right?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She was a mentor.

MIJA RIEDEL: And she was from Cranbrook.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, she was a mentor.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you have described her as a mentor. Would you talk about that experience, when you—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, my gosh, she was the first Euro instructor that cracked through the wall. The first one.

MIJA RIEDEL: How did she do that?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I don't know, but I remember going to—taking the painting courses, because that's what artists do, and then walking by the weaving studio, intrigued by all the looms, and, Oh, that's craft. People say that's craft and that's not really art.

MIJA RIEDEL: So that was the case back then as well.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. Oh, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Was that the '70s, or is that—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Late '70s.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Late '70s.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wasn't there—there's still very much of a divide.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It started cracking. Then in the middle of my program they changed the term "craft" to "applied design." That was the big controversy in the school at the time, and I got that from Joan.

But I remember walking by, and then she invited me into the room. I walked in and I looked around, and she kept talking to me. And then I don't know what she was saying, and I was thinking—and I remember being very blunt with her and saying, "Can you make a living at this?" That was my—I remember that was my first—

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —question to her as the real Consuelo—

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —talking to a person: "Can you make a living at this?" I remember she was, like, taken aback, and she kind of stammered, and ended up saying yes. That was what I got out of it. Okay. [Laughter.]

MIJA RIEDEL: A lot of stammering and eventually yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. Somehow, through all the words, I heard a yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: "Hmm, okay. Okay, I'll take a class," knowing that—remembering that, Oh, it was really easy, but this is a little bit more complicated, but okay. And the next semester I enrolled in the class, and I was still taking the religious studies, Dr. Anderson in the religious studies department.

I was getting jaded by the religious studies because, "You mean I just can't jump into metaphysical religious study?" Because I wanted to study the interface between religion and metaphysicalness, but to do that, to research it and go follow my own train, I had to take all these preliminary courses that involved all these writing papers and research.

I had to swallow all these words that I knew I didn't believe in, and I had to regurgitate them out in my own way. But to do that, I had to do a lot of reading on stuff that I was, like, This is bogus. This is a bunch of—I don't agree with this at all. But I had to agree to it to understand it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I'm like, This does not compute for you, Consuelo. That's when I started weaning from there, going more into the arts, taking the weaving class, taking the arts of Mexico, and the arts of Mexico was the one that was the last nail, which was—

MIJA RIEDEL: That was the history—an art history class?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, an art history class, an art history seminar. I took it as an undergraduate, but I took it—but it was for graduates. I took it only because it was so intriguing. I wanted to see the textiles.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So they focused on textiles for, like, three weeks, and I was blown away. And I remember asking something about, "Is this art? Can this be considered art?" "Oh, no. No. This is folk art. It's very different from art." I remember a little cloud going over my head going, Grr. I said, This is what my father was against. This is what my father—happened to him, but it wasn't the same idea, but it was similar: Men don't weave.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right—marginalizing.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Here if I do weaving, then it won't be considered art. Well, I'm not going to it. It's been 500 years of this thinking. I'm going to make it art. Everything I weave and create in that textile class will not be hooped, will not be macraméd, won't have feathers from it—not doing that because everybody would say, "Weaving, textiles; oh, yes, mandalas," which are made with hoops and beads and feathers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Macramé-type things?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, macramé; that was it. I swore, Okay—and I'm thinking—because she's telling me it's folk art, right: "Tsk, tsk, tsk. It's not art." I'm thinking, I'm going to make it art. I'm going to—and I'd already taken some painting classes. I knew about painters. I knew about drawing. And I'm going, I'm going to do it. I'm going to major. I don't know how.

But that's when I decided to—they shouldn't have told me that—[laughs]—because if they had said, "Oh, it could be"—whatever. But because she told me, "No, it isn't, can't be," I went, Don't tell me it can't be. In art, anything—besides, ceramics—Vouklos is just doing incredible stuff right now. He's breaking down the rules. Photography, they're just clicking these little buttons and they're allowing that to be seeping into the arts, but they won't let a thread and a needle go in there?

MIJA RIEDEL: So you were aware of Vouklos at the time?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, yes, because I was taking contemporary art seminars—you know, the art courses at San Diego State.

MIJA RIEDEL: But were they—okay, and were there no references to Ed Rossbach and Katherine Westphal and what was going on up at Berkeley, though?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No. Through Joan—

MIJA RIEDEL: Through Joan, yeah.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Through Joan to my textile readings, you know—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —from art craft, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, fiber arts.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, that's how I knew. Joan would tell me. She took us up to Jim Bassler.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She said, you know—

MIJA RIEDEL: Let's talk about that—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, she was the one—

MIJA RIEDEL: —your experience meeting with Bassler.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, the Jim Bassler—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh—

MIJA RIEDEL: Was that when you were an undergraduate?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, undergraduate, and we also, at the same time, hit up her first graduate student, which was the one that's at Cal State Long Beach—Carol Shaw-Sutton.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: We met her—she met us at Cal State Long Beach right after we met his—Bassler was in San Pedro.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Yes, exactly.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Then we drove up to Long Beach and met Carol Shaw-Sutton. Carol was young, and she had just gotten out of the program. And Joan was very proud of her, because that was her first graduate student. Those two were doing it, textiles, and yet being published and having exhibitions.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Okay. So those were my heroes—

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —or not heroes really, but *sí, se puede*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And at the same time—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —I remember reading in *Time* magazine or *Newsweek* magazine, one of those, opened up, and there was a thing about Rupert Garcia and one of his first silk screens that he had in the '70s.

It was in some San Francisco museum or—and I'm like, Wow, that's hot! It was one of his silk screens. My God. And he's from Fresno. I know what that's like. Oh, my God. I don't know what the image was, but it was one of his powerful *sí, se puede* kinds of things. The Raza and the culture is in that.

So those three are—and then the fourth one, Billy Al Bengston.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: He comes and has a show at San Diego. Joan is all excited because he's got tapestries. I'm going to see these weavings then. We went in there and there were—excuse me, they were basically rugs, pastel, kind of dumpy colors, bathroom colors as far as I'm concerned, and stripes. But I know his paintings.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So he's into color. Huh, he's doing textiles. Hmm, he's weaving. He loves—he

knows what I love. He knows that thread—the thread-by-thread buildup and how wonderful that is. But the thing that got me the most about his work, he put two nails on the corners right onto the tapestry onto the wall. Wow! I just couldn't get away from the nail—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —stuck right into the tapestry, nailed to the wall. And it was kind of like that, you know, instead of—

MIJA RIEDEL: So it was a little askew.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Askew.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Yes. And the two nails—four nails. He had, like, two of those and maybe three—I just remember the first one: Huh, that's it? They sure are dumpy, boring. But, boy, was I blown away by the nails.

MIJA RIEDEL: What in particular about that?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was such an aggressive act with such a simple, tame, docile object. And the two extremes, that's *arte*. [Laughs.] So he really, really—as an artist, Bassler was as a person in a home. Carol Shaw-Sutton was a person in academia in a job.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But Billy Al Bengston was an artist in a gallery. I mean, those three things—I remember Joan; it was her vision that exposed me to it—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and her assistance: "If you're to make textiles, give it a historical context." She insisted on that. And I'm so grateful for that, because that's what set it, not only with the Billy Al Bengston in the contemporary sense, but that's when she encouraged me to go to the archives of the Balboa Park and of the LA Natural [History] Museum—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —because I was intrigued by the Peruvian textiles.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: As a graduate student, they let me go into the archives underneath, where they have a huge basement with all these drawers. And you pick out a drawer and you pick up a textile.

MIJA RIEDEL: In Los Angeles or Balboa—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Both.

MIJA RIEDEL: Both?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Both had archives that they allowed me—and that's what I kept telling my graduate students. I said, "Graduate students, you can go to any museum in the world, and just by being a graduate student of research, they will allow you to go and look at their textiles that they never show." But you've got to know what you wanted to see, and I wanted to see burial shrouds, Peruvian.

The thing that amazed me the most about those guys, or those objects—the Peruvian textiles, burial shrouds—the simplicity of the structure and the incredible density of some of them, of the borders.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, their density of thread.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, the borders contained—was the active images and colors, and they're very dense.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But inside was a plain weave, like the potato sack—over, under, over, under—but with thread that was hand-spun. Oh, my God, it was like the size of my hair.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I remember picking them up and they weighed like butterfly wings, nothing. "And you survived 2,000 years," was my question to the cloth. "Wow." And that was the cloth that covered all the other incredible, beautiful cloths that were around the mummies, or whatever—the bodies. The simplicity of the weave structure and the simplicity of the color, which is natural—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —was totally, again, a yin and yang—the most exquisite, yet it was the most simple.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: To this day—you know, that was perfectly Consuelo, right, so that's what really—and I remember—made me write on that topic for my thesis. I'm looking, and I'm so embarrassed. You know, I don't even know where the copy—but somewhere I must have a copy of my thesis from San Diego. But I was like—I mean, that was inspiring.

I went, "Okay, I swear—I swear that every one of my weavings, I'll try to make them approach the beauty of your weavings, even though I know, folks, I can't weave like you guys did. You guys were too cool. I will barely weave like an eight- or 10-year-old in your society, but it will be beautiful; it will be elegant. I swear." To this day I still have that. If it's woven, I still want to make it beautiful, even if it's—

MIJA RIEDEL: I do remember that the sheer thread count in some of those old pieces got up to—I think close to a thousand threads per inch in either some of the Peruvian or Bolivian old textiles.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Even the Egyptian as well.

MIJA RIEDEL: Just—the detail, the fine—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, my God.

MIJA RIEDEL: —the fineness of those weavings was extraordinary. And how amazing for you that you had the opportunity to study it in art history and then go to—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, no, no, this is studio work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, okay. This was studio work.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Joan's the one—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, this was Joan. Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —that insisted me to do research.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, I see.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: In the history, art history, all I learned was, Textiles is not art. Get over it, Consuelo. Oh, yeah? Well, I'm going to show you. Everything I make from now on will be art textiles.

MIJA RIEDEL: So you did research on your own and then went to see the pieces in the museum.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But that was because Joan insisted.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: "You're going to do master work? Well, then you're going to have to do research."

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She was really a good mentor. She bought three of my pieces, and they were one of my beautiful ones that I made from San Diego. But when she passed on, I didn't even know about it. That's why I wanted to speak to Jim Bassler when I saw him, like, eight years ago, because she really was close to him. But, like I said, I'd get close to him and he'd run away.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Then I wrote to her son at her address, because she had property out in Jamul on a ranch, and he never responded. I know she had a fire in one of her trailers where she kept a lot of the collection, and I wanted to get from the son, "Can I buy it back or have access to some of those pieces," because they were some of the pieces that came out of San Diego, the gauze—the see-through and the tapestry. She bought the top three.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And so she had them, but I don't know what happened.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I never heard from him, and he was basically one of those feral spirit children of the land, Jonathan Austin. She never married, and she had this little boy. I hope he's still alive, but I don't even know that.

Carol Shaw-Sutton may know, but not really because she's the one that told me that Joan passed away. Soon after, that's when I think at that same conference I may have seen Jim Bassler. And so, I don't know what happened to the stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: So you got both your B.A. and your master's—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: At San Diego.

MIJA RIEDEL: —at San Diego State, the B.A. in '81 and a master's in '85.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, something like that, because that's what happened; I took a year off, got my bachelor's, and the big thing was, B.F.A., or not?

I was like, Well, what is a B.F.A.? Well, it really is to develop a portfolio to get into graduate school. Really? Hmm. Hmm. What do you need to get into graduate school? A statement and a portfolio. Really. You mean works, right? You mean like 10 works? Yes. Yes. Huh. I've got to get a B.F.A. to do that?

Here I'm commuting 40 miles every day to come back. You know what? I think I'm just going to do my portfolio on my own and apply. In a year I know I can come up with 10 incredible tapestries, and I can get—and you have an M.F.A. program? Cool. I want to get into the M.F.A.

So that's what I did. By the way, when I was 20 and I had—we had just moved to Escondido, I said, You know what? I'm going to do art. I bet you in 10 years—when I started at Palomar College in San Marcos—I will—in 10 years, I will be an artist with an M.F.A., and I will have a solo show in San Francisco. Because in San Francisco was where all the textile was happening.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, a lot, to be sure. Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, and I was so glad that I was living down there, but I was, like, Well, in 10 years I know I can have a solo show, and I'll have a graduate degree in art. That was my 10-year plan for—

MIJA RIEDEL: Had you been up to Fiberworks at all?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Never saw it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Okay, never saw it.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Not once.

MIJA RIEDEL: Not ever.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Only through pictures.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: By the time I got here, it is closed.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: When I got here—it was funny—there were, like, five weaving shops just in

the South Bay.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I think there's zero now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But there's maybe one or two in Santa Cruz, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So I came just as the door was closing—

MIJA RIEDEL: Just as that was closing, right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and I got through the crack.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But, going back to the master's at San Diego—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I did the 10 tapestries, went to the M.F.A. review. And I remember having my work and having to do a show in town. And I did my show in town, and Joan insisted that I bring the tapestries, not just the images. So I did, and I'm going, That's—okay, well, I'll do that.

I brought the tapestries. They're all small ones, the Border series with the mountains.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Joan says, "Pass them around." I remember the faculty picking them up, and all of them were very curious. They had never—and I got in just like that—into the M.F.A., because that was the first year they were doing M.F.A.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, it was the first year?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That they had ever allowed an M.F.A. There were only master's at that time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's when I started: Joan says you've got to get into and learn this thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: I have a quick question about the veils and when they began to appear in the work. Did they come up during the—did you first do them during undergraduate work, or did those begin to appear during graduate studies?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: During the graduate—undergraduate, because she insisted I learn the graduate and do research.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So those are the two—the veils are the merging of what's coming out of the Peruvian—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —gauzes and also looms.

MIJA RIEDEL: Your burial shrouds.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, but the burial shrouds are later.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. But the first one—you did one when you were an undergraduate.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Was John Chapman.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, the one—

[Cross talk.]

MIJA RIEDEL: —yourself, the personal—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, because I was leaving—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and that would have had nothing to do with these other ones.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, nothing to do with them.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, it was only because, Consuelo, you're dying. You're going to leave this area. Because I was in the M.F.A. The honey gets a job two years into my program—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, boy.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and he gets a job in Silicon Valley. So I guess a double-edged sword: Wow, in San Francisco! And it's where you—blah, blah, blah. Oh, man, but I've got to do my M.F.A. I talked to Joan: "Well, you know what? You can get your M.A. You've just got to fly down for one semester, finish this one course in contemporary theory, and then you'll get your M.A."—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —"and don't worry about it. You can get your M.F.A. up there." "Thanks, Joan." So that's what we did.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I came up here, flew down there for the last semester; every Friday, go for the seminar, come up, put on a show. I remember having 23 works for the show, and—

MIJA RIEDEL: This is for your semester show.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's the show in San Diego, and I came back with two. And as I'm driving back with two, I'm going, Wait a minute; how are you going to have a show in San Francisco when all your work is gone? Ahh!

MIJA RIEDEL: You sold eight out of 10 pieces at your master's show.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I had 23. I sold 21.

MIJA RIEDEL: You sold 21 at your master's show.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because I had a lot of little miniatures that were framed. All those ones were one a day, a weaving a day.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, let's talk about that, that weaving a day.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The two-by-three—yes. I was basically—because I was also inspired by van Gogh as a painter—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —but I was intrigued by van Gogh, for two reasons. One is that, incredible, beautiful paintings. And, two, his early work, he painted weavers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's pretty cool, guy. I was like, Dang, now that's impressive. And then I read something about a hundred paintings a year. He only painted for a short time, 10 years, but he did so much.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was also impressive.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But I remember Olitski. I loved Olitski because, basically, a beautiful field of smooth, like, almost airbrushed color, and then on the edge would be this smeary—all the colors, you know, smeared—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —Diebenkorn, the beautiful colors. Oh, my gosh, beautiful colors of the everyday.

Then the other guy who I got to see speak was Thiebaud, Wayne Thiebaud. Oh, my gosh. I remember hearing him when I first got over here. I went to hear his lecture in San Francisco—packed stadium, standing room only. There's this little man way down there—because I'm in the very back. He's at a microphone and he's going, "I don't know what you guys are all doing here. I'm just a sign painter." [Laughter.] I was like, Yes, that's my kind of guy. But anyway, those are my painting heroes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And was, then, dyeing very important to you early on—

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Dyeing was important only because it was one of the vocabularies that I needed to know of the ancestors—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —spinning, dyeing, weaving, surface design. I needed to know the basic vocabulary. If I was going to take on the whole art community with textiles, I better know it all. I said—and it's just really cool that the gods set it up that Joan knew it all. She grew up—a Portuguese man, a fisherman off of San Pedro. She would go off at 4:00 in the morning, so she understood work, to go do knots and help her dad fish.

She knew handwork and she understood it. But she couldn't understand metallics in my work. I remember getting to San Diego, and we had to do Navajo rugs. And I'm like, I'm not going to weave with wool. I'm never going to—if I was in Alaska, okay. I'm going to do cotton and linen. This is a desert here, folks.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I'm not going to weave with wool.

MIJA RIEDEL: Now, was color especially important in those early pieces?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Only because—only for emotion and what—for the piece itself.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It wasn't because I've got to have color in there. It was like, It's about rainstorm and desert, and what color would that be? Oh, dark blues. So let me get in there.

But I want to know how to make my own color, and I made this huge book, somewhere—maybe that should be for the Archives—but it's a whole book of—I remember getting all the Procion dyes, because I didn't—and putting all the yellow to red here, yellow to blue, like a multiplication table, and putting the two together like a multiplication: If I mix so much of the—these two together, I'll get—

[Cross talk.]

—and both, I'll have a whole range of all the different colors. But I want to make with each square—each one will be a sample of silk, linen, and cotton.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And rayon. So each one—so I will know how all the dyes interact with all the different materials. That was during my studies as a graduate student—Joan Austin again—because I wanted to know color. That was—my understanding of dyeing was—I didn't know then about subtractive and additive color, but I understood it, kind of. But that really cemented it because the colors worked like the additives as opposed to subtractive or pigment.

But really—my understanding of dyeing is what got me a job at San Jose State as a graduate student teaching color, as an undergraduate under Tony May. And that's what set me above, plus that I had a master's.

MIJA RIEDEL: Before we leave the Diego and Southern California, were you also aware at all of Neda Al-Hilali and all of her installation work?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, from Joan Austin.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I never met her until she came—she was in San Francisco and I was already in San Jose. So I went to San Francisco to meet her.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She was so cool. She really was cool.

MIJA RIEDEL: I think about her installations early on and how far ahead of—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The Cassiopeia series?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I still show that to my students. They were so cool.

MIJA RIEDEL: So ahead of their time.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, man.

MIJA RIEDEL: The installation she did on the beach [*Beach Occurrence of Tongues*, 1975]—

[Cross talk.]

Oh, man.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. Yes. And then also the other one that blew me away was Magdalena Abakanowicz.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: See, these are the people that Joan taught me about.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They weren't painters, but they were textile people.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Never met them, but, boy, Neda Al-Hilali was incredible—incredible. We really hit it off, without saying too much. I remember, as we were going up the elevator—I was with her in the elevator, and we were talking, and she invited me to go to her room in the hotel, and I got scared. I was like a student, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I got scared and I went, "Oh, no, I have to go home." I really, like, Dang, girl, you should have gone up there. Because I remember she was opening up her purse and there was this—in her—and I was like, Uh, uh—oh, man, I don't—I think I better go home and see Marcos and my kids.

MIJA RIEDEL: Different worlds, right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Different worlds. And she's a bit older than you, no?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, she was at least 10 years—

MIJA RIEDEL: Ten years—yeah.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because she looked old. I think she had a really good party life, because she looked old. Then she dropped out of sight. She dropped off the map. I kept asking what happened to her. Nobody knew.

MIJA RIEDEL: Was Ferne Jacobs working down there then as well, or not yet?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Completely different work.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It didn't—

[Cross talk.]

MIJA RIEDEL: I wouldn't think so.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I didn't—

MIJA RIEDEL: But I would think Neda's installations would have been interesting to you.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Mostly all of the textile people were like, Dang, they need me, you know; they really need me, except for Magdalena. She was way in a whole class. I needed her.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: You know, I needed Neda. But they were not American. They were European.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, yes, Neda had moved here, but you're right—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But she was Czechoslovakian.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She reeked of it. So there was nobody that I felt that was from here—Carol was kind of exciting, but—and she was so submerged in academia that it didn't go—and I'm going, That's what happened to Consuelo here.

Nobody really exciting from that era for me from here. Billy Al Bengston, he wasn't in textiles. He was a painter.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But, boy, his work affected me in its presentation.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Joan's was very—work didn't—she didn't promote it, and it was very beautiful, but to me it didn't have resonance of Billy Al Bengston, that aggressiveness.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It wasn't there.

MIJA RIEDEL: But you left San Diego then, it sounds like, with a very firm—what you've called the vocabulary of textiles.

MIJA RIEDEL: I knew how to make a good object.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: An historical, correct—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Inaudible.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, and—yes. I didn't know how well it fit into the new art, the contemporary art, because there was no space for it. None. There was no place for it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But I knew that it had a place in history, and I knew how to do it, and I was a contemporary artist. So, I can't get the M.F.A.; okay, I'll get the M.A. at San Diego.

Then, like I said, I did my stint, came back with the two pieces. Okay, I'm going to have the show, and I realized, I have no work to show. Oh, my God. And I remember somebody asking me, "Consuelo"—in San Diego—"how are you going to make work? I mean, doesn't weaving take you a long time to make? How are you going to make work? You know, it takes you forever."

Compared to van Gogh, compared to the painters who put one off every week, it took me a month minimum, and that's because I was a good worker. Most people take three months to do what I would do in one month. I thought, That's a good question. Well, you know what? If I do 10 good weavings a year, in 10 years I'll have a hundred really good weavings to leave to history, and that will be fine.

MIJA RIEDEL: And I think we just also started talking about the whole concept of one weaving a day.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, yes, the little miniatures.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Yes, and how that came about, how long that went on for.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, my gosh. So there I was, enrolled in painting, and—I was concurrently sneaking in a weaving class. I found myself ditching the painting classes to work—to go to the cafeteria and work on my framed loom, because Joan taught me how to weave on a framed loom like my father had done.

So I found that so much more intriguing than—I remember my mandate was, Well, in drawing they say if you want to be a good drawer, you have to do a drawing a day. So if you want to be a good weaver, do a weaving a day. Well, how are you going to do that? Well, you're good at tapestry and that's what you love, so how are you going to make them in a day? Well, I'll make them little. I can make that in a day. So that's how I did a weaving a day.

MIJA RIEDEL: And how many did you do?

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I don't know, because I would just toss them out.

MIJA RIEDEL: And they are all mostly landscapes, right?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The mountains and the sky, and maybe some water. That's all the action there was. But it was all my hand-dyed linens, my hand-dyed silks, my hand-dyed this, because I was learning—[inaudible]—putting it together. Some stitching was going on, you know.

I remember, of the 23, like 10 or 12 were miniatures. So that was really exciting for me because they were going so fast. I learned how to do angles; I know how to do straights; I did text—in that little board. I mean, it was fun. So it was nothing. I'd start it in the morning, and somehow during the day I'd work on it, and at night I'd finish it at home. And that's how I did my one a day. And that went on for the first year that I was learning it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And after I learned it, then I stopped that. They got bigger. And Joan says, "You've got to get on the loom. You've got to get bigger." And so I guess it was the best thing. [Laughs.] I was so mad at her, like, "How can you doubt?" And then, "How come I can't put metallics?" "Why are you putting metallics?" I said, "Well, look at Dorothy."

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, right, Liebes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Liebes, yes. "Look at her work, you know. She's putting metallics and plastics in her weavings." And that shut her up.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So, two years later Joan had nothing but metallics and everything in her work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. [Laughter.] But everything was such a—because she didn't like them; I guess because it wasn't traditional.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. So there was a very traditional sense of weaving textiles.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, yes, how to make a good object. That was the thing about San Diego that I respected. Everything had to be good; so that's what I learned.

MIJA RIEDEL: Beautifully crafted.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Form—good form.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Form is very, very important. Content, well, okay.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But if you're going to do this stuff, form—form. Presentation—didn't even know what that was, had never heard about that, except I couldn't get beyond the nails with Billy Al Bengston. Dang, that's awesome. I knew I could never do that, though.

I knew that presentation was there, but it wasn't something that we talked about in—in fact, in a lot of schools, that's the thing that the students will always complain about. Presentation wasn't answered. It was just about making the stuff. But how do you market it?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: How do you put it out there? I'm like, Ooh, I don't know, you know? Well, I kind of know how I did it, but I knew then because I was also reading autobiographies. I wanted to know the autobiographies of artists.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And that's how I got to know, really well, van Gogh, because I really loved his letters.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I remember reading Rollo May—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —*The Courage to Create*.

MIJA RIEDEL: —*to Create*. I remember that book.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I remember, courage, *coraje*, controlled anger. Yep, that's certainly what I've got. And I remember that was the one that showed me the soul of art-making. That's what I learned from that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. He really spoke about that inner—that inner thing that's necessary to create art, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So it resonated. It was almost a spiritual book, but it wasn't. Van Gogh's—I just remember, "Exaggerate the essential; make vague the obvious." I remember that. I never let go of that quote from van Gogh: "Exaggerate the essential; make vague the obvious." Those were, like, my mantras, you know? Kandinsky—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: "Few can see beyond the veil of reality." And I'm thinking, Those are my veils, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Put a veil over my work, but it will make it not so pretty. It doesn't matter. It's the statement. You've got to get through my barbed wire and fence filter to understand what's underneath, why it's the way it is, why it's woven, why it's beautiful, and why it's what it's about.

[Phone rings.]

That's me again. They're trying to get ahold of me and I don't want to play. [Laughter.] In March or April I got the first cellphone. It's an iPhone, right?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So it's a real techie. The honey is into techie. I resisted them the whole 10, 15 years because I call them electronic leashes. Why do we have to answer these things when they're just a machine? I don't have to run like everybody—"I've got to have it." Okay, excuse me, you know. Anyway, so I'm not going to answer that.

But Kandinsky's—I mean, these are the writings that I would go read during San Diego State, which is really formidable, formidable years of art-making. It really ingrained on me the walk of the artist, especially in the studio, the studio walk of the artist, as opposed to the promotional exhibition—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I didn't learn that at San Diego. In fact, I wasn't even brought up—I was just really focusing on, How do I make a cool weaving that isn't round, has no hoops, and says something? How—and pay homage to the—to the elders, because I always felt the elders, the anonymous women, indigenous women that died. I always would make prayers to them when I would begin the studio work, paying honor to their spirit, because their spirit was still there, but they died horrific deaths, and I knew they wove better than I did.

MIJA RIEDEL: Now, who were you thinking about in particular here that wove so well but had horrific deaths and yet had not—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: My grandmother, who had a very bad death, her mother, who I never met—I never met my grandmother either—that was a specific.

MIJA RIEDEL: And she was a weaver.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, my Huichol grandmother.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She could weave. She didn't do much of it, but her mother—my great-grandmother was the weaver, Huichol embroiderer, and who knows what happened to them, because Mexico was doing a lot of extermination too.

And I know here on the plains the Gatling gun was tried out on the Native Americans, you know, and then they used it in the Civil War. They abandoned it in the Civil War, but they used it on the Natives. So there were just gunned-down, villages. So those are the anonymous women I was thinking about.

And I knew they all could probably weave way better than me, make baskets and—Dat So La Lee [a Washoe Indian weaver], from Mendocino County—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I read her and I looked at her baskets. I loved making baskets. I loved it, and I still love it. But for some reason, the weaving and the embroidery calls me more, and I think that's my Huichol heritage. But I love that basket process, which is why I made that huge, big one.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I was so happy I could finally make—and I have beautiful images of spokes, of a process where you see the bottom is all twined, huge—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And it was just like a celebration.

MIJA RIEDEL: You're talking about the tortilla—

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —in the installation, right.

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that was at MACLA [Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana]?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: MACLA.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's here in San Jose.

MIJA RIEDEL: Much later we'll get there.

Well, let's talk about San Jose and then maybe take a little break.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Okay.

MIJA RIEDEL: Does that sound good?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: So, you enrolled in San Diego. Now, you were clearly determined to get your M.F.A., because you had an M.A.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, no, I didn't have it; I just enrolled right into the M.F.A. Oh, but you mean when I left San Diego.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: You left with an M.A.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, I left with—

MIJA RIEDEL: You left with an M.A. from San Diego, but you were intent on getting an M.F.A.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: M.F.A., yeah, because it was a hot thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was the hottest degree that an artist could get—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —a studio artist. And I knew that I wanted the ultimate degree.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So M.F.A. was one.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you were enrolled at San Jose. It was just too far to go up to Berkeley?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, I didn't—Rossbach was no longer there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, he was no longer there by then. Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I would have to deal with—it was in the anthropology.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. It had been moved by then. Okay, so—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So I missed it, but—

MIJA RIEDEL: Who was teaching in San Jose then?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Before that—I knew Liebes was there for a long time, and Patti Henry was part-time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She was the filler, because they didn't know what to do with that department.

MIJA RIEDEL: I see.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They were keeping it in limbo.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And they hired this lady who—it seemed to me her knowledge of weaving and textile was more surface-y. It wasn't intense—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —intense deepness.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was very surface. And that's what started happening, I think, among—in the movement itself. It started losing its authenticity roots and got into installation, performance, mixed media.

So then I'd come up here and I'd look at the [San Francisco] Art Institute. I felt everybody in the Art Institute was walking around with these glass tubes around them; whereas, I'm an artist. They had a big ego, the students. I didn't want to play. Because I scanned that one. I thought about the Art Institute; I looked at CCAC; I looked at San Francisco State. And I looked at San Jose, and Berkeley, too, but Berkeley didn't have it. They had it in anthro, and I didn't want an anthro—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I wanted art. So, CCAC, it seemed that the students were intimidated. And by this I mean I would see them, and they would come out of a bush. It seemed like they were hiding, metaphorically.

[Doorbell rings.]

Now that's you. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: That's me. They just—we're going to end in a couple minutes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Okay, so let's stop here.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

[END OF TRACK underw11_1255.]

MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Consuelo Jimenez Underwood at the artist's home and studio in Cupertino, California, on July 5, 2011, for the Archives of American Art[, Smithsonian Institution]. This is [card] number two.

I think we left off with San Jose or—yes, San Jose State at the end of the last disc—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Right. Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and what had moved you to seek an M.F.A.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Choose.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And choose San Jose.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And so I had looked at CCAC, Art Institute, and San Francisco State, which had—oh, what was her name—a really good, tight weaver.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: What was her name?

MIJA RIEDEL: I can't remember either. It will come to us.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I was attracted to that, to her work, in that it was very formal; it was well done. There was a little bit of excitement going on for me in the content. But when I visited the campus, the students seemed to be like bees going in straight lines, not deviating from their trajectory. They were busy, obviously—busy. And I went, Dang, I don't know if I like this. So let me try San Jose.

When I walked the streets of San Jose—first of all, we lived on Stevens Creek Boulevard in Cupertino. I was afraid of the freeways at the time. If I take Stevens Creek Boulevard all the way down, it turns into San Carlos. And if I take San Carlos to its very end, it dies right behind the parking lot, a bare lot behind the art department at San Jose State—straight shot. Wow. Let me get off this car. And there was a parking space right there waiting for me. Get off the car, walk into the campus.

And, remember the Doobie Brothers?

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They come from San Jose State.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So that was the ambience—[laughter]—at the art department.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I went, Wow, this is fun. Back in the day, the art department was exciting and vibrant. The Doobie Brothers had already made it. They left San Jose, and everybody was like, Wow, we're cool. They were cool. Not only that, they had a weaving program, just like San Francisco State, but San Francisco State was very austere and no-nonsense and everybody had an agenda and [was] busy.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: San Jose, everybody was friendly, smiling, looking at one another, having the time to stop and talk. Wow, that's pretty cool. I think I like it here. They have an M.F.A. Who's teaching it? Patti Henry? Never heard of her. Well, she looks like fun, you know—kind of fun. Okay, I can deal with that. Her understanding of the textiles is limited, but she knows—she knows how to rock and roll a little bit with the loom. Not much of a loom, but mostly dyeing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was her claim to fame.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, then let me get in here.

So I get into the program. My daughter just took off to Stanford. My son is now at the high school here in Monta Vista. I think I could get a job. Marcos says to get a job in the arts, so I'll get a job here at school. What jobs are available? Oh, look at, there's a gallery assistant. I've always wondered what goes on in a gallery. I'll try that one. And, look, there's a job for TA in color. Heck, I know how to dye. I know how color works. I'll try that. I got both.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They're trying to hire a full-time teacher for the program. Patti Henry was just a substitute, interim. And they were in the process of hiring a weaving instructor—textile instructor—for the art department. The art department was a full second floor, like maybe three classrooms and a textile studio, a weaving studio, and merging studios where there would be installation—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —or were going to do installation. Because they're going to rid of one of the rooms of looms. "Where is that going to be?" "We use it for installation."

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I don't even know what I did. Nobody was telling me what to do in the weaving class because Patti Henry didn't know how to weave. "Do whatever you want."

MIJA RIEDEL: That's the M.F.A. program?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's the M.F.A. at San Jose. Okay, what about the gallery assistant? Wow, this is fun. This is what happens: Every day there would be, like, a 10-inch file of portfolios—me, me, me—and I had to go through them and look at them and put them in their different areas. I had to paint walls. I had to make walls. I had to hang up work. I had to answer phones. And I even got to curate a show, the high school competition. But what struck me of all that was how many artists, every day, solicited exhibitions.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Meanwhile, I'd heard from [the] *Time* or *Newsweek* article that there's 28,000 M.F.A.s coming out from the U.S. universities and there's only 3[,000] to 4,000 galleries and museums. And after five years only three percent of the M.F.A.s are actually exhibiting and making art. I bet you nobody is going to want to weave art. I know that. That's my brain, right?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: You've got a chance, girl. You've got a chance. You know by the way they almost yawned at your work from San Diego because it's so decorative—that was the term—"You barely got into the program because the work was so decorative, and is weaving really an art? It's more in the craft department," because they had a jewelry-making foundry, ceramics.

And so I went, Oh. If you get into—if you got into the program, you're the only fiber person in the graduate program in the whole—you're the only one that's doing it in textiles.

MIJA RIEDEL: In all of San Jose's—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: In all of San Jose. Everybody is in painting, installation, performance, ceramics, foundry, glass. I am the only textile. That's okay. I'm used to being a loner. I'm used to being a loner.

Throughout the semester I started meeting friends, lady friends, guy friends, but mostly ladies—"Psst, Consuelo, I used to weave. Psst." These are now mixed-media, performance, installation artists—"Psst, Consuelo, I used to weave. I used to have a loom. Hey, I've got some yarns; you want 'em?"

So I called them my "closet textile artists." [Laughter.] They liked it and they didn't like it. Yep, that's what they were. They acquiesced to the powers, like my dad, and left their weaving or their stitching, or whatever it was, and became these others to survive. But, Consuelo, you can't—you made a promise to the elders; you know what your dad went through; you've already given up La Jolla just so you can do it, so you can't abandon ship now.

And there was so much pressure from the faculty to abandon: "Why don't you cast your weavings in bronze?" Oh, my God. "Do the foundry work. I bet you, you could do a lot with the foundry. Think of the foundry as dimensional weavings that you can leave outside. Try ceramics, painting. Why don't you paint your weavings?"

And I remember one of my committee, or the faculty—we had to pick three. I picked Tony May, the husband of Therese May. He was one of my committee members—and he was what I call a "conceptual craftsman," because he understood—his wife was a quiltmaker who came at it from painting. And she did really good in San Jose and in Northern California, and that's it. But also, his wife, when I met her 20 years later, she was doing the same identical work, okay?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Fine. I don't care. Everybody does whatever they've got to do. I don't care what comes out of their studios. I don't go into anybody's studio or bedroom. Sorry, that's my rule.

So the next one was Sam Richardson, who was one of the ones that was tenured faculty, comes from paint, knows ceramics since he took his undergrad, but he was the one that was pushing installation and performance.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: He was one of the visionaries. Those two are on my committee. Then there was nobody else, because everybody else wanted me to do something else—they both were accommodating my work. Tony May would ask, "Why? Why are you doing it? Why are you doing it?" Sam Richardson would say, "Where is it going? Where do you see this going? What do you want to do with this?" Anybody else would always say, "Why don't you just do it in glass?"

I went to the philosophy department and got Tom Leddy. He had a class called "Philosophy of Art." I took that class and, I swear, it was a 45- to 50-minute lecture class. He would lecture with just one slide. Everybody was on the seat of their chairs listening to this guy. He was so good. He understood. He thought I was intriguing, my work and me as a person. So those three were my committee members.

One time Sam Richardson was going, "Consuelo, you know"—because I could tell that the other professors were saying, "Why are you letting her weave? We don't want weaving to be one of the things that's going to be coming out—we want to close the program. And we hired this new person called Lynn Mauser-Bain. We just hired her from Berkeley; she's out of Berkeley. She studied with Rossbach. And she's going to take it into the performance installation—the textile, into there."

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: "We don't want this kind of art, which is the traditional textiles. We don't want this department to be associated with it." That's what the mandate was.

Richardson was giving in to pressure. Tony is such a free spirit, he didn't care. He hung out with the Doobie Brothers. Sam Richardson would say, "Yes, fun, but we've got to go talk."

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Sam was the one questioning me. He questioned me so hard. I remember there was a big moment in the early part of my program when he asked me, "Consuelo, why don't you just try painting? You're getting too obsessed with the loom. Try painting for a semester." I remember, Should I just tell him or not? I told him: "Would you have told van Gogh, 'You're getting too obsessed with painting; try weaving?'" "Well, van Gogh changed painting." "Well, I'm going to change weaving."

He shut up; never, ever brought up, "Go over here; try this; try that." It was always, "Okay, what are you trying to do?"

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And that was the moment when I went, I'm going to do this. I can see where all the textiles are floundering, because they're getting so caught up in form, and they're being redundant.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And everybody is doing the same thing over and over again for the last 20 years. And you've got to look at Europe. Those guys are doing something with [Ritzi] Jacobi?

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, yes. Yes, yes, yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Those guys are doing incredible, cool work, but they're not from here.

MIJA RIEDEL: How about Sheila Hicks? Were you familiar with—excited by what she was doing?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, I wasn't.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was too decorative—[laughs]—for my standards.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: You know, where I could—where that work would be too much that for me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh—but she was from New York too—Trude Guermonprez.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, yes, Guermonprez.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, my God. I know her work; I didn't meet her.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But in the late '70s. I saw *The Weatherman: Where the Wind Blows*, a flag piece. She cut up the American flag and reweave it. That was when I saw it—during the time when I saw Rupert Garcia.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I went, There's a chance! There's a chance!

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I was also in love with her painted warps and pattern as images.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: You know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I was intrigued by that. The one that sunk right to my heart was that flag.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But she wasn't from the U.S.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. That's true.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Consuelo, you're from the U.S. Come on, girl. That's when I decided even more I stood my ground. Everything—I will not deviate and do what all these people want me to do. I'm not going to—I may do installation because that's fun, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Okay. So that seed was planted.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. I'll do the installation. That's kind of fun. I remember the first installation I did, I never photographed, and I wish I had. But I didn't know what I was doing. I was just in the class with Richardson. They said, "Go out to the middle of the campus, find something, and make an installation." Well, they're going to cut down this tree. Why don't I make a giant peace sign around it with flower petals?

I made this giant circle and a peace sign coming from the tree in the middle, the inverted, you know, V with a line, all just flower heads. That was the piece. Everybody loved it. I was so green, I didn't photograph it. It was just throwing petals around and saying something about the tree: "Peace be with you. You're going to die."

But I don't have an image of that, which is really bad. I remember that one. Again, Richardson would leave me alone when he saw the stuff I was doing on my loom. That's when I was doing painted warps. I was trying to excite the audience at San Jose State by not giving them the traditional beautiful tapestries, because in the critiques, they didn't really care how well-executed—it wasn't about form; it was about content and context.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was what was emphasized at San Jose State. I got that the first semester. I went, Holy Toledo, I'm going to be hot, because most people, in their graduate program, they either get form or content or context, and they write. I'm going to have form—I've got form. If I get what they want me to do here, which is the content, unstoppable. I'm just going to go, *psst*. That was my chess game.

MIJA RIEDEL: You really had that thought?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

[Cross talk.]

Yes, because I was challenged by content, and they were going to sleep with the weavings that I was doing for San Diego. I had to get an M.F.A.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: What's missing here? Content. What really is important to you? That it be loom-woven. Does it really matter that it's linen? No, you already—or, you know, cotton or silk? No, you already said it has to fit the landscape.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The materials have to fit because you already made up that rule. So what's here? Oh, computers, wires and plastics. That's how I got into the plastics and wire—

MIJA RIEDEL: All right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —because they're what Silicon Valley was all about.

MIJA RIEDEL: Of course.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So then, How do I put that—well, I'll just cut—I figured out ways. The barbed wire was the coolest because—

MIJA RIEDEL: So that's when the barbed wire first happened.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, because of the material. So what are you talking about? Well, I really would like to talk about the Virgen, how the Virgen is really not that real beautiful one, but she's everything. That's when all these dark portraits of Virgens came out.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: At the same time, I was exploring plastics and mixed media in the loom. The other thing I want to talk about is borders. The barbed wire. That's the ultimate border material. So how are you going to use that? It's impossible to weave. Then the *Virgen de la Frontera*, the big giant one that I made, that was the first time that I had used barbed wire.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: If you noticed, I put five of them in there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Then three at the top. But the first one is kind of like this, because I struggled to put—This is horrible. How am I going to get my idea that I want them—in every 10 inches I want a barbed wire? It's got to be in there. Ding! Get a tube. Weave the tube. Put the barbed wire in the tube. Pull out the tube, and it's already in place. One, two, three, four in the top row—wow—and even three at a time at the top. It was such a cool process.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was, like, *ding*, you know? That was a big—that was San Jose pushing me: Get exciting here, because these weavings are putting them to sleep. Put some content in there.

So that's why I owe San Jose State so much. But at the same time, it was such an open—they didn't go after me; they put up with me. They were intrigued.

MIJA RIEDEL: At this point, didn't you also embrace fringe?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was to confront that mindset that weaving is—it's just—you know the jujitsu? When they come at you, you grab their hand and just keep pulling so that they fall? Well, it's like, You don't like weavings? Well, how about fringe, because I knew I hated fringe.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, then, here's fringe. That was the white one.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Or I'd just let the fringe—and they loved the fringe.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They really—

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, I'm just thinking about how metaphorically oriented your work is. The whole idea of embracing fringe—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —is so interesting that that came so early.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yep.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: From denying it all through San Diego State.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: There was no fringe. But I saw that this was a really serious case. I'm not going to hide who I am. I'm going to throw it in their face. It's weaving. It's fibers. It's threads.

MIJA RIEDEL: And I love the idea, too, that fringe is synonymous and antithetical—well, not antithetical but synonymous. And also, it both is and is not the border in the work, in that it just ties right in—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The edges.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, exactly.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The edges. For me, I put that border on me just so I could pass into San Diego. Just so I could make that transition from textile to art. Well, Get rid of the border that defines craft. Make it like a painting. Stop wearing their rebozos, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Put on a sweater. Get rid of the fringe. At San Jose, I have rebozo. I have fringe. Deal with it, you know? That was the beginning of fringe. After that, then, fringe was determined by the content.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Was this also the first time that you worked in overlay, or a veil? I'm thinking of the night version of Guadalupe. Was that first sense of a layering?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. That was at San Jose State. I thought of the veil in San Diego—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —because that was the one where it was one single layer.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Remember? There was like, "Few could see through the veil of reality."

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: There was one little piece that did have a veil—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —over a little blue piece.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It had another little tapestry on top of it that you could see through.

MIJA RIEDEL: What was that piece called, do you remember?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was one of the Blue Warps.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: One of the Blue Warps series.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But I never really took it to a full veil.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was more of an abstract veil.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: When I thought of the veil in the double weave—that's what it was.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The double weave was two-fold: learning how to double weave, because it's a more advanced weave—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Two layers at once.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Plus, the veil came together, those two.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I can put my veil in a double weave. That will blow them away.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They'll think, How did she do that? So that was what the veil became more and more, because in the initial ones it was the plastics that were overlaid inside the main weaving, remember?

Then the other one that first happened was—but it was solid—was the blue—*Tonantzin Dyeing Blue*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was in between—my in-between state of San Diego and San Jose. She had the veil—she just had plastic on top of her to show the plastics floating all over the ocean, you know, that kind of a feeling.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: This oil is on the slick, and that's kind of what was going on with her. But when I came over here, that veil became even more intriguing with the double weaves, because you saw some of the Virgens that were squares; there were veils over that. But the Virgen de Guadalupe, the one that you're talking about, *Night Lights*, it was the night—the night was the veil.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right.

And the *Tonantzin*, before we leave that completely—because I wanted to—that strikes me as one of the first really strong, deliberate environmental pieces.

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, yes, it was. It really was environmental. It was all about the Ocean Mother and how she's being polluted. And that really was an environment—what happened to that piece? I think Elia got that piece.

MIJA RIEDEL: Elia?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The one who brought me to Mexico.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She has the *Virgen de las Conteras*, the one with the five barbed wires.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I think she also has the *Tonantzin Dyed in Blue*.

MIJA RIEDEL: And what's Elia's last name?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Gutierrez-Stavenhagen. Elia Gutierrez—she's a *doctora*. Elia Gutierrez-hyphen-Stavenhagen—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —from Mexico City. She also has a place in Xochimilco.

MIJA RIEDEL: And did you want to say anything else about the *Night Lights* piece?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was for the ladies of the night—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The streetwalkers, the ones that I was familiar with because of my childhood.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I remember they would always just smile at me and realize that I had a hard time. They were one of the nicer people, women, in my childhood that would be nice to me.

I wanted to make the Virgen to take care of them. I don't know what happened to all of these women. They were all my mom's friends and stuff, so I didn't know what happened to them. I wanted to make a piece to kind of like have the Virgen protect them. And that's why underneath, they're real shiny, fluorescent colors, because that's how they would dress.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But I wanted the night—because it was night, I needed the night to be over them.

MIJA RIEDEL: That piece also included the goddess—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was one of the first times—

MIJA RIEDEL: Coatlicue, yes?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Coatlicue. Coatlicue.

MIJA RIEDEL: Coatlicue.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was, I think, one of the first times, if not the first time—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —that I put here there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because that's when I went, Oh, I get it. I know that she's the one. She's the one that is the precursor. She's the real reason—you know, she's the real goddess of the Americas. This other one is just to appease the new Hispanic, Spanish mentality of what goddesses are. They can't handle a real

goddess. So that's when she first appears.

MIJA RIEDEL: Another piece that I wanted to touch on at the same time—I think '87 was Warhol's Virgin.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Because it seems that there was a Pop reference that—

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I liked—

MIJA RIEDEL: —Pop reference weaving in and out through the work. Does it feel that way to you too?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. I liked him. I got into him at San Jose.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I enjoyed what he did. He was a silk-screener—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —a textile person, and he got into painting and performance, installation. You know, he went further than I did in that direction, but I did enjoy that he celebrated his roots, his artistic roots.

In that celebration I realized that that was a very courageous thing for him to do, and somehow he made it. So he was kind of like one of my abstract mentors. And so that's why I did an Andy Warhol—*Virgen à la Andy Warhol*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I don't know what happened to that piece because I gave it away to an auction—[laughs]—and I don't know who got it. I was running at the time.

MIJA RIEDEL: And another interesting piece that happened then was *The Border Serpent*.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, yes, that was from my M.F.A. show. I wanted to weave a border. I was experimenting with wire, and I wanted to have a weaving that I could shape.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I also was intrigued—I was really happy that I had come across the mission blinds.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: These were placemats, wood placemats. I went, Wow, I can line them up together and there would be, like, maybe six feet. But if I weave them, I knew they'd go up to, like, 13 to 15 feet, because it doubles almost.

Wow, it could be the border. Oh, my gosh. I can make the Quetzalcoatl and the border all be one thing here. Then not only that, I can shape it and suspend the shape from wire so that it holds its relief form. Then I could have the fringe kind of like the blessings and the feathers and the droppings of the serpent. I was really happy with that piece.

MIJA RIEDEL: So by the time you left San Jose, you had begun to experiment so widely with materials to seek the content.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. It was because of the content that I used the stuff. I wanted to speak with material about my issues. What were my issues? Well, I know it's about spirit; I know it's about the land; and I know it's about the border. And that's basically all I had to play with, you know? But that was a full palette for me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And every one of those pieces that were done for San Jose in the mixed-media realm, if I had had the time—so the story was, they hired Lynn Mauser-Bain. She didn't know how to weave. She didn't know how to thread a loom. She barely knew how to make silk screens. But, boy, she could talk. She could really hit them with theory and whatever. All the undergraduates dropped her classes because they wanted to know how to do weaving.

I was already teaching color theory, and they had asked me, "Wow, your color classes are really good." Stuff was coming out of it. Students were all excited. I would always have something in the hallways. "Can you teach the 2-D class and we'll pay you as a lecturer?" I had to drop my gallery assisting class—because I did that for one year—because I figured, Well, I better get into teaching, not a gallery assistant. I'll do the 2-D class, and then I'll do the color as a graduate assistant, and I'll do the 2-D as a lecturer.

And then they asked me, "Can you also teach a weaving class, but we won't pay you." "You won't?" "No. We want you to take it on because Lynn doesn't know how to teach. We can give you credit, class credit, because you still have to do courses, four units."

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: "We'll give you units to teach the weaving course." And I think that was a political move so that they wouldn't get Lynn upset—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —because she didn't know how to teach it.

I remember going into the weaving studios. And I had my own loom. I brought my own giant Cranbrook and set it up in the studio. And I was always there when I could be there. And all the rest of the looms were empty. I had that studio to myself.

And I remember going in there one time, and there was one young Asian girl, real sad, in the dark, kind of, weaving. And I'm looking at her warp and it's all in a big mess. And she had learned how to do it herself, and she was so sad because she really wanted to learn, but Lynn didn't know how to teach her. So she was trying to figure it on her own, and that's impossible.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So when they were asking me if I would do that, I thought about that girl and I went, You know what? I can't let this die. I know that if they don't teach that course, they're going to drop it. Basically that's what they told me. I'll teach it.

So I taught the color, the 2-D, and the weaving, and did my work, all that other stuff. I was having fun. I was, what, 30 years old? I didn't even sleep. I only needed, like, three or four hours sleep. I mean, this is fun. My God, you know, it was like picking, only it's not prune fields. It's not the dirt. It's in fun studio land.

So by the end of the year the class was full. Everybody was weaving. Everybody was having good designs. Everybody was having great color. And Consuelo was having a good time, as you can tell, exploring, because it was fast. Instead of tiny threads, there were big pieces of half-inch, inch plastics, you know. And I know how to work.

And then the third year—I was there five years. It was going to be three, but because of all these extra-curricular activities that I was doing, I had to extend it to five, because in addition to that, Jose Colchado became—he was teaching the education and arts. He got promoted to associate dean of the arts and humanities.

MIJA RIEDEL: Who was that?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Jose—Dr. Jose Colchado.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: He said, "Consuelo, these are really good stuff you're putting on the walls, student work. Who are you, again?" I said, "This is who I am. Who are you?" He said, "Well, I'm from Texas." [Laughs.] A little guy, five-feet-two, you know, real small brain. "I'm from Texas." I go, "Oh, really?" "I'm a doctor." "Oh, really?"

Now, that got me. "Who are you? And you teach education? Yep, I've heard your things." Some people were

saying that, you know, it was a good class: "You should take it." I'm going, "I don't have time to take another course. I've got to get through my courses just to get the M.F.A. in, in weaving of fibers."

He said, "I'm going to be associate dean." "Congratulations." He said, "Would you like to be my helper? It's a paid position." "You mean like a Girl Friday?" "Yes." "What do I have to do?" "Well, you don't have to push paper. What I want you to do is walk around with me to all my meetings, and I want you to pay attention to what goes down. When we leave the meeting, I want to hear your impressions of it." "I could do that. Yes, I could do that."

I know now he wanted me to see the other side of academia, what goes on beyond the classroom in a university.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's what I learned. I learned how the structure works. I did that for two years, in addition to the color and teaching weaving.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Doing my work. It was awesome. It was—

MIJA RIEDEL: Was that in the late '80s?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Huh?

MIJA RIEDEL: '85 or '86?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was awesome, really awesome, because I loved what was going on on the loom. During that whole time, though, it was like, Wow, I really wish I could weave this border serpent in San Diego style. I really wished I could weave all that mixed media—fine threads, really push that aspect, but I couldn't time-wise—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and it put people to sleep. If I didn't have those three other gigs, I probably would have—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —had my own secret work, and then the work to appease the powers. But I decided to do this other stuff to learn academia.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, because you weren't interested in teaching it.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, yeah. I saw it as, Wow, this is fun.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: My first day in color class—remember, I was a stutterer. I go into the color class going, Gosh, you don't even like to speak in front of a group of your own peers; you're going to speak to a bunch of strangers? I walked in the color class. I look at the sea of faces, like 30 of them, because they were crowded classrooms. All of a sudden I got that totally frightened, scared move, turn my back to them.

I go to the blackboard and slowly write, "Consuelo Jimenez," all the while thinking, Consuelo, you've got three options. You can just stay here and write your name over and over and over again—[laughter]—and some kind soul will come up to you and put their arm around you and walk you out. Or you could just walk out of here and never come back and tell Tony May and all the others that you can't do it. Or you can just start crying. Stuff happens. Okay, okay.

Oh, no, the last option was, Or just pretend you know what you're doing. That was the last one. I turned around—I finished my name, right? I'm looking at them: "Wait a minute. They're like my daughter's age. These are just kids. It's the first class in college as an art student, all 18, 19. Nobody is older than 20. Oh, my gosh, these are just like my daughters. Forget it. Okay, class, get your notes out. [Laughs.] And I never looked back.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was fun because I had that idea that the masterpiece is the young mind, and I'm going to tell you all about color and a little bit more; how it fits into the universe of art and life.

That was my mandate for anything I did: How does this fit the universe of contemporary art, and how does it fit that big life? If you want to hear metaphysics, I will talk about that; if you want to hear about the mundane of life, we'll talk about the mundane of life. And it will all tie in to whatever the class is.

So that was my philosophy of teaching, to talk about the issue: how to make a good design or color, or weaving, but how does it tie into the universe of art and then the universe of the world? And—

MIJA RIEDEL: Context.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. It's going to come from you, and I don't know who you are. You've got to tell me through this process who you are, because I'm not going to believe any noise you tell me. I'm going to believe what you show me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I always told them, "When I was a student, they wanted three pieces; I would give them five. That's how I got here. I don't want to hear that you're bored. You've only got four decades left. You're going to be old, as the old fogies out in the thing. You already passed two decades." They would always, like—[laughs].

"You know what? You've got to sleep for a third of that decade. That means you only got seven years in those decades because we've got sleep a third of our lives. There's no time to waste, and this is one of the most time-consuming processes in the world. Get on it or go to painting, go to photography. It's a much faster process."

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was so cool because I would really get them.

MIJA RIEDEL: What's interesting, too, is it sounds as if you were evolving your teaching philosophies as you were finishing your M.F.A.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: So you're progressing from being a student to being a teacher pretty quickly—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and carrying directly from that what your own experiences have been—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —both as a student and then just as growing up.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yep.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was funny because there really isn't—no, Okay, I'm going to do this; I'm going to do that. It was all, like, This is—

MIJA RIEDEL: When you look back on all of that—all of those experiences—and this is one of the questions from the Archives—is there a particular experience, educational experience, that stands out above all the others as the most rewarding in any way?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The very first one that I remember as an artist was in Elmira [CA], a little two-room schoolhouse. Then we were all excited because we got to move into a new little school where only the seventh and eighth graders were going to be in one room, as opposed to the fourth through the eighth.

So I'm now in the seventh-grade room and there's this teacher, Mr. Maniscalco, an East-Coaster guy who's like, What am I doing here in California? I can see that. What am I doing here on this farm, Hickville, you know? [Laughs.]

But he was kind of cool because he wanted to get on with it, right? So I was like, Okay, In two years I'm going to be in high school, I thought, in Vacaville, where they offer underwater photography, all these arts. But my mom says, when I got out of eighth grade, "You got to go to Calxico"—200 students, racist, segregated.

Then going back to that high school, I remember getting my SAT scores, or whatever. All of a sudden all the ranchers' kids—as soon as the scores came out that were supposed to be private, they all knew about my score being really high, so they were all nice to me. I was like, They want me to join their world. What about my Chicano, oppressed border-crossers here who have already said yes to me and embraced me, and they don't talk to them? So I just let it shine. I just didn't get in there.

But going back to—what was the question?

MIJA RIEDEL: The question about the most rewarding educational experience.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, yes. Here I was, I'm going to break this thing and I'm going to show Mr. Maniscalco how good of a drawer I am. Because I knew by then—I had a lot of little drawings all around the edges of paper and everything, right?

I made a pencil drawing of this white flower on an 8 ½-by-11 sheet, white sheet. I don't know where I got it. I must have stolen it from a class or something. But it was a rendering of this white flower. It was really nice. I really was proud of it. It was beautiful. I really put a lot of effort into it.

I showed it to him. He looks at it and goes, "Consuelo, you could probably have a good job at Disneyland Studios." I brought it home, crumpled it. I think, I'm going to go into science. I'm going to go see what I can do with science and mathematics because I'm no good at that. So that was my first art coming out.

The next art one was that class in El Camino. I don't know how I did those weavings. I still didn't know how to thread a loom, but yet I would come out with really beautiful weavings. I didn't know how to thread a loom, but yet somehow I went through the process and came out with weavings. That was weird to me, really weird to me.

The third thing what happened was almost, like, three to five years later—because we were now living in Torrance, more better off—the honey was already working with his bachelor's degree—there was this little shop. That was it. We were in this little basketry shop that was in the neighborhood. It's half a mile from the apartment.

I remember going to that shop intrigued because they had these little looms. The lady who owned it was this younger lady, maybe five years older than me, but I still had the wall between me and the world. I would just go in there very quietly and look at some of the stuff. It was during that time.

I was, like, Wow, how neat. I wonder how you have a shop like this? I would just do a lot of wondering in there: How does this place like this exist? What makes it tick? How do you make something like this? Well, she looks like she has money, and she's pretty confident in who she is, and she has good [taste], kind of.

So, like, six months or a year later, the honey gets to go to Santa Clara for some business thing. We go with him, the kids and I, and we park ourselves right in front of the Triton Museum. At the time, there's that same statue, *The Universal Child*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I take the kids. We're going to walk—we had the hotel—it was the same hotel that's their motel. And we picked it because it was near the museum and I wanted to go see a museum while he's doing his thing with his whatever.

We walk to the museum and we pass by the *Universal Child*, and I'm, like, That's one of the best sculptures I've seen in public. Yes, it just blew me away. I really loved the message. I loved the form. I loved everything about it. That was before school—you know, San Diego and everything. The kiddies were small and I was just being a mom—mid-20s, I think.

I remember going into the Triton Museum. I don't even remember what was in there; it was so boring, okay? Beautiful walls. Beautiful—oh, still one of the most beautiful museums that I've still seen. The back wall was pure glass and you see the rolling hills.

During that time they had a little kiosk of wood in the back—a basketry show. "Wowie! Oh. Kids, let's go see that." We go back there and it was baskets, and contemporary but coming from traditional. If you wouldn't know, there was a basket by the owner of that shop. I was, like, so—for some reason that really struck me. Wow, she's in Torrance and she's got a basket over here in Santa Clara. How did that happen?

So that was a big, how does that work? I had no clue how it worked. Years later, when I was with Joan and I'd send my little piece off and it gets to San Francisco and Sacramento, I realize now how it worked, but I remember seeing that basket there, like, I wonder if I can do that. How does that work?

Then cut to San Diego State. I remember the big one was walking in and asking Joan, "Can you make money out of this?" I'm still mortified that I actually said that. The other one was the painting instructor—because I would sneak off to the cafeteria to weave, right, and skip the painting class.

I remember one time doing that, and I look up and there's my painting instructor, whose class I should have been in. He looks at me and I look at him, and I'm like, Busted. Busted. I drop his class. Congruently, I learn about the arts of Mexico, those two.

Then I remember a voice asking me, How do you expect to make weavings when you take so long, and saying, If I just come out with a hundred weavings—and I'm still of the idea, When I retire, I'm going to select the best hundred weavings and write a book about them, you know.

But I still—I can't even get through—but anyway, that was—I did that. I know I have a hundred weavings, but I'm not through weaving. I just feel like I'm just starting again. I feel like I just got out of graduate school, because at San Jose State, I never really graduated.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I never walked through graduation from San Jose, because the year I was going to graduate, I'd go to some conference in Chico—it was a big hand-weaving conference with a bunch of blue-eyed ladies, blue-haired ladies. But still, it's fun. They're fun ladies, and these beautiful, incredible threads and all kinds of fun, funky—it was like going to a fair, right?

I'm there and I meet one of the instructors, or teachers, full-time, continuing-track people from North Carolina State, and she looks at me and she says, "Consuelo, I'm going to have a sabbatical next year." This is, like, my third year into the graduate program over here where I'm doing everything, right? "Would you like to be my replacement when you graduate," because I was going to graduate.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So, that's it. "Would you like to take my position for a year? I'm going to be gone." I guess I could leave the honey for a year. I know he'd understand. He'd probably say yes. But, God, that's a long time. Oh, my God. So I go, "What am I going to do? In your studio?"

She said the textile studio was a converted indoor basketball court. [Laughter.] Oh, my God! Hardwood floors. The students could do giant weavings from the ceiling. We could have—I, Consuelo, could have a blast with students and textiles, and it was supported over there. I know it was much more than over here. I was just, Oh, my gosh. Oh, this is a tough one.

Then I'd tell the honey: "Well, gee, if you have to, I guess you have to." I could tell he was bummed, right?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But he didn't say no.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: He said, "If you really want to, you can." The kids are all gone. Yes, the boy's at UCLA now. The girl is at Stanford. "Okay." Gosh, an indoor basketball—wow! And a real job. Wow!

So I got to my chair, like, in April: "Well, you know, Steve [French], I'm going to graduate." "Yes. It's going to be hard to see you go, Consuelo. You've done so much here at the university." "Yes, but you know what? This lady asked me"—I forgot her name. "She asked me to teach over there, and I need to go. I really want to go, but it's so far away. I don't want to go. It's too far away. What should I do? Should I really leave?"

And he goes—because he was kind of like a mentor, too, because he would always—because by this time I was teaching Lynn's class. She was already on the way out. She knew it. I was taking on two of her classes. I couldn't teach the two designs. I was teaching the color and her two weaving classes. And Jose—and I couldn't do Jose anymore. I'd done him for two years.

So I was like, "You know, I'm ready to teach. I know I am, and this is an incredible opportunity. I've got to do it, right, Steve? I've got to go, right? And it's so far away." "Well, Consuelo, let me see what I can do." By June, at the graduation kind of time: "Consuelo, would you like a full-time tenure-track here at San Jose State, starting in the fall?" "Yes!"

I thought to myself, Wait a minute. You're just taking off in your career. You're going to take on the whole world, sit on the stone with your loom, and this will make you go—because you know how much work it is, all those

ideas you want to do on the loom. And my whole thing, ever since I was an undergrad: When I graduate, I'm going to weave every textile in my house, darn it. Every blanket, every towel is going to be woven by *moi*. You know you're not going to do that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: You know you're not going to do loom work like you really want to. But you know if you don't do it, they're going to get rid of fiber here, because they didn't want textiles. I could see that Lynn was on her way out. She wasn't showing up. She knew it too.

Then the other thing that I found out about academia, it seemed to me they didn't expect the woman to be living off the salary of just teaching—that they needed somebody that could also be buffeted by somebody else.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, dear.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I kind of felt that in between the lines, but that's what was going on. I was covered because the honey was now doing really well here in technology and engineering, so they were very on the pulse on that. So I went, "Okay, I'll do it."

I remember it was the start of 1989. Well, Consuelo, just do it for 10 years. I remember asking Steve, "Steve, what do you need to get full-time tenure here?" "Oh, you've got to be famous." I thought to myself, Well, you just took the fun out of that one. [Laughter.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, let's talk about one of the first significant series that you did that was happening right about this time—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —the Burial Shroud series—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —how that came about; what inspired that. The first one, I think, was '89—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and it was—the first one was for Joan of Arc?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: *Joan of Arc* was the first one. It was because I had fulfilled my solo exhibition to Meridian Gallery.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I'd gotten the green light from Steve that I was going to be now hired.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I had found an old studio, but it was my first real studio. I was like, Wow! Oh, my gosh. My powers, my buds from the spirits have come through. I've got to pay respects to all these heroes, people that have held the light for me. That *sí, se puede*—you can do it. Just go for it. And she was one of the first ones, at age nine that when I read her, I told myself, I can get out of the field in 10 years. In 10 years I don't have to pick anymore. I don't have to get up at 4:00 in the morning. Now I want to just to have fun, but back then it was horrible.

It's funny; most of my heroes had sad deaths. [Laughs.] I don't think they had proper burials. I've got to make a shroud for them. And burial shrouds are meant to clothe the body.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I don't think any of my heroes would want that. I'm going to make the shroud to cover their body, and kick it off if they don't like it. That's why they're all kind of trapezoidal.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Body length—I had to look up how tall these people were—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —to have them fit the scale. There's nothing on Joan of Arc, but nobody was higher than five feet.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So she was kind of easy, kind of difficult. But everybody had their challenge, every one of those heroes. So that's how that came about. I had to pay homage to my heroes. And the heroes were Joan of Arc, Zapata. Zapata, we all know his tragic story. And John Chapman—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I don't know how he died.

MIJA RIEDEL: I don't either.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I don't know, so I just hope he went to the orchards. So his was—

MIJA RIEDEL: I had to actually look that up, and there was Johnny Appleseed. I didn't know it was John Chapman.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. Yes, and he was one of the Children of the Light, one of those sects coming out of the Quakers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's why he was literate. That's why he could read and write. That's why he said, "You guys are a bunch of idiots." That's why I liked him so much. I thought to myself, Wow, if they all came over just wanting to plant instead of take, take, take—and so that's why he was one of my first heroes of the European race, because he came over with that intent.

MIJA RIEDEL: I didn't know that.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. So that's why I liked him. That's why I said, There's faith. They're not all bad, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So he was a hero.

Then there was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And then I really wanted to make one for Lao Tzu, but he was an older hero. All these people were when I was young and formidable. And Dr. King, I was in high school when I first heard of him, civil rights and what he was doing down there.

He didn't get killed until later, but he was definitely one of those forces that made me want to believe that we shall overcome. So, Dr. King. Then as I was finishing up the series, Cesar Chavez had fasted, and he fasted way too much.

So, I finished the series. Kenneth saw the four and—

MIJA RIEDEL: You mean Ken Trapp?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: I think we ought to mention that, yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, and he wanted to buy all of them.

MIJA RIEDEL: When did Woody Guthrie happen?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Huh?

MIJA RIEDEL: Wasn't there a shroud for Woody Guthrie as well?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, yes, he was in there. He was one of the ones that I liked because he's definitely U.S., but he was the one that said no to Hollywood and New York. He was going to sing for the masses. He was going to sing in the railroad stops, the migrant camps. That's what I liked about him.

He was really difficult. I had to do two different starts because I couldn't get him. He was the one that was the most—but then I finally got it. His inspiration was the dust, because I read his story. And so that's why that

shroud is so sheer. It's like the dust. That really imprinted him to be who he was. He says he remembers going under mattresses for a couple of days because that's the only place you could breathe.

So, oh, the opposite of mattresses. That's why he wanted to be free. To be stuck under a mattress for a couple of days is horrible.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So he had to be free and light and be able to go wherever he wanted. Then it made sense.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because I was trying to make the earth golden because he loved the earth, but it was too dense always. Then it hit me, oh, it's the dust. So that was John Chapman. He was—when he was, "This Land is Your Land."

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, Woody Guthrie, yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. That's when—I remember my dad singing and making up verses in Spanish to that tune.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. I remember the hootenannies in the early '60s. I remember hearing—I don't remember; what singers were they? Somebody on the pop radio, you know? Then I remember hearing one of his recordings.

So I went, That's a really good song. And then I heard about him. And then I went, He did affect me. My dad liked him. I went, It's okay that you can like a U.S. song. It doesn't all have to be Mexican songs That was before I got into rock and roll. So that's why Woody Guthrie appears.

MIJA RIEDEL: And then when did Ken Trapp decide to buy all these pieces for the Oakland Museum?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: All four of them were finished—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, so—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and they were hanging—there was one that wasn't finished.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Cesar Chavez.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I told him, "Okay, I need to make room for Cesar Chavez." And he says, "Good. Just give it to me when it's done." I hadn't even started it yet, because he had just died.

MIJA RIEDEL: So what an extraordinary, validating time, to have this full-time, tenure-track position, to have the whole collection of the burial shrouds collected in one museum.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: [Ken] was incredible. I'll always owe it to him. He was the one. He was the one that made me what I've always wanted to be since day one. I don't need to have a whole book on me. I don't need to be the star. I just want to be a footnote.

That would be so cool, just to be a footnote on somebody's book—that somebody like me that was pushing fibers when it wasn't popular and is talking about border and land and spirit and struggle in beautiful ways—because there are a lot of people that are talking about that stuff, struggle, with really decapitated bodies and blood.

I don't want to put all that into my art. I wanted to do it the old way, with the old thread way. I wanted to be in history that something like that happened. I was really happy when he got it, because I sensed, Yes, now I'm going to be footnoted. Now I'll be [a] footnote.

MIJA RIEDEL: And then some.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. I didn't know about "some," but I was certainly going to—because I

knew academia was going to be a lot of work—a lot of work. But I'm going, Well, 10 years. Sure enough, in 10 years I've got the tenure full-time. And then I wanted to quit and they said, "Well, if you quit, we're quitting the department."

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, I guess I could get more into just formalizing my position in the arts, and this is a good—being a full-time professor is a good stone to be on when you want to get more into more museums and stuff. So I'll do it for 10 years and then I'll quit. So that's what I did.

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MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Consuelo Jimenez Underwood at the artist's home and studio in Cupertino, California, on July 5, 2011, for the Archives of American Art[, Smithsonian Institution]. This is card number three.

And we're going to start this morning with a few thoughts that you had regarding what we were talking about yesterday.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Joan Austin, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, Joan Austin. Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, Joan Austin taught me how to weave, how to do the basics of the textile structure. But the most important thing that I think I have an edge over other of my peer artists was that she taught me the importance of documentation.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah, interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She was the one that was—always insisting on photographing everything that came out of the studio.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And she would make a big production over setting up the lights, setting up the camera, and getting the right picture. And it was ingrained in me to do that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And so I thought as I went on in the graduate program at San Jose, I felt I had that edge over my other graduate peers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I thought that was—

MIJA RIEDEL: Because that was not emphasized at San Jose?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, and it wasn't emphasized—well, I don't know if other faculty, but I know she was very much into the documentation thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that came in especially handy when you were applying for other exhibitions or for—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, my gosh, yes, even for the Archives—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and just to have a good record of all the work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. And it's true, because when I was looking at your images before we met, they were very well documented, going back to the beginning.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really, the very first piece—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: —from El Camino College, or—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, I kept those, but I photographed them during—I went, Oh, I've got to photograph. I've got to document. What I didn't do—she said, "You should have an index card for each piece." And I'm going, oh, my God, to get—I'm not going to—

MIJA RIEDEL: [Inaudible.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Now I go, Darn, I should have done that, you know? But I have to owe that to Joan Austin, that she's the one that gave me the importance of that documentation [of] work. I always try to ingrain that into the students again—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —by what her example was to me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, and it's so easy now with digital equipment—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —with a snapshot, putting it in a metafile, and they're set, you know?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Right. Right. The other big thing was do the best photography that you can.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Don't try to do it on your own. Get somebody professional. And that's so important because you don't want just okay photos—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —you want the best that you can afford.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So I want to say that about Joan. I'm also really sorry I didn't know about her passing on until years later. Maintaining contact is very important.

There's a lot of regrets, and the other one regret I have is that I didn't take images of myself as much as I should have with other of my peers and mentors.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's because I didn't like images of myself. And I had opportunity, but I would always, like, No, I don't think so. In retrospect, I'm going, I should have done that; I should have had images of me doing this, images of me meeting that person, that kind of stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right. There's a wonderful image of you, quite young I think, with that red *serpiente* piece —*Border Serpent*.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was because the photographer insisted.

MIJA RIEDEL: Aha.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: [Laughs.] I went, Okay, I'll do it. He had to talk me into it, because I was, Okay, I'll do it. I'll do it. Okay, I'll do it. That was—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, and that's a great photo.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was in the graduate program at San Jose State.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was one of the first early ones, images of me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Yes, that's the first one I can recall.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, because other than that I was, like, very camera shy. So—

MIJA RIEDEL: Any other thoughts, or shall we move into the Celestial series?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Let's move into it, and if I come up with anything else, I'll—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, we can just—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I'll say it.

MIJA RIEDEL: —bounce back.

So, yesterday we talked about the Burial Shroud series. And the early '90s were such a dynamic time for your work. The burial shrouds happened. The Celestial series—the celestial Border series?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, portraits.

MIJA RIEDEL: Celestial Portraits. And then the Fronteras Flags, the first flags.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: So let's talk about those series in particular. Let's start with Celestial Portraits, since we covered the shrouds yesterday. That was a big shift from things you'd done before.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, yeah, because I was always like, I can hardly wait until I graduate, and then I can do what I want, because I always felt my work had to appease the committee—

MIJA RIEDEL: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —the faculty, the institution. I always felt, I've just got to do this while I get through the program. I really want to do weaving. You can see with the burial shrouds, that was the first thing I did, was dump everything and go back to what I learned—what my love was, the loom, and then—but I married it with concept—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —which is what I learned from San Jose State.

And it was also coming from the soul, in the sense it was paying homage to those that gave me strength to go through what I had to do, because their lives were much harder than my life.

So once I felt that, then I went, Oh, okay, whew; I got back to the loom. I can still weave. Yes. I paid homage to the great ones. Oh, there's other, greater ones. Ah. Oh, yes, the sun and the moon and the—ah, okay, okay, I got it. Okay. Let me pay something for you guys, because they were also there.

Then by that time, the necessity of being solely traditional-form-oriented, like the San Diego Shroud series felt like, I mixed it up, because in those I put in some barbed wire—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —I put in some fragmented cloth that would never have flown in under Joan's eye.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She would have said, Take that stuff off. You know, get it tight. What do you mean, barbed wire? What do you mean plastics? It would not have flown.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: In San Jose they're like, Yes, you know? Yes, you know. But I think I married material and the concept—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But I tilted it more towards San Jose material, and—

MIJA RIEDEL: More found objects, alternative materials.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. Yes. I think that was exciting. Plus, I had gotten the big studio—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —which had the 30-foot walls, a former Masonic meeting hall. And it had the big loom in that big studio. And all of a sudden I could go huge. That's why those pieces are, like, nine feet by five feet. I mean, they were big, because what—I remember Joan was always saying, "You've got a loom. Try to use the full width."

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: "Try to use the full width of the loom." At San Jose, the program, I felt I had to produce, produce, produce, that I had to make them smaller rather than larger. But here, now I'm in my own time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I could go big, and I know how to go big, and I know how to go fine and just mix the whole thing up.

MIJA RIEDEL: So that's interesting because the studio really enabled you to—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Totally.

MIJA RIEDEL: —to change scale.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, my gosh.

MIJA RIEDEL: Now, where was the studio again?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's on Third. It was on Third. It was on Third; they knocked the building down —

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —Third Street and Santa Clara.

[Cross talk.]

It was, like, maybe three blocks off campus.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was wonderful.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was incredible. But then, years later when I went—like five years later I went to Spain, '94, and then I went, Wait a minute, what incredible work. Their studio is as big as my kitchen. [Laughs.] So, how does that compute, you know? So then, all of a sudden, Well, don't get confined to the space as defining what your work is.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting. Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Get free from that. Make still the idea—because you can still make big pieces in a small space. Then it was just hammered home when I went to see Pollock's studio in the Hamptons.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's just a little shed, and he made these huge pieces, you know, in this tiny little shed. I'm going, Okay, that's what you learned back in the '90s. Okay, you know? It doesn't matter. Now my studio is even in the pickup, in the passenger seat, because that's where I create work. It doesn't matter.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's interesting. So you are really able to work in a variety of spaces.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Totally.

MIJA RIEDEL: Is there anything in particular that you have to have?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, I can collect it all in my eyeglass case, where I have the needle, the thread and the scissors.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I tell students, "This is all a fiber artist really needs." That's what's so great about this media. I don't need to drag a kiln around. I don't need to drag an easel around. I could put it all in a Sucrets-box kind of a thing, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The needle, the thread—

MIJA RIEDEL: What about—and so, we are talking about non-loom work, obviously.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. I mean, it doesn't have to be. I can make a loom. I know how to make a loom on a can, on a box, on a sheet of paper. You just have to construct like a spider; construct a web anywhere you want and then go across the web as a weft.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: In fact, one of my students made me this cool ring. It's a bracelet. She made it as a ring. I said, "I want it as a necklace." It's a little weaving loom.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, that's wonderful.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So she actually wove a series of beautiful, tiny—with sewing thread—little squares and put them on a grid on a canvas and then safety pinned them with tiny little safety pins onto the squares.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, my gosh.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I went, I want that idea.

MIJA RIEDEL: This is, what, an inch by—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —an inch and a half. Yes. That's fantastic.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Isn't it?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, my gosh. I've yet to weave on it, and I'm thinking I should have brought it [with] me [to] Belgium—on the airplane ride—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —so I could weave. But then I'm going, Well, what can I do better than what she did? Nothing. Well, then—[laughter]. I can't, because it was such a cool idea.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, absolutely. I want to move us back to your studio, the large—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: How long did you have this large studio for?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Not very long.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Maybe three years at the most—two to three years.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. But the Celestial Portraits were all—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Came out of there. The Burial Shrouds were there, and the big portraits with fabrics were there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Then soon after those, then I moved on.

MIJA RIEDEL: Were the Celestial Portraits the first time that you incorporated the caution image into the work?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No. When was—it was around that time. No, it was in—well, was it? I wonder if it was in the graduate work at San Jose State, because at San Jose State was when I did the silk screen, you know, because I was influenced—I was thinking of Andy Warhol—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —the silk screen onto the warp. I don't think it was in there. I think you're right. I think it could have been *Indian Soil*, which was the first one of the—

MIJA RIEDEL: I've been looking, and that's the first time that I—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's the first one. I think you're right.

MIJA RIEDEL: In the piece called *Earth*—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —is the first time that I noticed that caution image. There may be another one, but—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I think that was the first series, because it was 1990—early '90s, and the thing came up around '87, was when I noticed the caution sign.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And that really horrified me to see that sign.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So, Oh, my god, they're thinking of us as animals, you know—"CAUTION: Deer Crossing." So that affected me, and that's when I first started using it. So, yeah, I think you're right.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I think that was right.

MIJA RIEDEL: Now, those pieces were interesting because they—that series was interesting because it incorporated so many of your interests—ecological interests, the landscape, nature—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Spirit.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely, spirit. Fringe seems like it also became—

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, my gosh, that was such a horrific and very—okay, so I had Sam Richardson, my ex-committee professor, come in to see the work. I remember I showed him the self-portraits. He didn't say anything about the work; he started talking about his father and the relationship he had about his father.

Now, what's going on with that? I don't know. At the same time I had the moons—the white moon and the other side of the moon, the dark side.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The white moon had the fringe and the dark moon didn't have fringe.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I had to cut it off just like that.

Then he didn't say a word. He took off; he left. Then I brought in Fred Spratt, who was the owner/director of the Fred Spratt Gallery, which was "the" gallery for the university folk in San Jose. He comes in: "Why did you cut the

fringe off the moon for?" [Laughter.] The first thing he said.

[Cross talk.]

Just walked in.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: There was a portrait that Sam rattled and rattled on. He completely didn't talk about the Moon series. Then Fred Spratt, who is a painter—he was an abstract painter and that's what he mostly showed—he never showed my work in his gallery. That's okay because I felt that it wasn't a venue anyway because it was all abstract painting and it didn't make sense. He was married to a wonderful Japanese lady who loved textiles, and through her he could appreciate my work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I valued his ideas and emotions that he got from my pieces. So when he said that—he just walked in, "Why did you cut off the fringe of that one for," I just didn't know what to do, because I had already gone through this fringe thing, you know, that I told you about, and I was always, Should I or I shouldn't I? Should I or shouldn't I?

Then after—when he said that, I went, I knew I shouldn't have cut it. I said, Consuelo, from now on, before you get rid of the fringe, you've got to sleep on it one or two nights, then decide.

MIJA RIEDEL: What was the criteria for getting rid of it or not?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because I wanted to be so different from the other side.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Whereas, a white moon, we could see everything—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —but on the dark side we don't see any—we never see the other side of the moon because it doesn't rotate, doesn't spin. It's like you don't see anything. You don't see fringe; you don't see anything. It's just darkness.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did they both have veils?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: I know the white one did.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The black one did too.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I don't think I have a photograph of a close-up of that one. Yes.

The problem that I saw with academia and during that time was I was very excited about weaving, about art, and about teaching. Then, after two or three years, I went, Oh, my gosh, this is a lot of work. I've really got to focus on one or the other—so I decided—and then I left—the studio was gone, and so I went back to—I don't know what I did next—I can't remember—but I know in '93, '94—the work got smaller, mixed media—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —because of the time constraint, the time constraint, because I put a lot of effort into being a good teacher.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I could never be like everybody else and repeat the same curricula over and over again. It seemed like every semester had to be new.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was really difficult. I made it really hard for myself. But then I would get

bored. I'm going, This is boring. I'm not going to do the same thing over and over again, you know? Gosh.

MIJA RIEDEL: So how would you design courses? Let's deviate a little bit into the teaching.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was important to me to give them what I knew.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I knew there was three things to the art: the form, the content, and the context. In every course they had to know form. They had to know—they had to know the structure of color.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They had to know how thread and the loom work. They had to know how fabric and dyes worked. Then the content. Who are you? I don't want to know about your favorite pet.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I want to know about you.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

MS. UNDERWOOD: That was always the second part. Once you know the vocabulary, what are you going to talk about?

Then the third one was, Well, how does this relate to the world? How is the world going to relate to this? You don't know? Well, then why don't you look up those images and colors and look up what your favorite artist said and did.

So each group of class was different. So they brought in new challenges for me, because I would always ask them, What are you doing here? What do you want to learn? Why are you in a weaving class? Why are you in a textile class? What's up with that?

So they would come either from the Santa Cruz hippie craft mode, or they'd come from, Well, there's no other class but this to take, or, I've been intrigued. I want to know what's up with it. So those were kind of like the three different—and each class would have a bigger amount of one or a bigger amount of the other, or a bigger amount—you know. So every class was different.

MIJA RIEDEL: And were you teaching strictly weaving? Were you teaching other aspects of art as well—color theory, anything along those lines?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, I was teaching four courses.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Color theory, weaving, 2-D surface design, and textile design.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Each course defined what I taught. In the weaving I wanted them to know off-loom and loom process. I always told them, "Whenever I teach you anything here, my mandate is that when you leave this class, you teach two or three other people. I'm really concerned that the weaving will go away in our society. It shouldn't. It's defined what man is separate from the animals. Why should it go away in these last 50 years? I'm here to teach you and I want you to teach others." That was mandatory.

In the textile class, it was, Respect fiber. There's so many fibers—cotton, silk, linen—they all have different characters, different properties, and they all can say something different. Whatever your ideas are, make the material meet the—or match the idea, and then learn about that material. You know: What is it, what is its high point, what is its strengths, what is its weaknesses?

And then in the color class it was more about self: Who are you as an artist? What do you want to express? How does color relate with that? But in all classes, all these things kind of came together—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —because, What are you going to weave—a cloth, a fabric, an object, you know? And in the textile, What are you going to construct? What are you going to evoke? What are you going to bring in from your past, personal or cultural, into here? Because the whole thing about art for me was, You've

got to give it a past. That's what I learned from Joan.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: You've got to bring in the past, make it talk, resonate for today, but make it important still in the future.

MIJA RIEDEL: And did you draw on the history of textiles for these classes as well?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Not as much—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —because the historical textiles, as we know it, the folk tradition, everybody already knew about that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, Okay.

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They already had a handle on the different continents, and all these kids were getting more and more sophisticated—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —so they already knew. I would ask them, and, yep, they knew. So I wasn't going to go back like Joan did—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and show me what the African textile, the kente cloth, as opposed to the Peruvian or opposed to the Chinese, because I felt that I can't give them that because they already seem to know this stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: You've got to remember, San Jose State was extremely—and it still is—multicultural.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Totally. They've very aware of each other. These students that were college level, they already kind of had a handle—not too much. I'd give a brief one or two lectures on that, but not like Joan, one, two weeks, on just kente cloth.

Then, in the contemporary 2-D design class, that really would bomb, and then I would get them—I'd get them excited about a couple or two or three that I liked. But I even brought in Christo as our contemporary textile artist. And that really upset the sculptors, you know—[laughter]—in the graduate and in the other classes because, "Well, he wasn't textile—fabric." "You've got to be joking. What is his material? He's a textile artist? Give me a break."

So we would have arguments with that, but the students were like, "Yes," but my peers and the faculty were, like, "You can't do that that. You shouldn't do that." And I'm like—

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —who's zooming who here, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But it was okay to say Sheila Hicks, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's okay to put her—but she's sculpture more than Christo was for me. I was always on that edge of, Tell me not to, because I will challenge that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Pushing those borders.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, I was always doing that, and I kept doing that.

Give the students a traditional—oh, and the name of the lady was Candace Crockett.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. And when I would—

MIJA RIEDEL: The one at—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —at San Francisco State.

MIJA RIEDEL: —San Francisco State, yeah.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Beautiful weavings, really tight, but it put us to sleep. All these traditional, important ones, it would be like—I could see their—because it put me—and I can imagine them. And I was like, Oh, my God. Okay, I know I'm young and I know these are younger, so they're even more yawning than me.

So I really couldn't draw too much on the history. I was more excited there to get more excited over the Soviet prints from—in the Soviet Union during the communist years, they funded a lot of the craft movement.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So they had really incredible textile silk screens.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And they would get excited about that, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: The content.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, more than, like, Ferne Jacobs.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and all this stuff. So I couldn't really bring in the ones that Joan forced down my throat. [Laughter.] I couldn't do that because I'd lose them—so I figured out ways. I'd look up who was doing—like Neda, they were blown away with that.

They were blown away by the Ritzi, maybe. They were edgy—because the scale was what blew them away, the content and form—well, the form was somewhat exciting for them. The scale was good for them. Magdalena, it was scale, you know? Oh, it was just unbelievable.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Unbelievable scale.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I tried—on the traditional ones I would try to extract what was it that was exciting about it. But there weren't that many in the '70s and '80s—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —that was really pushing the—for me, I never had a—I wish I had—I never could find an image of Billy Al Bengston. Maybe he just did that for San Diego State.

MIJA RIEDEL: No, I don't—

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Or the nail on the—he might have gone to San Diego, and, you know, "I don't know what I'm going to do. Oh, that's"—I can see him do that, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And so—

MIJA RIEDEL: And did he—had he actually even woven those, do you think?

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I don't even know if he did—or maybe—

MIJA RIEDEL: —found them and—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Or maybe he found them or maybe he had somebody to—

[Cross talk.]

Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I don't know, but I just remember there were just—you know, the structure this big, there were, like, bath-size mats and *boom, boom*. I was, like, Whoa!

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, I've never heard of him weaving at all.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I know. It's really weird.

MIJA RIEDEL: It was an era when installation was really significant and mixed media was really significant.

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And that was at the beginning of that, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was at the beginning of that. And I know that it was very controversial—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —especially at a conservative place like San Diego State, where I was at the time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But then at San Jose I felt they went totally overboard, where they overlooked form and were really just about presentation.

MIJA RIEDEL: A quick, related question, because you've taught—you've studied and taught at multiple universities and colleges, and then we've talked about—off disc, we talked about Penland and some of the schools that you've taught at.

What difference do you see between artists that are trained in the university and artists that are trained somehow elsewhere, either through schools or on their own? Do you think there's a place for university in craft and in weaving, fiber in particular?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I tend to be very open about those ideas. Like I told the students, "Don't disdain the Sunday painter."

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: "It's important. Don't disdain the folk artist who's out there in the boonies and not call it art. It's important, and just as important at these guys that are in the galleries and museums. So who are we to be the gatekeepers? Who are we to say, this is good and this is not good?"

"So, if you really want to know—if you want to teach; if you really want to get into the context and history of art or crafts, then go to the university. If you don't want to, then don't do it." But I know, for me, I needed validation, authenticity. I need to have a degree.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you've also just said that the university brought a level of context that the other—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —training on your own or through—

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because you have to research.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: You have to research the past, link it to the future, and see who the contemporaries are. But if you're the kind that just want to know how to do this and then go set up your shop in the middle of nowhere, that's fine too.

But to do that, it might empower you to get a degree, because you can go to Timbuktu with a degree and set up a school, or set up a center. You may not know if you want to do that or not. This is always my talk to the students, because some students go, "Oh, I don't need that; I'm not going to be doing"—I go, "Well, it's true you don't need it. However, when you're out there in the boonies, you could set up a place, and it would be a lot easier to get grants and funding from the local community to help you set it up if you have a degree. So it validates and empowers you. It's another arrow in your quiver."

That's the strength of the degree and university training. But I've seen some of the best artists never went to a school, and they're out there in the middle of nowhere and they're incredible, you know—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Much more than some that come out of universities.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So, who are we to say yes or no? I will tell them the story about over there in Palomar Junior College in San Marcos. There I was, struggling to shadow an egg in the drawing class. And this one young lady next to me, she'd just close here eyes and out would be these unicorns and forests, and all perfectly rendered with pencil from light to dark, and I was like, Here I'm struggling to shadow this stupid egg, and here she's like, eh, du, du, du, du, du, du.

I was already married and had the two kids, and I've got to go to this place, so I can go to either San Diego State or the university over here at La Jolla. And I went up to her and I said, "So, what are your plans?" thinking, My God, this one can go to New York, Chicago, you know, London. She can write her ticket with her—"Oh, you know, Consuelo, I really just want to get my degree so I can work in a bank."

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She had no clue what to do with her talent. Here I had no talent, I felt, and here I already had my dreams of, I'm going to want to do this and that. Here this young lady, who is incredibly talented, didn't know what to do except work in a bank. So it's not just talent. It's more than that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: You've got to have something—I guess, for me. Maybe she would be happy in a bank. She thought that was going to make her happy. Who am I to say, No; no, don't do that. Because I've been around and I know people are people, and there's all kinds of people and everybody had a path. I'm not one to guide paths, really, because if they would have told me, Go this way, I would have immediately gone the other way. If I were to say that—and I know that from myself. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right.

You've taught at Penland.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Have you taught at Haystack or Arrowmont, any of the other craft schools?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, only Penland.

MIJA RIEDEL: Penland is the only one.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And how did I get to Penland? I'm not sure how I got—I don't know, because

out of the blue they asked me would I do a workshop teaching over there in Penland. And during that time, I was running again. All the '90s I was running.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I never had time to do anything but my art, academia, family. My first instinct was to say, No, I can't do it; I'm too busy. But Penland, that's where weaving started. Oh, my gosh, that's where the whole thing started in the U.S. Oh, my gosh. Okay, I'll do it, only because I wanted to weave in that studio. That's the only reason I said yes. Otherwise I would have said, Sorry, can't do it. I can't get out of my path.

MIJA RIEDEL: And how did your experience there compare to what you experienced in the university as a teacher, and how were the students similar or different?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, my gosh. First of all, I had 12 students. The whole workshop was about barbed wire.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: How to weave with barbed wire on the loom.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, that's another story. Oh, my gosh. So I've been struggling with California barbed wire since the early '90s, learning how to weave it, right, and how to stretch it and all that. I didn't realize, but California barbed wire is, like, almost pencil diameter, the two, and then you twine them together.

I go to Penland and the barbed wire they give me, it's like the core, the lead part is—that's how wide the diameter is, and they're twisted together.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah, so much narrower.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Finer—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —lighter, easier. I'm like, "Wow, where did this come from? This is very different from the California barbed wire." Then some young lady said, "Well, Consuelo, we have to take care of our horses." Oh, excuse me! Of course, we don't want to hurt the horses over here.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: In California, who cares? It's for people. [Laughs.] That was so funny to me. But ever since then, I've been ordering just the thin—

MIJA RIEDEL: The thin gauge.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: [Laughs.] That's what's out there, the thin gauge—oh, my gosh, my fingers were so—they were like—I was afraid to pick up things because I'd break things, you know, because I was so used to working with the barbed wire—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —when I went to Penland. That was the first hit in Penland.

MIJA RIEDEL: And Penland, was that the early '90s, mid-'90s?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Mid-'90s, I think, or maybe late '90s. Mid-, late '90s. So I did. Okay, I'll do a workshop in barbed wire, because I knew that was edgy and it might bring in the students to come in.

I remember the students in Penland. Like I said, there were two camps. The students' camp, the younger set, the ones that were in my class, I think there were eight guys and four girls. And all of a sudden it was more guys than girls—the first time ever. And they, all of them, were very good, very good.

Then I noticed, as I hung around with them, that I had some kind of presence, because the other people, I'd go to the gatherings and they'd all seek me out. I realized, Oh, my gosh, these students, they like me. They've heard about me. They like who I am; whereas most of the faculty did not seek me out. It was the young folk—

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —that would seek me out. I was very touched by that, and I was awed by that.

The other thing that struck me about the students was how good they were. I would say 99.9 were my A-plus students that I would have in my regular classes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was like having a whole class of nothing but the best. I was like, Dang, these people are good.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But they were coming from the North, from the South, from the Midwest—

MIJA RIEDEL: From all over.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: From all over half of the U.S. It seemed to me like the best of the best. So I was, like, Wow, this is really cool. I think it's going to be okay, the art world, you know, if these are the young folk. I guess they must be in their 40s now, and some of them are probably teaching, hopefully, because they all had nothing but great careers in front of them, just by the quality of the work that was coming out.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was amazing. After that I always told my students, "See if you can go there."

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Especially the good ones: "You've got to go there because then you'll see how not alone you are. There's lots of young folk that want to work day and night on their art, that think nothing but their craft, you know, think nothing but their art, and they're doing hot things, you know, merging the art and the craft."

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was really hopeful. It gave me a lot of hope for the future. It made me feel more confident that I'm doing okay with the younger folks. The older folk might have a little problem with me, but they're my peers, so they have the context of what I grew up with. But these young kids, they have another context altogether.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They don't have that cultural baggage that the '50s kind of stuff. They have the '70s and the '80s.

MIJA RIEDEL: And what do you see as that shift, that cultural context shift that the students did?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The students, I think, saw our generation go down, whatever it was, but I know a lot—because I remember there was so much idealism in the '60s. You know, the hippie movement. It was based on idealistic values, you know: love, flowers, and peace. I mean, what a spiritual, holy, celebratory triad of ideas, and for a whole generation to embrace them. Wow. That gave me hope—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —coming from where I was coming from. It could happen. Oh, my gosh, it could happen. The Mickey Mouse Club rules, you know, all those values that you saw in the Mickey Mouse Club and in the idealistic *Leave it to Beaver*—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Wow, it could finally really happen. What brought it down was not the assassinations, of Kennedy, because that happened—that was done by the other generation, older generation, and our generation, I think, responded in kind with sorrow and recognition of, Oh, my gosh, this is really bad.

It was the massacre in Mexico City, the students that got shot down by the government. They didn't even do a

body count. All they came up with was 2[00] or 300 people in that plaza where the three cultures meet. Have you been to that plaza?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, a long time ago.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: In the '60s—'68, '69—

MIJA RIEDEL: Is when they shot the students?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —the students down.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was at the height of the hippie movement. That was right before the big fiasco with the Rolling Stones in San Francisco where the motorcycles killed some of the concert-goers, it was right before the '70s, when things went dark.

But a precursor for me was when I went, Oh, my God, it's not—it's shallow; it's pseudo peace, love, and flowers, because the students were shot down in Mexico City. It was horrible, horrible, horrible, and yet it didn't make the headlines here.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Nobody cared. My peers, and to love, peace, and antiwar—Eh, next.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I was like, Oh, my God.

MIJA RIEDEL: It wasn't transcending the borders, yeah.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That totally—that's when I said, Okay, the next decade I'm just going to go into my Escondido three-acre farm and be the best mom I can ever be—back to nature, raising two kids, and I'll think of what to do. Oh, I think I'll become an artist. That's when we moved to Escondido, and for 10 years—that was my next 10-year plan.

MIJA RIEDEL: So were you seeing—I'm still trying to figure out what shift you were seeing in your students from your peers in terms of work and what they were interested in, what they thought was important, what the focus was.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I think the students at that age were kids during the '70s.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: You know? And so now they're students. They are now 20-year-olds.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So they saw the downward spiral of their parents. Because a lot of those kids were living with grandparents. A lot of their kids were dealing with separate—new fathers, stepfathers, stepmothers—and a lot of them were kind of rejecting—unless they came from Santa Cruz—all those hippie ideal values.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was the big difference; whereas my peers were still dealing with that, trying to juggle the '60s values and the '70s negative times and yuppyism. And they were struggling with who they were; whereas the kids, they say, "Get me out of here." "Consuelo, you are real. You do love flowers and peace." I think that was the difference between me and my peers, and why the students were different than me as a student.

Is that the question? Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, I'm thinking about what they saw in your work and in your materials and in your classes that drew them, and then also trying to gauge the difference between when you were a student and what was compelling—what was driving weaving and fiber—and then what was driving these kids later in the mid- and late '90s when you were teaching at Penland at San Jose State.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, when I was a student—I mean, I think I told you—I didn't know what an artist was. I thought they painted or sculpted.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So I paint. So then—

MIJA RIEDEL: And it also seems—just to finish the question—it seems also that perhaps the boundaries it opened up in terms of what was admissible when you were at San Diego—you talked about Joan being very specific about what was and was not acceptable. Same at San Jose.

By the time you were teaching, weaving was acceptable and mixed media was acceptable. Textiles and fiber had opened up in terms of what was—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, exploded.

MIJA RIEDEL: —common practice. So I wonder if the students were more intrigued by that range of opportunity.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They were. They were kind of overwhelmed, for one thing. And it does not compute, because they had heard, Hey, threads and fiber, you know, that's Mom's stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They were like, Wow, huh?

And then I remember several students told me, "Consuelo, it's amazing." They were overwhelmed by me personally. "Not only are you a woman and you're Mexican and you're poor, but you're also an artist." They didn't want to emulate me, but they had hope.

Even one of my peers, Andy Ostheimer, says, "Consuelo, talk about heroes; to be doing hero burial shrouds, you're heroic," you know. I think a lot of those students were mesmerized by my, quote, persona, but also overwhelmed by the doors that I was opening: Look, you can do anything you want as long as it's authentic, it's you, and you can tie it to an art-historical context.

MIJA RIEDEL: And your content, I imagine, was so charged, so contemporary, political, environmental, and your materials, from barbed wire to—I don't know if you'd started using the safety pins yet.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, those were the mid-'90s, I think.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, but—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes—

MIJA RIEDEL: —there was a lot going on that was very contemporary—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Very.

MIJA RIEDEL: —very much of the moment, very much speaking to—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I always—

MIJA RIEDEL: —political and environmental realities, social reality.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I always felt that my work was not going to be about me, myself, and I. It was not going to be about my parents. I used to call the portraits of what my mom did to me, things what my dad did to me, what I think about art, me as an artist, that kind of work. I saw that art was my masturbation, kind of a thing. I don't want to do that. But if you want to do that, student, okay, what's the big—how can you make it universal, because you're not the only one. If you want to go that way, well, find out other artists that had that theme.

But I think the thing that got to them was how I opened up—unlike me as a student, where I was, like, You've got to walk this way, I would say, Look at all the ways you can walk. Find one. Walk it. But if you're going to walk it, walk it with history, with the future and the present, and authenticity. Why are you using barbed wire? Why are you using the border? Have you crossed the border? No. Well, then, why are you using it, just because you're Mexican? I don't think so.

I think I challenged them on content and authenticity more than other things because I would let go—Well, you want to put some—whatever materials—and mix it. Okay, but where is it coming from? In San Jose, the

materials were always open. But if you're going to bring materials, respect it, and how are you going to do it well? But most important, how is it authentic?

I think that's why I had a lot of graduate students that wanted to do special studies with me, because I would challenge them with authenticity and material and content. I think that was a big difference than when I was a student, because I was challenged by form—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —not by the content. When it came to finally developing content, they didn't know what to do with me because most Mexican/Hispanic Chicano artists were talking about *viva la raza*, or, This is how I grew up with my folk art, kind of bringing it into contemporary art, or just beautiful portraits of Mexican singers or historical figures.

But that wasn't me. One of the reasons it was so political for me—because I asked myself, What is it that's important to me? What is the most important thing to me? What is it that you want to do? Well, if I'm going to do something, I really want to do placemats for my house.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: However, that ain't going to fly. Those shrouds became very close to that because I really wanted to do something really beautiful for my heroes. It somehow worked. But I know the placemats for my house was not going to work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: What else is important to you? Well, that stupid border. I see that it's bad, bad, bad, and it's getting worse, because in the '80s with that caution sign, I saw, That's really bad. Then soon thereafter: A wall? Oh, my God, they're going to create this place a desert.

MIJA RIEDEL: Let's talk about the Frontera Flag series—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: —because that fits right here. It's right at this time after Celestial Portraits.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: It's borders; it's—you chose again, as in the case of the shrouds, a textile form that is incredibly historically charged, flags.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Right, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And then the border of the U.S. and Mexico, in order to make this next series.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's how that was a sequence, because I already paid homage to the greats. Now, what is it that turns me off or on, that really boils me up? It's that border. It's the fight between Spain and England in the Americas. I still am very angry about that, you know, that we're a colony. Every Mexican president, besides Fox, has gone back to their homeland. Not one president in Mexico retires in Mexico.

MIJA RIEDEL: Is that true?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. Fox is the first one. And his ranch is right below Bush's, and Ciudad Juarez is right in the middle.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, that's what I think. They all go back to Ireland, Spain, France—villas over there.

MIJA RIEDEL: And it's interesting to hear you talk about this because we've talked about your work in terms of Mexican context, but I think also what we're hearing here is your context with your father's background as Huichol and your husband as Yaqui—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —that it's not just a Mexican-American thing; it's also a Native and immigrant thing—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I knew that. I knew that because—

MIJA RIEDEL: —original immigrants, Europe and Spain—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, because I really feel that we're Native because I grew up with the corn tortilla, with the *molcajete*. These words my dad would use were Nahuatl words.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So I know this does not compute. I'm not either from Spain or England. I always felt bad that I could not learn the Huichol language, and why do I have to know Spanish? Because it's a forced language. I was always angry picking as I was a kid. I was angry that all the overlords were either Japanese or Euro, and everybody picking was Mexican.

That didn't make sense. Then when I saw the term "Hispanic" come up in the '80s. Oh, my gosh. There's a saying: "Hispanic means never having to say you're Mexican." It was like, Wow, they really want to take away the identity. Because once you take away the indigenous, then that border goes away. It does become Mexico and the U.S.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I'm still trying to get to how do I say that without getting everybody all hyped up?

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, the flowers—we'll get to that, because that strikes—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Right.

MIJA RIEDEL: —an environmental—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But in the Flags series, that's when I took on, Let's get the two flags. It's a perfect traditional textile form—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —that embodies nation and culture. The first one is *Frontera Flag*. I'm between the two flags. I'm in the middle. I'm the barbed wire and I'm the ex-barbed wire in the middle, because I don't feel I go between the two. Then the second one is a little bit more hopeful. The third one, where it's vertical—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —then it becomes more hopeful where there's a blur between them.

MIJA RIEDEL: So the first one was *Revolution*, and the second was *Confrontation*—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —and the third was *Solution*, correct?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, in which they're both equal and they're both running the same. That was what that series was about, the two nations, the two flags, and can't-we-get-along kind of a thing.

That was the time when I started embroidering the *Virgen de los Caminos*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And that's when I did the *Land Grabs*—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —you know—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —because that was—

MIJA RIEDEL: That was primarily an installation, right, *Land Grabs*?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: A wall installation.

MIJA RIEDEL: And where was that installed?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: When I had the show at MACLA, my solo—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The first one that I had at MACLA. That was a beautiful series I really liked, because I found a way to go back to tapestry—tapestry loom.

One of the last pieces that I did in the San Jose series in the tapestry was multilayered. It was beautiful. It had all the strings attached to it in that image of a frame with a window with borders, and in the middle were several gauze layers. That was really one of my best tapestry pieces.

MIJA RIEDEL: What was that one called?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I think it was just the last frame piece. It doesn't really have—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, right. Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I remember that was just so powerful for me that, Dang, I think I know the frame loom now. I think I got it, because I wove layers in between each other and stuff, and I dyed all the linen, and I did everything that I wanted to do that I would possibly want to do on a frame loom. That was at the end of my graduate work at San Diego. When I cut it off, Ahh! Don't cut it! I wish I had not cut it off.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But I knew that on the first snip when I cut off the whole right side.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I was like, No! So then I didn't do another frame loom for years, until I graduated from San Jose State and quit, and I did the little Flag series.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: When I did the *Land Grabs*—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and I left them on.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I left them on the frame loom.

MIJA RIEDEL: And why was that important?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: What do you mean? The frame loom?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because I felt—that was my first returning to the frame loom after I had cut off—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And, This time I'm not going to cut them off.

MIJA RIEDEL: And it was important to keep them on the loom, why?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: On the loom. Why? Because I wanted, again, to put it in their face: This is a little tapestry on the frame loom. Look at the process. Look at how a simple object can create such beauty with power, because I felt each one of those Americas was powerful, one of those images, you know, that have the Americas with the line of demarcation; you know, the Americas with the Northeast over there being infiltrated by the Dutch, and the English slave trade.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Each one was like the *Land Grabs*, how the U.S. was made. And yet there were simple, documented histories that had a lot of historical significance in a frame loom.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, then also they were still immediately framed, literally and metaphorically, and there was a weight to them. I mean, something about presenting that way—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Formidable.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And they were small, but they had huge presence. Yes, they were, what—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —eight inches by—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, they were, like, this big on the frame.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, 10 by 12.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And then I added the little altar. I couldn't find a close-up. I used to have a close-up image of the chips, because that was a transition from using chips to the new way of making computers. I forgot, from semi-conductor chips to—there was—it used a lot of gold. And then they changed that in the late '80s, early '90s.

Somebody gave me a box of gold wire that the industry was throwing out because it cost too much money to strip the gold wire from the aluminum inside and then they would coat the wires. They would use that in making computers. Along with a little box of gold chips that were little tiny little things.

So I was like, Dang, first they rape the land, kill all the people for the stuff, and now they're throwing it away. Oh, my. So I'm using it now. In the altars at each base of each candle there are corn kernels and the gold chips.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: About the juxtaposition of what is valuable.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: What did we give to the world? I think it's the corn more than the gold. That was more important. But the two different ways of looking at it, the colonists versus the indigenous, they're two valuable things that are—you know, the Indian would probably—the gold is just decorative, but the corn, that was sacred. But it's just the reverse, where it's, "In gold we trust," or, I mean, "In God we trust" on our monetary —

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's sacred to them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: More than the corn. Each candle was color coordinated to fit the theme of the era.

MIJA RIEDEL: The era?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Of the slave trade. The first one was a line of demarcation, red, because that [was] when the biggest killing of the indigenous happened.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The French Revolution was yellow—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The golden color for the French for the royalty. What was the blue? It was the blue and the green. The green was the Southwest. It reminded me of the Mexico flag, the Spanish—who are they to sell it to the U.S., and who is the U.S. to buy it from the attorney general, not the president of Mexico? It was like selling the—Adam Powell selling off our states. Mexico I implicated with the color green.

Blue was the sadness of the slave trade that was going on over there in the Northeast. And then the Hispanics below was white. You know, there were five of them, but I forgot—the demarcation of the Northeast, the Louisiana, the Southwest, and Hispanics below.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And the "Hispanic" below is for all the anonymous that died.

Everything had to mean something. I learned that from San Jose. Everything had to fit nice, and I learned that from San Diego. But, really, installation and mixed media was San Jose. San Diego was the textile thread, how to put that together well.

MIJA RIEDEL: And from this point forward in your career, it seems like the border increasingly becomes—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —the issue.

MIJA RIEDEL: —the main theme. Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, because they were building that wall. Germany, they were celebrating the downfall of the Berlin Wall, and we start ours.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I was like, Isn't anybody listening? Isn't anybody watching? Does anybody really care? And I kept going back to the massacre in '68 where nobody cared that those students were shot down. And it was basically a big cover-up, and nobody picked it up over here.

So I felt that nobody is going to be talking about it. The Mexicans even weren't talking about it. The Mexican artists weren't talking about it. They were talking about Castro, and Che Guevara. Those guys were hot in the Mexican Chicano movement, and I was like, Who cares? Who cares about those guys?

I was so mad when the Stanford Chicano center there, they had the big, giant mural. And my daughter was going to Stanford at the time, and they put this huge mural of all the Hispanic, Chicano, Mexican, and South American people that were very important. And in the middle of it there was—my daughter said they put Che Guevara, not Zapata. Zapata is right next to him. And it was Zapata Hall.

And I said, "Sweetheart, how did that happen?" She said, "Mom, they had a vote, and the students of Stanford said Che Guevara was more important than Zapata." So I was like, I'm not going to go that way. I mean, everybody was looking at what the media wanted us to look at, not what we had to look at. So I felt again, What's the problem, Consuelo? You're a lone voice with the weaving, and now weaving is in, so you can be a lone voice.

As far as the caution sign, nobody was taking that on back in the day because they were too embarrassed about it; it was kind of shameful to be connected with that race that was being shown as animals crossing a freeway. But for me it was like, Don't be ashamed of it. I learned how to overcome shame by being a migrant farm worker and still raising up my hand and saying, I know the answer.

That was why I was so into it, because there were so many that weren't talking about it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Nobody was talking about that, just like nobody was weaving. There were already becoming closet—you know, like I said, closet textile. So the border at that point, that's why the barbed wire was there, because of the barbed wire—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right before *Land Grab*, the *Land Grab*, you'd done another piece that I wanted to be sure we mentioned, the *Virgen de los Caminos*.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was totally because of my granddaughter.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She was born. My daughter called her Xochil.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's interesting. I just want to mention, because there is a real strong sense of personal narrative that runs through your work.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was the most personal. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: It was very quiet, but it was—paying close attention, it's there.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, in that one it was. That was going to be a quilt for my granddaughter.

MIJA RIEDEL: And her name was Xochil?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Xochil.

MIJA RIEDEL: X-O-C-H-I?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I-L.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, great.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Xochil Rina. "Rina" is Hebrew for "song," so her name means "flower song."

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: My dad wanted to call me Xochil. My mom said, "That's too much of an Indian name." "Hmm, let's call her Consuelo." I always went, "Dang, I wish I was called Xochil." So I would tell that story to my daughter.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So it just blew me away that she called her little girl Xochil.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Okay, so that's the first part of the story. The second part is, remember I told you I didn't like the Virgen de Guadalupe?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I also didn't like flowers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They were too beautiful. As a kid I was like, What are you doing here? What are you watching? Why are you so beautiful and happy when there's so much misery and suffering in this world? What are you doing here? Who cares?

MIJA RIEDEL: So they weren't a source of happiness at all.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, not flowers. They were too pretty. Everybody liked them. What's with that? I felt totally angry that they were there. People liked them, and why didn't they like people? Why didn't they like the land? Why didn't they like me—kind of a thing. Why do they like flowers more?

So, I don't want anything to do with you guys. I don't care about beauty. I don't care about that. I don't care about what people like. And then they call her Xochil. Flowers?

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Oh, my gosh, flowers? So then I said, Oh, my gosh, flowers!

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah, I see.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I was walking around this thrift store. There was this muslin fabric. I remember the old days when they would iron on the blue imprints of embroidery.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, the stencils?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Stencils, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The thing had stenciled flower corners—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and a stenciled kind of aura around it—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —of flowers. Not embroidered. Somebody probably stenciled it or bought a stencil and threw the fabric away.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They weren't about to. I'm looking at these flowers-to-be, because I just saw the blue line, and thinking, Oh, this is a perfect size for my granddaughter, and her name's Xochil. Oh, I think I'll embroider flowers.

So for two years I carried that thing around with me in the airports when I would be traveling, and whenever I had time, I'd embroider flowers. And, "It's for me, Haggie?" "Yep, it's for you, Mama." She'd see me embroider and, "Look at, Mama, this is going to be for you." And it was just getting more and more beautiful. And I was going, "Yes, this is going to be just as beautiful, for my beautiful granddaughter."

Towards the end I went, Wait a minute, how come it needs barbed wire? Oh, my God, there's a Virgen in here. I should put the Virgen. Oh, my gosh, the Virgen is in there. She's big.

MIJA RIEDEL: She was in there?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, I kind of saw her in there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: You know how you have that artistic vision—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —of what needs to go there?

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I saw the Virgen in there, and I'm thinking, But she's dead. Barbed wire. Oh, my gosh. That was when the caution sign was really getting to me. I went—[gasping sound]—and I went, Universal, just like I tell all my students to. It's for the little girl. Not my little girl—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —but for that little girl.

MIJA RIEDEL: On the side—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —running with her parents across the highway.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She didn't make it.

I quickly drew in the Virgen. I put in—drew in the barbed wire. Well, how am I going to show that it's for that little girl? Oh, the caution sign. I'll quilt it. I'll quilt the caution sign. "Mama, look at what I'm doing." "Haggie"—she calls me Haggie—[laughter]—when it's serious. I've got to sit down because I know it's going to be a serious conversation when she calls me Haggie. "It's for that little girl, huh?" And I went, "Yes, Mama."

MIJA RIEDEL: She knew that.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, because she's been with me—she knows about me and my walk. Boy, I remember one time when I came back from Texas and somebody wanted me to write a book. I was telling Marcos, "Marcos, they want me to publish? Oh, my God, I don't have time to publish."

So then, like two weeks later, the little girl comes in, and she's, like, 11. "Oh, Haggie." "What's wrong, Mama?" "Haggie, I have to publish. I don't know how, but I have to publish." "Haggie, what's publish?" [Laughter.] That's how she is, okay?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She was right with me with that little girl and the caution sign and the art-making and what I was doing. So she would sit on top of the studio tables, an infant, while I—and the studio table had a huge—I still have it. It's seven feet by nine feet, white table, to put my stuff on. I'd put her in the middle of the table as I would be walking around and working on it. So she grew up with that stuff.

MIJA RIEDEL: How extraordinary.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, my gosh, she was the flower—she was the flower of my life. And she's the one that is the *kantora* that is going to—Okay, that one.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's Xochil.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So when she said, "Oh, it's for the little girl," she gave her blessing. And she still refers to it: "You mean my"—when you talk about the Virgen de los Caminos in the Smithsonian Institution—"That's my quilt, huh, Haggie?" "Yep, it's your quilt, Mama."

MIJA RIEDEL: And isn't that in the Renwick now?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She knows it's her quilt: "Yep, it's your quilt, Mama." But she also knows it's for all the little girls that didn't cross.

That's the story. That's why it's so beautiful. And after that, flowers were everything. Flowers were everything. They started appearing in all my work, and now it's like, Where is a flower going to fit in this piece?

MIJA RIEDEL: And thinking about flowers and Xochil makes me think of that deer-crossing piece in 1997. I just think that is such a powerful piece, such a powerful synthesis of the flowers that became such an important part of your work, the caution image, that long, narrow format that makes me think of the shrouds and the rebozos. I think that was ikat. Wasn't that ikat?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, ikat on silk.

MIJA RIEDEL: And also that deep, dark blue, that indigo—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Indigo. *Night*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. That piece seems like such a powerful metaphorical and visual fusion of so many other things that have been important to you.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. Right. The caution sign was already starting to be used by a lot of people. That was one of the last ones where it was so clear. The other images started being breaking up because it was being redundant. People have asked me, Well, how come you're still using barbed wire? Well, as long as that border's up, I don't care how many people use it; I'm going to use it.

But going back to that piece, it was the first time that I thought about flowers in terms of the border.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The state flowers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was the first one. That piece was, Well, what about the deer that has to cross that wall?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: What about the deer, and where is it going to cross it? Well, along all the border states. Oh, my gosh. Well, how do I show that? Oh, I know. The state flowers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And so that's how that piece came about. I felt that it was a spiritual deer running up. It was a very good—and the ikat was because I wanted to revisit my traditional ways of making work, which is a tie-off, submersing dye. In retrospect, I would have liked to now have embroidered and tightened up some of the lines of that piece.

MIJA RIEDEL: That piece was—it was nine feet long.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, it was very long.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was a running deer trail, and then coming across the barbed wire and the caution sign. But, like I said, it was, like, the last time that I really put the caution so clear.

MIJA RIEDEL: And then it began to be broken up, for example, in the Rebozos?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, fragmented, tiny—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —almost that you have to go, Huh? Oh, my gosh, that's a caution sign.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that was the first piece, the Rebozos, in 2001, that had no stitching whatsoever. It was just safety pins.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Safety pins, yes. It was the idea of, Well, what's the first thing the indigenous will do when they cross? They're not going to wear the rebozo. They're going to wear a blouse, a sweater. And forget about weaving it. In fact, forget about sewing. You might have to do what I do, use safety pins, because there's no time.

And the reason the rebozo became important, again, is because Yaqui land, I saw that only the Yaqui women would wear the rebozo. When they leave the town and go into the Mexican town of Vicam Switch, the Mexican Yaqui that was more Mexican now than Yaqui, would not wear the rebozo. Only a traditional Yaqui woman that still spoke the language and lived the way the Yaqui did would wear the rebozo. [There are two Yaqui towns named Vicam in Rio Yaqui, Sonora. The one off the PanAmerican Highway is referred to by all locals as "Vicam Switch." The one located about five miles west is referred to as "Vican Pueblo."]

So, it was definitely a powerful icon for indigenous. That's why I use it. Since then I wanted to weave a rebozo, but it was like—[sighs]. [Laughter.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Time-consuming.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was like weaving my curtains. There's a little curtain that I wove immediately after I said I'm going to FERP, which is early retirement. It's the one in the kitchen with the see-through plastic.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I loved that idea since graduate school in San Diego, when I first used the plastic in that big, long—the Muertos piece. I used plastic, and I went, Wow, look at the light going through it. It's

really cool. It would be great to weave all my curtains with this—see it with plastic so that the light could be diffused coming in, and I could make color plays with the different-colored warp, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

MIJA RIEDEL: Was that the *Dance of the Dead* piece you're talking about?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. Yes, that was the first time I used—there's plastic segments in there in the strips, in the borders.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And that's when I first discovered how beautiful the translucency of plastic was woven, scrunched up. You couldn't see through it, but you could just see the filtered light.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Ever since then I had the idea, When I graduate, I'm going to weave all my curtains with this plastic. So I didn't, but when I FERPed, when I said, Okay, I'm going to retire in four years from San Jose, the first thing I did was weave that off in four hours—[laughter]—at least I did a little one for the kitchen here.

Same thing with the Rebozos. I didn't do this piece right there. That was a precursor to figure out how to do a rebozo, the one that's hanging really long in the middle part of it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And that one, I went—is way long, but I'm going, I know I can do the rebozo ikat. I have to do the rebozo for the moon. I have to do the one for the water. And then I see the Virgen de Guadalupe with translucent—with this kind of stuff. And I just—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I just bought this beautiful—this guy in Northern California who's selling gold wire from the Japanese factories that used to weave and embroider the kimonos. He went there back in the '80s when they were closing them down, and he bought a lot of the threads. I just bought some gold and silver threads from him, and that's going to be used with this kind of iridescent for the Virgen de Guadalupe.

MIJA RIEDEL: Gorgeous.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But I've got to do first—right now the moon is on over there. I just finished the Earth, and I'm thinking, I'm going to redo the Earth because I think I can even take it further.

MIJA RIEDEL: So is this new series of these rebozos, is it in your mind at all related to the Celestial Portraits going back in the '90s?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, it's—

MIJA RIEDEL: No?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, it is—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —but on Yaqui land they cross, okay?

MIJA RIEDEL: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I always said, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the genderless Holy Ghost." It always irked me that there was no woman in that cross.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So I always resented that—"The Father, Son, and the genderless Holy Ghost." What's with that; why isn't there a woman up there? I know there is. So that was my thing with—you know, me and myself and I playing with Christianity and its follies, right? But all religions have follies. I realize that. But I was the closest to Christianity because that's what was in my face.

In Yaqui land, they don't start really teaching you stuff until post-menopause, unless you have it as a gift.

MIJA RIEDEL: What do you mean they don't start teaching you stuff?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, they don't give you other ways of looking at religion.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. That's what I heard, and that's what's been happening.

During my almost post-menopause, when it was almost over, they were crossing themselves. This lady that I was talking to, she already knew that I didn't like it because of that genderless Holy Ghost. She says, "No, no, no, no, it's the Mother Moon, the Mother Earth and the Mother Water, and God." That's where the rebozo came in. I've got to make the rebozo.

Because my first thing, I want to weave a rebozo for the Virgen de Guadalupe. First I wanted to weave a rebozo for me back in the early '90s. When it came to this one, for the *Border Fronteras*, I'm going, God, it would be great to weave a rebozo for the Virgen de Guadalupe. Yes, right. Uh-huh. You're going to do that. Uh-huh. You can't even, you know, weave yourself anything, let alone a rebozo for the Virgen de Guadalupe, and you wouldn't even know what to do. How do you begin—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —to think of—how do you weave the heavens and the stars, because that's what her shawl is. I would always put it on the back burner.

So then I finally FERPed. I got back. I got that junk out of me and I got more into the loom. I got the—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's what I wanted to do. Wow. Huh. It would be great to weave a rebozo—and this started with the series when I was doing the basket and the tortillas—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The '90s and 2006 kind of time, because that's when I signed the papers: I'm going to quit in 2010. I'm out of here. Let me sign this paper and I'll guarantee you—you know, FERPing—or Faculty Early Retirement Program, where I could work half-time and get full-time pay. Something—I don't even know what the things were. So I said, "Okay, let me"—once I did that—

MIJA RIEDEL: And did the program close then, Consuelo?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. I told them—

MIJA RIEDEL: You kept it going for 20 years and—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, I said, "You know, what? I need"—they told me when I was—first of all they said—remember I asked Steve French, "What does it take to get tenure?" "You've got to be famous." And I went, "You took the fun out of it." So I told myself, 10 years. Do it good for 10 years. What's the problem? So in 10 years I did it, got the full-time tenure track and all that, I think even prior to that.

Then I said, "It's time for me to go." "Well, if you go, you know, we're going to quit." Wait a minute, there's people just graduating from CCA. There's people from Rhode Island. Look at these cool weavings. My God. I went, They're going to close the playground. I didn't know what to do. I was like—I had my plan. I was going to be there 10 years, leave as a full professor, and put that in one of my up-there shingles that I did that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: "You're going to close it after 40 years, 60 years of incredible textile history? Are you going to close it?" And I knew why: budget. I didn't know what to do. I really did not know what to do.

So I decided to stay. I'll be here another 10 years, and then what are you going to do? Well, in 10 years I'll just imprint myself more into national and international and see, and use the position of professor to put myself more in history, because I had just barely started. I wasn't really in history at the time. So that's what I did.

In 2005 my mom was already dead—or around that time—and of the 12 kids, I was the only one that really was taking care of her. She lived in Calexico. She had a really hard relationship with my dad. And everybody had abandoned her, kind of taken away her properties—my brothers and sisters.

Oh, my gosh. I've got to take care of my mom and I've got to do my art. And at the time I was having this incredible opportunity. Elia had put together the Chicanas from the North with the Mexican women artists of Mexico. And I was like, Yes, we're going to unite, finally, you know.

And my mom was dying. It was so bad that the phone would ring and I was afraid to pick it up, because I wasn't sure [if] it was going to be my mom's prognosis, or was it about the Oaxaca thing—you know, the latest: who was going to talk, where was it going to be, all the details.

MIJA RIEDEL: Ah, this was Elia's event.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, it was happening at the same time, the organization. It was really difficult because I didn't know what to expect—a phone call with extreme joy because of Oaxaca and excitement, or was it extreme sadness because my mom was just going down? And then she passed on. She died. And the Oaxaca thing happened, and the two women groups, they came together. [Makes sounds of cats growling.] Cats.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, dear.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Cats. It was cats. I was, like, Ahh! And I love both. I got along with that, Mexico City, and I got along with U.S.—my U.S. Chicana comrades. Well, I was totally in their camp. The ones that never talked to each other here were all of a sudden buds over here. The ones from Mexico City—I enjoyed getting—that's the first time I came up with the term "Euro-Mexican." [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure. And, Consuelo, what was this event in Oaxaca? Was it an exhibition?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, it was a conference and—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: What was it? It was a conference that's in their—what the heck was it? It was this thing that she put on—oh, it was a big deal. Elia knew how to bring in the papers and the—

MIJA RIEDEL: I'm sure.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Monica [Meyer], the big art critic from Mexico City, was there. She's the one that, "Consuelo, it really irks me, the term 'Euro-Mexican.'" I still can't get it out of my head, you know? It was really cool, I mean, on many levels, and it was just so—I did not expect it to be so catty.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: We expected, Let's get along. [Sings:] "We are the world, we are the children," kind of a thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Boy, were we out of kilter. What is this? Was it '96? When was it—'97, '98? But I'll find it. But it was basically Elia—

MIJA RIEDEL: A conference.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She came up here. That was funny, too, because I came in, in the 1980s, to the Bay Area. There were Chicana women already happening from the '70s—the *muralistas*, Juana Alicia, Yolanda López, Ester Hernandez, Carmen [Lomas-Garza]—the one from Texas.

And they all came out of the '70s, the Bay Area schools, from the Art Institute, San Francisco State, you know? Rupert [Garcia] was here.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: All this Chicano movement had happened.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I missed it because I was in LA and San Diego. So I came in after the whole movement was over.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you'd missed the Chicano Park in San Diego.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Totally. Totally.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Totally, because I was doing my thing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I was very—you know, I grew up—

MIJA RIEDEL: It was a little before your time, too—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, it was a little bit—and I was raising kids.

MIJA RIEDEL: —'70s—early '70s, right?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That decade was devoted to the kids—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and me going through school—learning how to be an artist, learning how to weave. So I missed it, and I really wished I was over here, but the way things turned out, I wouldn't have been as good as a weaver.

I come here in the late, mid-'80s and, yes, I'm going to into the Chicantown; I get to see Rupert, and I get to see all the greats. And all the greats, they didn't get along, because they had this history of do, do, do, do when they were in the '70s, and by the time I came here in the mid-'80s, they were already in their little camps over here. They had too much personal history that got messy. Because I didn't have any of the history with them, I could get along with all of them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So, Elia and I, we would go around—Elia meets Yolanda Lopez, who's in San Diego. Yolanda and I meet, and she's part Yaqui, so we had a great time here with my husband and her and I. And then Elia comes and meets Yolanda, and Yolanda shows her my piece at the old Yerba Buena Center in San Francisco by the bathroom, way down there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Elia meets me and she likes me, so together we start visiting all the different artists. And they're all, like, "Cool. You weave? Wow." Because they're all painters and silk screeners. And I'm like—"You weave? You do textiles? Dang, girl." You know, they were all, like, "Wow." And I'm thinking, Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Recognized—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Recognized by my peers. I'm always thinking, Oh, my God, this is too cool.

Then Elia says, "Well, you know, what do we do?" And I go, "What would be really good, to unite; you know, get rid of this border thing, right?" Because she wanted me to meet some—she brought me—she gave me a solo over there in San Angel Inn in the—in San Carmen? There was a church that got—what was that? I think that was in—was that right after Spain, I think? Where is that? San Angel Inn, but it—that's where she stayed.

Gosh, there's so much stuff here. [Laughs.] I know; it gets to be a little bit overwhelming here. In 1989 to—no that was before. It was somewhere in the '90s. Where was that? Latinos—[inaudible]—I know I have that in there. That was a big one. Group exhibitions—that's it. Oh, yes—Museo de San Carmen, San Angel Inn, in 1993.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was when she gave me a solo over there, and that's when they told me, "Consuelo, go home. Take care of your Indians, because our Indians are fine." That's when I saw all the Mexican workers really going over my work. I got press write-ups from Elia's connection in the Mexican newspapers. The TV was there.

That's when I told the students, "Sometimes you go to an exhibition and all of a sudden you've got a microphone and film and lights on you. You better know what you're talking about." And it was because of that that I realized, Oh, my God, I'm on. Elia, what have you done? You took me right to the very top of the elite of Mexico.

Anyway, so from that, "Okay, what do we do next?" She wanted to have a big event in Oaxaca and bring in the

Mexican women artists and the Chicanas and unite them, because she believed my idealist vision of, Yes, we should all get along. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Not at all.

You know, one thing I do want to talk about is having—right about this time we talked about how your work was increasingly focusing on the border. It seems like the focus also increasingly became more on the Yaqui—your Yaqui experience through your husband—and then indigenous culture in general. I'm thinking of that *Alba* exhibition installation, which we haven't mentioned at all.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: It was one of the first major installations.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, at the Triton.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And the emphasis was so clearly not on Mexican or American but really on the Yaqui indigenous cultural—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because I was becoming increasingly disillusioned by my Chicana-Mexican roots because of what I was seeing over here. None of them knew any of the indigenous traditional methods. They had all dissed them, and they were starting to get a little bit interested in it.

And their work was not about that. It was, like I said, Che Guevara, all this other stuff, and gay power. I remember talking to one of them, and, "Consuelo, I don't know about you, but my roots come from Mexico or from the Spanish."

And I hadn't brought up Indian, you know, as opposed to the U.S. English. I said to myself, My God, you know, how can you relate to that? I didn't want to confront her because I admired her work, but I thought, How could she relate to that? Doesn't she know that we're Indian? Doesn't she realize that Spain, Spanish, comes from Europe? How can she talk like that?

At the time they were still in that mode of thought. I think that's when I started—and then seeing this blow up, and not many of them wanting to recognize the thing that underlined both of us was the land, which is indigenous. Meanwhile, I'm going to Yaqui land, seeing the struggle of staying who they are, staying true to themselves, not being colonized. I said, Hey, I've got to bring that in. I've got to talk about that, because that's basically who I am then.

I would get these looks: "You don't like Che Guevara?" "Excuse me? He's from Europe. Why would I like him?" It didn't make any sense. So they would—they were like, "You don't like him?" I tell you, over at Stanford they put him instead of Zapata—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —in the middle. I was so angry, and I still am, because of that. You know, what is he doing there? He didn't have the soul even close to Zapata, and yet these are very intelligent—highly intelligent people. They liked him more.

MIJA RIEDEL: They were more familiar with him, no doubt.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, they were looking just at the pseudo—what the culture wants you to look at.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, I think Che Guevara is common knowledge—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, very.

MIJA RIEDEL: —whereas Zapata certainly is not.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, among the Chicanos, Mexicans, he is.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure. Sure.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But he's not as sexy, I guess, right? So that was—that same kind of thought,

or the same kind of interaction, was happening among my peers. They thought I was out there for being so anti-Spain, not anti-Mexico, but I was like, Hey, Mexico is just a colony of Spain, just like the U.S. is a colony of England. I'm not going to kill myself for that. "What do you mean? They're Mexicanas, you know." No.

MIJA RIEDEL: So what inspired *Alba* as an installation rather than a weaving or—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was a—

MIJA RIEDEL: —some sort of textile.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's part of the Yaqui rituals.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The Yaqui rituals, they have the spring equinox.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's a three-day ritual—no sleep, constant praying, constant chanting, constant singing and dancing. The different societies have their different dress, their different musicians all at the same time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, my gosh.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: At the dawn, 4:00 a.m., they send fireworks up.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The belief is that at that moment—they do that so that God can listen to see that, Hey, look at, we did it. Look, yoo-hoo. Then some old lady told me, "You know what? That's the time when the people of power can go to the heavens—that moment." That's what some people focus on.

I thought, Wow, what a nice metaphor, to be able to go to the moon and come back. I've always been afraid—in my lucid dreamings, when I'm flying, I'm always afraid to leave the stratosphere of the Earth. It's scary to go into the darkness where there's no air, there's no light, to get to the other celestial objects out there. It's hard. I'm very cowardish. [Laughter.] I'm very much so. And the landing is horrific. [Laughter.] God, I hate landing. But anyway—

MIJA RIEDEL: Why so?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: You know how you get on those roller coasters, and that feeling in your stomach—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —as you go down? Imagine that intensified, like, 10 times. It's horrific. Going up is fun, folks, but coming down ain't. [Laughs.] And so, on the *Alba* I made a ladder—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —to, Okay, if I can come down like that, then it will be okay. But not *zoom*, which is kind of what they implied. Then the moon is all of a sudden where I'm landing, which is why I put the crescent moon on the ground.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because I reversed it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, okay, so you're actually coming to the moon. I see.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And there's corn there too.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, there's corn. That's the sacredness, the corn, and the rocks that are wrapped in plastic. And there's eight rocks for the eight pueblos—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —that are still there. The early 1500s, the Spanish Jesuits tried to go north of Mexico City because they heard about the people up there in the north. The indigenous people said they're very fierce warriors because they are the ones that have been protecting the knowledge of the Americas that even precedes the Toltecs, the old ones, and they still hold that knowledge. They're very fierce people to the north.

So these guys, the friars, go up there looking for these people, and they're the Yaqui, the Yaqui Nation. They still do the ritual where the friars say, "We approached them and then some elders came out a distance in front of us, and basically they went like this"—they drew a line on the ground and went like this, and they went like that. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: [Inaudible]—overhead.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And they still do ritual with that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They also said, "We will let you talk to our elders, but you can't come and talk to our people." So the elders went and talked—the Jesuits told them about Jesus. The elders said, "Oh, that guy. Oh, after you killed him, he came over here with us and he told us his ways, and he married and had kids, and he died an old man."

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And to this day, in the spring solstice they have him as an old man.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: That is so interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Now, have you also spent this time with the Yaqui culture because of your husband and because of marrying into that culture?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Have you spent any time researching the Huichol, or is that of interest to you?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I did, but my dad lost all connection with that. And when we went down to Huichol land, it was almost impossible because his family was so Mexicanized—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —you know. His grandmother, which was the link, Agapita Aguirre, which was the link, had already died years ago. And then my mom hated my dad to go back to his past. She refused to go with kids. One time we went in the early '60s—like, I was 10 or 11—and they did nothing but argue. And my dad could not even get out of the car, let alone talk to his old folks, to see what was going on. My mom was always upset.

So I never could, but I always remember going there and thinking, Wow, I wish my dad had stayed here. I wish he had stayed here. Because I loved the village aspect, the way—can you imagine back in the '60s? So when I tried to go back again in the early '70s—my husband and I, we took a road trip down there.

MIJA RIEDEL: And this is in the Michoacán area?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. Yes. We tried to connect, but everybody had moved, gone on. The "hacienda" was now a small town. So it was almost impossible.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But we had already been learning about the Huichol. My husband was doing his graduate work at UCLA, and he actually read Castaneda's thesis before it got published. Yes, he got that

book, what was it, *The Teachings of Don Juan*—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —was actually Castaneda's thesis in anthropology—

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —at UCLA. And he got it republished into the book. My husband read the thesis before it got published—because he would spend time going down there into the records of what they would say about the indigenous cultures. Is that wild?

MIJA RIEDEL: That's completely wild.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Isn't it?

MIJA RIEDEL: I never heard that.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's amazing.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's his thesis from UCLA. [Laughter.] Exactly.

My husband was really into the philosophy and knowledge of the old folks. The old indigenous cultures. If you talk to him, he could rattle off which tribe was in which time, what writings of all that.

So, yeah, we knew about the Huichol, but I was so busy—now we're going into graduate school—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and getting—and working and doing my own art. So then I left the reading and the knowledge-seeking of other stuff. That was the late '60s, mid-'70s, until late '70s. Once I hit the graduate work of the '80s, then I stopped researching.

But I felt I had enough, and I already dreamed my grandmother a couple of times. So then my Huichol link—I never met her, but I felt that I had dreamt her. I felt that through the dream world, I could connect. Here I was in Yaqui land with the honey, going into this ritual thing. And I'm going, Wow, it really is indigenous. I could see the similarities, you know, of an indigenous way of being, which is pretty similar in many basic levels.

I felt that if I explore this—not explore it, but live it—that it would be enough to keep me going, give me food for—to come back over here and say, Yes, folks, we're not Spanish; we're not English. We are indigenous. It is really real.

MIJA RIEDEL: And that seems to tie in very deeply to your environmental sensibility, because with that deep immersion in Yaqui experience seems to also have come at the same time that the presence of the flowers in your work, over and over again, those four state flowers, either abstract or not—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —in weaving or in installations, that those have become increasingly significant in the work.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because in Yaqui land, the men wear flowers on their—embroidered wrist bands and wrist cloths, and in kerchiefs. They keep saying, "A real man can wear flowers. There's nothing feminine about that." It's like they confront their femininity, and they accept it.

That was so cool and important to me, and to be able to say, Yes, *kantoras* tell the elders they did wrong. To have the woman be the overriding law, that's pretty cool.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, I think we haven't discussed that yet on the card. So just in quick summary, that that's a way that decisions are—well, I'll let you explain the way the decisions are [made] concerning that Yaqui culture, and the women have the final say.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Right. In the Yaqui culture there's many societies, men and women societies, that are church-spirit related. One of the societies of the women is the *kantoras*, kind of like the cantors in Hebrew, but the cantors in Hebrew are men. In Yaqui land they are women.

There's eight pueblos. Each pueblo has a council of elders. The elders are elected. They listen to problems. If you

have a problem, you go to the council. They meet once a week. So you tell them what your problem is, and the council of the elders listen, and everybody gets to have their say.

When everybody finishes talking—and it can take an hour or three days—then the elders decide what the solution is. Then the *kantoras* hear the solution, hear the problems, and if they agree with the council, the *kantoras* will say, "Okay, go with it." If they don't agree, they say no—the *kantoras* say, "No, it doesn't sound right. Go back and talk again." Then they have to go back and talk again. So the *kantora*, the woman, has the ultimate say in what is being decided in the pueblos.

MIJA RIEDEL: So interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's totally interesting. There's not a chief. There's a *cobenao*, but he has to listen to the other council members, and they in turn have to listen to the *kantoras*. So that's why there is no president; there is no chief. It's just elders. The elders are ruled by the *kantoras*. If you look at the historical references to the Iroquois, they're pretty much similar.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They have that same—women are the ones that dictate, you know, or—

MIJA RIEDEL: The final word.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The final word.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Flowers and women and children, they all make sense. With going back to Yaqui land, it just became more overwhelming how important flowers were symbolic of a way of looking at the world. I thought to myself, Well, we have flowers in special places here too.

We even have a state flower. Take the California poppy. You cross the border into Arizona, it's no longer the California poppy; it's the Sonora poppy. Fancy that, the same flower but two different names.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because they'll say, "It's not a California poppy. That's a Sonora poppy." But you cross the border, all of a sudden that same flower—so, who's zooming who? Who's labeling what? This isn't the Garden of Eden where we all get to be Adam and name things. I mean, sorry. That was over there in Northern Africa, but it ain't here in the Americas. We don't get caught up in names, in possession. The land doesn't belong to the person. It belongs to the people, the nation.

MIJA RIEDEL: And it's an interesting time, I think, to talk at least about that, the installation, the 2010 installation at the Triton Museum, *The Undocumented Border Flowers*—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —because that's such a beautiful synthesis of the border influencing your work for so many years, the arrival of the flowers as such a strong environmental statement, and the whole concept of different kinds of borders—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —or nonexistent borders.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Right, how borders can decimate the natural environment.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And how is a flower different from an indigenous person of the land?

MIJA RIEDEL: And something you said that I thought was very much to the point is, how do flowers pollinate across that border wall that's being built? How do you pollinate over a 12-foot wall? It just breeds nothing but desert for miles in either direction.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It does. And so what is happening is they're creating a desert in the middle of the Americas. In a hundred years there's going to be a wasteland there. Nothing is going to grow. In 200 years it's going to be a Sahara Desert. And it used to be such a rich ecological place.

MIJA RIEDEL: And such a fragile place, that desert.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Totally fragile. But there's no place in the world that isn't fragile.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Well, that's true.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: This is one of the last places of the Americas, North America, that is so beautiful and desolate and desertish, and it's becoming a wasteland.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: A desert dead land. This is the legacy of England and Spain still fighting over who runs the place.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, and remember I talked about the Mexican presidents going back to their homeland? Well, Bush was kissing the queen's hand over there.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: He's one of the descendants of George—King George. How close can we still get—that we're still a colony? And we're not seeing through that veil of politics.

MIJA RIEDEL: Before we leave the caution image altogether, I want to talk about the *Run, Jane, Run* and *C. Jane Run* from 2004 and 2005 because those, if I'm not incorrect, are the last time we see the caution image so prominently. But they were huge. Those pieces are 10 feet by—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. The *C. Jane Run* is 10 by 17 feet.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's huge.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The rebozo became really small. The little square became tiny to use the rebozo. Then I went, You know what? I can—it's like having the yin and yang—Consuelo never knows what to order, coffee or Coke, when I used to drink Coke. It was like, What do you want? Uh, both.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Hot or—I don't know, but they're both caffeine—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and they're both dark and they both taste good. One burns and one's hot. So there I was.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Now I blended it: iced coffee.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Okay, but back then it was like, What do you want, large or small? So the *C. Jane Run* with giant squares, it's huge, the idea of the decimated family, because there was, like, a hundred and something people that had been killed over the—and I read—when somebody gets run over at 70 miles an hour, the only thing that's left are fragments of clothing, which is why pieces of cloth. Nothing else is recognizable—shoes, pieces of paper. And usually these people don't carry anything of ID because they don't want to get caught.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Wow, just pieces of clothing? Wow. Oh, my gosh. What kind of clothing would they wear? Well, they usually wear—I'm reading the article—dark clothing that isn't easily recognizable, to kind of blend in. And I go, Oh, I know that kind.

So that's what I did. I went through my closet and looked at clothing that would fit the saying and then held it tenuously with safety pins, and silk-screened gold and silver because that's what the fight is ultimately about, money. It was kind of like a homage to those people. If I had the names, I probably would have made a little initial on each square, you know, but that's what that piece is about.

And why was it so big? Well, I wanted to make a huge statement. How big can I go, you know? I made this statement with the rebozo, with tiny—that's about as small as I can—but how big can I go?

MIJA RIEDEL: And the whole idea of it being a quilt as well is—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —such a powerful—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —textile again.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, totally fabricated and put together with no stitching. That was important. No stitching. Everything was just put together with safety pins, kind of like people on the run—

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —or people that are migrant. That's the kind of approach I had.

MIJA RIEDEL: And then I think about that especially in juxtaposition with *Run, Jane, Run*—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh.

MIJA RIEDEL: —because of that single enormous image of—

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I've been wanting to weave the giant caution since the early '90s and never —

MIJA RIEDEL: And you actually incorporated caution tape—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: —into your weaving product.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I wanted to weave that since the very beginning of the early '90s when I was still hot with that—when I just started using it—but I never had the space. Again, I did that after I signed the papers: I'm going to leave this university. Another first thing—I had a lot of things that I wanted to do that have been waiting, and, Okay, I've got to get this out of my life, because I've been wanting to do this forever.

MIJA RIEDEL: It's bright yellow.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, that's what the sign is.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, it is. Yes, you're right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Bright yellow.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I don't like yellow.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] I'm surprised—

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I don't like yellow. It's too bright yellow. I don't like it, but that's what it is.

And—

MIJA RIEDEL: This looks like it's still on the loom, too.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I wanted it to—I wanted it to have the feeling of the backstrap.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I wanted to put in your face: This is woven.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It isn't a piece of cloth with me painting on it and me stitching on it, and I'm a textile artist. No. I am a textile artist because I'm weaving the cloth. That was the big one. I wanted to make a big piece, because I hadn't made pieces in a long time, but—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, and that was 10 by six feet—

[Cross talk.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, nine feet—well, with the fringe it's 10 feet—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —and then five feet across.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And six feet with the—six inches on each side of the barbed wire that holds it up.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But that was the biggest I could do in terms of weaving. Now, I could make a bigger weaving, but that's only with commission, because I could always sew them together, hang them together, but I think I just wanted to get that blank—that—you've got to make that weaving before you die, you know. You've got to make that caution sign and—

MIJA RIEDEL: Larger than life.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, life-size, really.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It is life-size.

What was it that I would always tell the students? I think I got this from Rollo May—I'm not sure—scale: How do you pose scale? If you want the viewer to bring the object into themselves, make it tiny. If you want to confront the viewer, make it life-size. If you want the viewer to go into your object, make it larger than life-size.

And so that one, I think I wanted it larger than life-size, and it is bigger than human. I wanted them to go inside of there. That's why it's so big. I didn't want to confront them; I wanted them to get in there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And the same with *C. Jane Run*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Get in there. I don't want to confront you. The Rebozos is more like a confrontation. It's more like, Okay, let's meet halfway. You might be able to put this on. It's wearable. Whereas those tiny ones, Take it inside of you. Take it with you wherever you go.

MIJA RIEDEL: The thing about those tiny ones in the *C. Jane Run* is that they're tiny, but there are hundreds of

them.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Many, many anonymous things have gone down on that border that we don't know about. Many of them. A lot of people have been affected by them. A lot, more than we can—there's so many people that we don't know that had adventures in that border crossing, and that's what that's about. That's why there's so many of them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Where is that—where are those pieces now?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The first, the Rebozos, the Mexican Museum. I donated them to the Mexican Museum.

MIJA RIEDEL: In San Jose?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: In San Francisco.

MIJA RIEDEL: In San Francisco.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They have them in their archives, and when they get their space, hopefully, they'll show them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Okay.

And then the Mendocino one, the one I think is the most beautiful one. It's rolled up right there in the other room.

MIJA RIEDEL: The *Mendocino Shawl*?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Uh-huh. [Affirmation.]

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay. And what about the *Run, Jane, Run* and *C. Jane Run*?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's in the garage.

MIJA RIEDEL: They're both here. Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: [Laughs.] Yes. Yes. I'm going to show both of those and the *Rebozos* in the Fresno exhibition [California State University].

MIJA RIEDEL: And the Fresno exhibition is in 2012 or 2013?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's this September.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, this September. Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: September 26th.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I think I'm going to show them as well in the, 2013, the Triton Museum.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But I'm not sure. It depends if I have—I know I want to show the *C. Jane Run* because that's only shown once—

MIJA RIEDEL: All right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —here, and once in Texas, and not anywhere else. So I think I want to show it in Triton.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, I'd love to see those in person.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And then the *C. Jane Run*—yeah, they'll both be in Fresno—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —the sixth and seventh and the eighth. That's when I'm there installing. And I'm going to reconstruct the border—*Undocumented Border Crossing*—in Fresno.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I'm uncertain now if I want to have it the dark night, or do I want to have a day ground, meaning beige-brown instead of black. But I'm going to have the same flowers—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —the same threads and the same border line, the same nails. But it won't be exactly the same. I have a student helper that they got me to help me paint it on and to get it—but it won't be exactly the same. It will be a little different but similar.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But the one I thought was very—and I think I sent you images of that—was the first one I did. It was black and—just a line drawing of flowers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was here at the Euphrat [Museum of Art], here at De Anza [College].

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And that was the first one where I actually came up with the idea of the flowers, and at those point, they were drawn right into the state shape, or into the shape of the states on each side.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And—

MIJA RIEDEL: As a drawing on the wall.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, on—

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MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Consuelo Jimenez Underwood at the artist's home and studio in Cupertino, California, on July 6, 2011, for the Archives of American Art[, Smithsonian Institution]. This is card number four.

We're going to start off this card with a story that you've remembered about the Rebozos.

MS. UNDERWOOD: The Rebozo series, because I think that's going to be a formidable series that I'm going to be behind. I've been wanting—like I told you, weaving a rebozo for the Virgen de Guadalupe.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But I was like, Yes, I'm going to do—yeah, get over it, Consuelo, you're not that sacred yet. There's no way you're going to—don't shame yourself in front of the Virgen. [Laughs.]

So then I did the rebozo safety pins and then I went, Oh, I don't want to do a rebozo. Well, I'll do it for myself. But —oh, by the way, when I did—let's go back to the shrouds. Remember the shrouds, and that little one?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, of course. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The reason I did that little one, I did it as I left San Diego because I was dying—a part of me was dying now. I was leaving Southern California to come over here. And, Oh, I'm going to make myself a shroud that will show my death, and it's for me and myself and I.

I put everything that I knew that I loved about weaving into that little piece, you know. It was the triangular—to do the relief which I had been playing with in the Flight series. It was the brown-on-brown, tapestry edge on the top that is barely visible in the photograph because I didn't do a close-up.

It had a little bit of loose warp that were left to go as decorative fringe, but real minimal on the side. And also the other thing was a tiny bit of metallic, and it was ikatted.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So all that I put into—I'm going to do it, like, a burial shroud for me, something like a portrait, but it's sad and I'm leaving. Then cut to when I went and did the shrouds for the Joan of Arc and the Hero series, I looked at that piece. I remember looking at it and going, That's funny. Why did I think it was a shroud for me and it's only two feet or—[laughs].

MIJA RIEDEL: So small.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So small, why would I do that? Isn't that funny? I thought to myself, Isn't that funny? I've got to make sure that, for the ones for my heroes, they've got to be life-size.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Anyway, I thought that was a really important moment because that made me go, Okay, the heroes, I've got to find out how high they were.

MIJA RIEDEL: Scale.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. I've got to make it fit right, because it didn't. How did I overlook that?

So now on to the rebozo. I'm going to make one for me. Well, that will never happen. I've still got to weave my curtains, my blankets. Yes, I'm going to do one for me. Yes, get over it. You're not going to do that. But you can do it for the Virgin. No. Meanwhile, I'm learning about the cross.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The three mothers. Before I do the Virgin, I've got to do one for the three mothers that I know, that I see. Okay, I can do this. Well, the first one, well, Earth, of course. Oh, and I'll do them of wire and they'll be—I have the four wires—the red wire, the brass wires because they're strong; they're fine. I've always wanted to do a wire weaving.

Fine, and here's going to be a really cool way to do fine weaving again. Now that I've graduated, I can do the series. Oh, my God, this is great. But you've still got to do the tortillas and the basket. Okay, we've got to do the MACLA show. But wow, I've got it. That's what I'm going to do. I'm going to weave as soon as I get this show out of the way.

Then I'm going to start the Rebozo series and that will be a really hot series that will kind of finish off my weaving, kind of like the burial shrouds. But it will be just as awesome, but now it will be rebozos for the mothers and then the Virgin.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Okay, good. I felt good. So I went and did all of this tortilla stuff, all the celebratory work that, you know, you saw, the 2000.

MIJA RIEDEL: At MACLA?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: At MACLA.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: After I did that show, then I'll do this. Hmm, so there I was. I did it, right. I'm cutting fast-forward now. The basket was kind of like that. I didn't know what I was going to do with the basket. But I knew I wanted to weave a basket of barbed wire. But I know it's so time-consuming.

That took two years of just going in there and doing it for a little bit and then stopping, doing a little bit and then stopping. But it was one of those things that I've wanted to do since I was at graduate school, but I couldn't because I got a job and I couldn't do something for Consuelo that was going to be forever. I had to do work for shows.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I started that during the time that I was doing the MACLA show. I started that because I wanted to do a basket of barbed wire since I was in graduate school. But cutting back to that rebozo, so then [I] finally did the MACLA.

I'm going to do the rebozo now. Yes, do it for the Earth. Something's wrong. I can't do it. I had everything selected. I couldn't do it. Why? What's wrong? Oh, I've got to do it for my real mother first, my mundane mom.

That's that red-and-black erotic one.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, right rebozo for *Mundane Mother*. I was wondering about that title. Yes, interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's why. It's dark. It's erotic, uterus-based.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I've got to do one for her first. She's the first. Then I saw the Earth. That was the funny one. Then I saw, okay, okay, so as I started doing the Earth, I started—must be something.

Anyway, so then as I started doing hers, I started seeing the Earth. As I did the Earth, I saw the moon. I still didn't know how to do the Virgin. Not until I finished the Earth and had the moon going on over there that I saw the Virgin.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Then I saw, Oh, I know what she's going to be. I know exactly. She's going to be gold and silver and iridescent. So now I know the Virgin. So now I see the end of the tunnel. So I'm going, Okay, two seasons for each one. Hopefully by 2013, I'll have them all for one big wall in the Triton, all the rebozos for all the mothers.

So that's my rebozo story. And then after that, then I won't want to do another rebozo again. [Laughs.] But now I'm already thinking, I want to redo the Earth one because I want to do it finer. So, you know, will it ever finish? I don't know. If I really like it—I really like the rebozo. I really like weaving it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, it reminds me of, like, the shroud and, like, the flag. It's a charged textile as a form, its cultural weight, its cultural significance historically.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Its time, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I just can't let it go, just like the flags. I wanted to reweave the flags and I still —

MIJA RIEDEL: Let's talk about the flags because we haven't talked about those yet.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Okay.

MIJA RIEDEL: If you're done with the rebozo.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: We haven't talked about the flags from 2008 at all.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: You went back to the loom.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The low-frame loom.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And but I did the elections.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. And there was *Political Threads*, *Hoe Down*, *The Bracero Flag*, *Roses and Stripes*.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: There were a lot—I mean, there's like 50 other ones that I want to do.

MIJA RIEDEL: A whole series.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But I just can't devote—

MIJA RIEDEL: Election—[inaudible].

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: There are so many that I want to do.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I want to do them. All those, each one of those, I can see five more of that kind, all different, because the rag rug, the one with the—the one I liked a lot with the one I sold was the one with the silk, with the different colored—the really muted kind of reds and pinks, mauves.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I love that, and then you notice the stripes were broken up into shapes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Was that the *Flag of Calm*?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, that one.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, I could do, like, 20 of those because I love different—I can see all different kinds of pinks or mauves that are reds, all the different blues that I could incorporate.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, my gosh, and I can do them in linen and in silk.

MIJA RIEDEL: What inspired you to go back to the flag after—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The election—Obama election.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That whole—

MIJA RIEDEL: 2008?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, every time you turned on the TV, there was somebody talking in front of a flag.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Every guy who wanted a speech was in front of a flag.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And the first one actually was the triangular flag, the quilt one.

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Quilted one, right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, and that's when I'm going, Wow, that really looks good. I really like how that, how they'd put them on sticks and then they'd fall down.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I'd—That's a really neat shape. I really was seduced by the triangular fall. Wow, I should do one for the women in the Americas. How could I do that? Oh, I know what. All my kitchen towels, I can overdye them. Okay, oh, my God, the Yaqui tortilla cloths, white. Those will be the white stripes.

Overdye the red ones, my kitchen towels that are old, overdye them in indigo, overdye them in red. The Yaqui ones, don't do anything to them, just show the white, a little bit of the flower embroidery. Oh, that'd be a great quilt. And what you don't see in the slide, and which I wish I had done it stronger, is the quilt pattern, is the corn as the Virgen de Guadalupe.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The quilt pattern is the—imagine that being—the Virgin being a corn—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: With a corn—all the corn lines.

MIJA RIEDEL: Coming—crisscrossing, yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, crisscrossing, a grid of that—of that cone shape or whatever.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And then everything else is the sun and the moon in the bottom. So the whole flag is quilted in Virgen de Guadalupe shape, but it's a corn, and you have the leaves of corn coming up instead of the sun. So that's a neat idea that I haven't—

MIJA RIEDEL: That sounds beautiful.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —that I haven't worked with because I don't have time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, yeah.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But I want to work and work with that image even more. And I did a little bit in that rain. The Virgen de Guadalupe has the corn in there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. Oh, really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. If you notice, it's in there, and it's in that little one.

MIJA RIEDEL: In the one that's hanging in the hallway?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, the plastic ones.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Those are the ones that are done—the strips of all these plastics. If you look at that, those are really corn inside the Virgins. You see the corn? These guys?

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, inside the Virgin, yeah, yeah, yeah. Absolutely, of course.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And those are the—[inaudible].

MIJA RIEDEL: You did that great.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I have lots of them that I want to do for the rain. That's what these are from. So I've got to cut these up and then sew them in and then highlight the yellow and the gold with the thread. Then those will be falling down over the wall, that I want to have a wall of rain over the cactuses.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. This is what you're working on—[inaudible].

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: This is for the installation for the 2013.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, for the exhibition at Triton?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Triton, yes. I want to make a giant wall of falling rain.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, on top of the nopal?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Or on top of the cactus?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, with the Americas in it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That's the idea for it. But, see, I've got to make them up, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Do you have a title for that show yet?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, no. I haven't—I don't have a title for that. I just know it's going to be

really cool. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: And you're starting already?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, I have to. I have to. I have to. I'm thinking of—right now I have a student weaving—you know that little tiny little flag that I showed you, the Mexican and the U.S. flag?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I'm doing that same theme but weaving in wire—the red, white, and blue—the white and the red-green, all in plastics and silk, but in the middle white put the border with a barbed wire cutting across both, the shape of a—I have leather, black—I couldn't believe that—leather barbed wire from Italy, barbed wire made of leather, such an oxymoron.

MIJA RIEDEL: Absolutely.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Totally. I'm going to use that to make the border shape, cutting across the Americas. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: I wonder what on earth they use that for.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Jewelry.

MIJA RIEDEL: Leather barbed wire?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I guess punkers want it around. I have no clue, but I got it in gold, in silver, white, black, and red.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's wonderful.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: It's a lot easier to work with too.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I've done some already, because it was very problematic taking barbed-wire pieces across the borders.

MIJA RIEDEL: I bet.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Mexico would stop me all the time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And Elia and her buds would have to okay it to come across.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They're—I don't know, and this is before the terrorism thing. So I can only imagine now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, my gosh, yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, so then I said, Okay, you've got to do something.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So what I'm doing is, I got this leather barbed wire and I use it, you know. I mean, now that I'm older, I don't care anymore. I'm just going to, because with the rain, I could use the leather barbed wire, but I want the material.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, absolutely.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But sometimes the leather barbed wire, like in this piece that I'm making right now with the woven flag, I can see it's got to be leather. It has to be leather.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I'll couch it on. So, yeah, the show's going to be amazing. I want to use as

little of the old work that I can.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I want to show the yellow caution sign.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I want to show that big giant *C. Jane Run, Run, Jane, Run*. I want to show those. I want to show the five, and I'm making a brand new border wall—*Undocumented Border Flowers*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But they're dead. So they're all white on white. White flowers, giant, just overlapping. I see the whole big wall filled with white flowers that are just the border flowers, but all white, big in size, and they're just crammed on the wall, all overlapping, and then having a visceral border on top of them.

MIJA RIEDEL: This will be the largest solo exhibition you've had to date, correct?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, and I'm hoping to come out with a mini catalogue that has a write-up.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I like Gladys's writing on me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So I'm hoping to—maybe she can write—because I don't have a book on me.

MIJA RIEDEL: And Joan would want that. She'd want that documentation.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I want a book on me before I pass on, while I'm still alive and I can edit it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Of course, right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And select, and so I think that's what I want to do for between now and 10 years from now.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you may be able to use excerpts from this [interview], either for the book or as quotes in the exhibition.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, I'm sure.

MIJA RIEDEL: So when this is done, it might be a great resource for that.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, yeah, because this will be done before the exhibition, huh? How soon will this one get out, because it's 2011 right now?

MIJA RIEDEL: I don't know yet.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: 2012?

MIJA RIEDEL: But I'll send it in right away and we'll—you know, then it's just a question of how far backlogged the transcription is. But we'll get into that later.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Okay, okay, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MIJA RIEDEL: So keep in mind these questions.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But that's a good point. I never thought about that. That'd be good.

MIJA RIEDEL: I want to touch briefly on influences, people who've had the most powerful influences in your life and career. We've talked about a lot of people already.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Rupert Garcia comes to mind, Joan Austin, Jim Bassler in his own way, Neda al-Hilali, Carol Shaw-Sutton, certainly nature, borders, your own personal experience, indigenous experience, Mexican-American relations. Is there anything that comes to mind that we haven't touched on that has been a significant influence?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: On art?

MIJA RIEDEL: On your work, right, or in your career.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: I think we've done a fairly good job of it. If anything else comes up, be sure—feel free to mention it.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, there's so many levels that they all get jumbled. I think the people that have influenced me, of people, it's the interaction that I've had with what I call the gatekeepers, the ones that say, "Yes, you can play," or, "No, we're not interested."

MIJA RIEDEL: Can you give a couple of examples?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, we were just talking about David McFadden.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: How he was an incredible, powerful gatekeeper, and he allowed me in, and I didn't have to jump hoops for him to let me in.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And to have people like that out there, what I learned was that you don't know who's out there until you talk to them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So don't be afraid of the ultimate high-God gatekeepers, because some of them may be really cool and let you in. If they tell you no, don't take it home. It's just who they are.

Who are the other—the gatekeepers, like the dean of the—what was his name—of the arts and humanities at San Jose State. He really acknowledged who—my powers, as an artist, and as an inspirer, and he overlooked my inequities or the weaknesses that I had in my formal presentations, of the written word.

But he saw this other power that I had that—and so he took me under his wing, kind of guided me through the rough spots in being a professor at San Jose State.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I forgot his name because he was only there for, like, eight years and then he had to move on. We talked about Kenneth Trapp, how he just immediately told me, "I want to buy these," you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Responded to those shrouds.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, immediately, and he never let go of me even when he—he took me to the Smithsonian.

MIJA RIEDEL: At the Renwick, right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And—

MIJA RIEDEL: Smithsonian's [Renwick Gallery].

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I remember that in every group of people that would invite me, there were some that were totally offended but thought I was sane and some that really thought I was cool.

So that kept—that kept making me feel, It's okay. You don't have to please everybody. You don't have to make everybody see your point of view. There's always some that do, and that's all you want. That's enough. Whereas before, when I was younger, Oh, my God, nobody likes me. Okay, go away world. Oh, my God—[inaudible]—really don't like me. I think I'm going to go away now.

As I learned, there's always going to be people like that; there's always going to be people that like you. And that's the other thing. Just because they like you doesn't mean anything. It doesn't make you better in the studio. [Laughs.] That doesn't mean—I mean, it's important but—it makes you feel good, but ultimately, in the studio—

MIJA RIEDEL: Talking about studio and working process, how has your working process changed over time, or is it a big, cyclical experience, where you'll work on the loom for a while and then move on to installations, baskets, come back to tapestry?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, the big change is, when I started, I had rules. I will never do this. I will never do that. I will never do this one, like the fringe, the circle, the feather.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I'll never do that, never, and here I am, right?

MIJA RIEDEL: Doing that.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Okay, so now, it's, like, those rules are out the door. I like fringe. If it's necessary, I like it. And the thing is, don't have rules. Don't have rules. The rules get in your way. Now, what's important is what is it that I want to say, and what is the best thing—what is the best material? What is the most logical process to go with the material and the idea, and those are the rules, you know. They're really questions now, not rules; whereas before, I was guided by the rules. Now, it's the questions. Oh, what is it again? And that's a big one for me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: You know, a really big one for me. So in the studio it's always a Who am I again? What am I saying again? Who am I doing this again? You know, why—what's the idea about? And then once I get the idea, it's now, Okay, come on, you've got to do 10 more. Come on, you've got to—it's no longer thinking, right? Now, I'm in—

MIJA RIEDEL: Exploring the idea.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, it's not just doing—we're doing the idea. It's now picking the rows of fruit as opposed to what am I going to pick today.

MIJA RIEDEL: Where do the ideas come from?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Gosh. Once I got out of the school, I had to turn the faucet off. Just come out of anything I see. Oh, I can do this. Oh, I can do that. Oh, I can do this. I can do—like, Shut up; I don't want to see. When it started was when I saw that I had a spigot—is that what you call that thing?

MIJA RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That I had a spigot in terms of creativity was with the burial shrouds.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I had to stop at five.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But they were lining up. Oh, my God, I can do the satire burial shrouds, one for Madonna, one for George Bush. I could do one for Ronald Reagan. I could do one for the Pope. I can have fun, and I was saying—I could be doing burial shrouds the rest of my life. I don't want to be one of those artists that just does one thing all of my life.

"But Consuelo, I want one. And I'll trade you one of my paintings for that." "Oh, okay, I'll do that." So I did five trades where I would trade with my peer friends, artist friends. And I got a picture there and I got something there.

And I would—we were going to size them up and be, Ha-ha, okay, I think you're the party guy, so we'll do, you know—and then one of them died of AIDS. And I wasn't at the funeral, but they said they covered his body with my shroud.

I don't want to do any more shrouds. All the ideas that I had about the shrouds, I don't want to think about—I

stopped because there were so many—after the friends, you know, I wanted to do the satire series.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I can just come up with—I didn't want to see any more because they were already lining up for years. I was going to be doing shrouds, and I didn't want to, but I was doing friends. And then the guy died, and I went, You can't play with these ideas. You've got to keep them in a thing sacred.

It's just like the rebozos. I could weave rebozos for all these people of importance, whether they were positive or negative. I don't want to go there. So I turn off the ideas. So where do they come from? They just come from anything I see.

MIJA RIEDEL: How do you decide when to turn the spigot off?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: When I feel like I'm—like, Hussein was buried with my shroud. It's something that just stops me. When the chicken—they look at the road. You can put them on the road and then they'll just get mesmerized and stop?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: When I get that feeling, I think, Okay, it's enough, because, Keep it sacred. Don't bring these sacred things. Like in Yaqui land, I can come back from Yaqui land and—I've seen people go to other cultures and bring back a suggestion of that culture and put it in their installation or whatever, and I'm going, That's what we called in the '90s, or no, in the '80s—it wasn't copying. It was appropriation.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: [Laughs.] And I'm going, I don't want to appropriate. So keeping some things sacred, and I think art, to an extent, is sacred, because I know these gifts are coming from another place.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I respect that place as sacred. It's very metaphysical. They don't come from dreams, because dreams—I tried that before I was at graduate school, reproducing something I saw in a dream. It doesn't work in reality. The dream world is to inspire me and guide me in this world, but not to tell me what to do, but to guide me.

So the ideas come from beyond the dream world. It's where the dreams come from. I feel like I've spent my whole lifetime, ever since a kid, opening up those channels, because I couldn't get into this world, but I could certainly get into the other world.

I think since I spent this whole lifetime getting into those channels or getting into that world, that the channels are wide open and I have to work at shutting them off.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Not—I don't have the problem a lot of artists do, what to do next. I have the opposite. No, I don't want to see anymore. Stop it. I'm already booked until 2013 for the Triton Museum. I can't do any more because right now I have—I'm overwhelmed with just what I've got to do.

But they asked me to do a Dia de los Muertos, four or five months ago, for the Oakland Museum. And I'm going, Oh, yeah, I did that 20, 15—I don't know how many years ago. It's the token time for Mexicans to come in and do some Dias de los Muertos. But then I said, My dad died.

All of a sudden 2013 is still going on, but I added my dad's installation and my dad as the guy bracero crossing two borders, crossing two flags, crossing three cultures, and how do I put that in that installation? That's what I'm doing now. Now I'm feeling overwhelmed for the 2013 because of the installation for my dad's Dia de los Muertos.

So I put the spigot on. I opened it up. What should I do with my dad? So I came up with the really cool installation, which now I have to write. I have already made the drawing. I have everything collected for it.

I even wove the thing for it, and it's being documented by a photographer right now who is—it's going to be the centerpiece. And it's his face that's on the weaving. He's the central part of the installation.

But it's also about, like I said, the two flags. That's what those coiled barbed wires are. I'm going to wrap those up in red, white, and blue; red, white, and green; red, white, and blue; have a lot of cool threads like this falling

off it; have it on the floor. I mean, beautiful flowers everywhere because he was into flowers.

So it's already done. I've just got to make making the stuff. So I don't want to—I have that, and I have the 2013, which I already have five major pieces that I'm working on at a time. I don't want to see any more.

MIJA RIEDEL: You don't want any more.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The rebozos, hey, if I do the Virgen de Guadalupe, I don't want to see any more. I don't. I don't. I may want to see a new Earth, but let's get through these first. Let's get through the Virgen, and then I'll see, and then I'll open up the faucet again.

Where do they come from? My God, it's—it's scary. You know, not scary—it is scary, because once I see it, I feel like I'm—it's like a gift, so I'm obligated to make it happen.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: If I don't make it happen, they go, Aw, we gave her this and she didn't make it. So I, like, go, Please don't let me see any more. I don't want to see any more, you know, and don't tell me I have to write down in a journal because that bores the heck out of me.

I want to be writing—not writing, I want to be making with my hands, not writing. Right now I don't want to do that. You know, but I've got a Dragon Dictation, which is pretty cool. I just got that, like a month ago, and I'm going, Okay, I can talk into the computer and then not have it—not have to da-da-da, you know?

MIJA RIEDEL: That's great. Is it working?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, it's much better.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, that's great.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, it's really neat. But what I'm writing down are my dreams, because those are like short stories.

MIJA RIEDEL: I bet.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They're really cool.

MIJA RIEDEL: I bet those are really interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, they're really cool.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I remember way back in the '60s, the yogis had this yoga of dreaming, and what the yoga dreamers would do—because there are different yogas—they would dream up dreams, and they'd go into these worlds. And the whole point was to find the ones you want to go to, so that when you pass on, you go into the dream worlds.

I'm there, okay, let's do it. So there I was, dreaming up a storm for 20 years. I had my five different worlds that I would go to periodically to go check them out, and just travel on and do things in them and keep up the contact with these worlds. And I'd be doing this and I went, I like these five. I'll stay with these five.

MIJA RIEDEL: Is that also not part of an indigenous cosmology, the five different worlds?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I don't know, but that's what was natural for me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was just natural that I had five. And I would go to different ones, but the five—I liked five. They're all different. And dreaming, it's like I was afraid almost. I was getting into too much dreaming things during the 1970s, late, late '70s when I went to graduate school. I dropped it because I knew I had to focus on the reality.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I had to go to graduate school. I had to go to school. I could no longer merge the two worlds. But the funny thing about my world dreams was that when my mom died, I always saw these worlds as different worlds, different spaces. The morning my mom died, I didn't know she died.

I woke up. Oh, my God, I'd dreamt it the night before. I saw the worlds as a map, flat, where this was that one; this one's over here; that one's over there, and if I travel this way, I can go to here. And I was like, Wow, I've never seen them [in] relation to each other.

MIJA RIEDEL: How interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And that morning, when I woke up, like, around six or seven, then at 10 o'clock they called me that my mom had died. I never dreamed those worlds again.

MIJA RIEDEL: None of them?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And in fact, I stopped dreaming for like a year. And to this day, I haven't gone back.

MIJA RIEDEL: None of the five?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No. And I'm thinking, My mom went there. I bet you she took on my worlds. How neat, because they were co-worlds, and my mom suffered. I'm sure she was really mean and all that. I know that, but I'm thinking, Boy, her mother was even meaner than that.

So she probably thought she was okay, you know. But I'm thinking, I bet you she went—she's a princess—[inaudible]. I mean, that's what I believe. I never—so I have no—I've never touched that. It's been five years. I started dreaming again.

MIJA RIEDEL: But those worlds had nothing to do with the work?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: Completely separate?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No.

MIJA RIEDEL: Let's talk about travels here on Earth.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: On this—oh.

MIJA RIEDEL: And are there any in particular? You've traveled quite a lot. We've talked about Spain in passing. We mentioned Belgium, I think Brussels.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, Spain was incredible.

MIJA RIEDEL: But are there any travels in particular that have really had an impact on your work?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was Spain.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The first time I went to Spain—I think I went to Spain three times, but I can't remember. But the thing that got me about Spain was, wow—everybody was saying, "Well, where are you from?" "Oh, born in California." "Oh, Americana, Americana," and American had always meant to me Euro-American. "Oh, Americana."

When I would say, "Oh, I was born in California; my father's from Mexico," "Americana, Americana." I guess so. Then the foods—my God, there's no black pepper on this table, not even chili.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Holy schmoley! I am Americana because, boy, a chili—the second time, I took my crushed red pepper, and I take it everywhere I go now. But I was like, "I really am not Hispanic." Their tortillas are omelets. Oh my gosh! I was so happy. It validated all my beliefs, yes, yes. And that's when that whole food thing started.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: [Laughs.] Because of that experience in Spain. The foods were so different from the foods that I had always known here, which were the cactus, the corn tortilla, the chili. I mean—

MIJA RIEDEL: Nothing Spanish or Hispanic about them.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Nothing.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I was like, Whoa. I was so happy. So that's what started the food one. That's when the *Chile Tepin Dress*, that was a—I never finished the corn and the squash, the same theme, the silk wrap. I just didn't have time.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. So this was all around the time of the MACLA installation?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: '94.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, '94, okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: '94 was, I think, when I went to Spain, and that day that I took off to Spain, when I booked the flight, I didn't know that that was the opening for the burial shrouds at the Oakland Museum. And it was on my birthday.

MIJA RIEDEL: Wow, what a birthday.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes. I know. But I was taking off, going—[laughs]. That was bad. But I somehow lived through it.

MIJA RIEDEL: So the Spain, and in particular the food—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The food and then the effect of my persona and my work on the Spanish. "You're different from the other Mexicans that have come here." "Really, why?" "*Se creen muy blanquitos.*" I don't.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Really, and I'm thinking, "Yes, I guess they do."

MIJA RIEDEL: They appeared extremely white?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They think of themselves as white.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, I see.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Spanish.

MIJA RIEDEL: The Spanish do or the Mexicans do?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The Spanish thinking of the Mexicans were that they thought of themselves as blanquitos.

MIJA RIEDEL: As very white.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And you know, more Hispanic than Indian.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Whereas they see them as Indian.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But not until the '70s did they start bringing up the Indian in the movement.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So—

MIJA RIEDEL: So that also reinforced your sense of self.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: For me, it was like, Dang, I'm on the right path here. I'm glad, because I don't want to be considered Hispanic. I know who I am. They say Underwood; they let me in.

But then they see me, and then they see the cactus on my face, and they go, "Oh, my God, you're Underwood." That's what happened most of the time when I would be called to do art stuff, and then as an Underwood, and then they'd look at me and they'd go, "Oh, my God, you're Underwood? Oh." And so it was like I couldn't pass for white. I couldn't.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was so neat about being an artist. You have to be authentic to be good. I mean, you can be super rich and be a fake artist and you can do that. But that's not my fate. Because I come from where I come, I had to be authentic to even survive as an artist.

So I know, like Jesus said, "Know thyself," you know, as an—Picasso's quote—that was another one that spurred me on. When he was a kid—well, two things about Picasso.

Well, the first—well, the quote—the one that got me was the one—"My mother said to me, 'If you are a soldier, you will become a general. If you are a monk, you will become the Pope.' Instead, I was a painter and became Picasso."

Ah! Okay, okay, pretty cool, Picasso. Plus his incredible drawings at 13 and 14? He was drawing like da Vinci and all that. I was seeing this video of him back in the late '70s, or '70s, and that's when I heard that quote. The other thing about his story, which really struck me and influenced me, was his learning how to draw. Did you hear that one, where he—apparently his father raised pigeons.

MIJA RIEDEL: And the bird's foot that he had to draw over and over again. Is that right?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, the father went and got the pigeon and wrapped their cuts—cut off the legs and told the kid, "Draw them." Drawing was serious for him at age two. That's why by 13 he was a master. I went, Dang.

MIJA RIEDEL: I hadn't heard that.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Okay, we can relate here, Picasso. We know what is and what isn't and what is—we take it seriously. That was really influential on me.

Going back to travel, so there I was in Spain, where I'd confront the colonial mother, you know. And they embraced me because I stuck to my guns.

If I had become a Hispanic, I can see where the art folks at least would, "Next." But I came in as indigenous, you know. "Okay, I'm Mexican; I'm a U.S. Sorry about that. I'm sorry about it, so." [Laughs.] I remember one Basque person telling me, "You know, Consuelo, we really respect the Chicano art over here." This is in the much later trip to Anahuac or something, in Spain, southern Spain.

MIJA RIEDEL: Anahuac?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was some conference I went to.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was a Basque lady, and she says, "We really respect the Chicano art." "Why is that?" "Well, you know, after so many years of colonial domination, you guys still are fighting. You're still kicking," about colonialism and the border. I went, "That's pretty good. I think we are."

I never—I can see where we stand out in a lot of places, because borders are such an issue everywhere. But those are—current borders, in many ways right now—it's the borders in the last 50 years that are tearing apart that country, Europe, the nation over there, and I'm sure in Africa. But we've been going on with this border thing for 200 years.

I still have it, and now it looks like the Chicanos are finally, but not really—they're not really carrying on the border. They're carrying on more identity, which is fine. I mean, we all have to approach our border issues differently. But I feel that at least the world is recognizing issues of border in the Southwest.

I guess one of the most important things how travel has affected me was that I had to make my work so that it just wasn't understandable in my area. People from another world had to understand my issues. My issues had to have a global presence, and I think that this *Undocumented Border Flowers*, the big giant basket, the big

giant *molcajetes* that celebrate my culture, is really cool.

And I like the fact that in the tortilla basket, my favorite part is the embroidered corn beans with the indigenous words that I know in Yaqui—*chokim*, *ba'aa*—which have nothing to do with Spanish. *Chokim*—you add an M to make it plural, not an S. *Choki* is "flower"—I mean "star." *Chokim*, now "many stars." *Ba'aa* is "water," not *agua*, *ba'aa*. *E'eh* is "no." *Ewi*—E-W-I—is "yes," not *sí*, or *ci*, C-I. [Laughs.]

But those are the words that kind of—*ati*, I mean, that's "what." So these are the words that I have embroidered on the corn husks that go all around the basket. The organza.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And so for me, I'm going, Okay, I love the fact that I want the viewer to come in like a bird, like an eagle hovering around, seeing a shape, and then zooming in to the detail.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I really like that. And I like it as a metaphor, as a bird coming in, flying in and then seeing.

Fred Spratt had another way of saying it, which is really funny. He said, "Consuelo, your work reminds me of going to see my dear old aunt, Victorian aunt, in her Victorian living room all filled with all this stuff, and you're amazed by all this stuff.

"And she's rambling and talking, and then you're realizing that she's speaking the most disgusting, revolting, profane language, but you didn't get it until you stopped focusing on what's going on around you and listening to her." And I'm going—

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I'm going, "That's a funny way, but yeah, I kind of get it, yeah." [Laughs.] Because that's kind of what I do. But I saw it more like a bird, and most of my work, like the *Diaspora*, where you fly in through the hoops down to the Earth, and all those flowers are the anonymous souls of the Americas, kind of like the *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, all those indigenous that we have no clue who they were.

There are so many indigenous tribes that we don't know what happened. When the Civil War was over, Jackson forbade any information to come across out of the middle areas. Who knows what atrocities were going on? So that anonymity of anguish and suffering on so many levels, we never got to hear about.

Well, I'm hoping that those flowers are the expressions of those, "Ah," final things that have brought it to peace, and that you have to go in through the hoops and down through the hoops to get out of there or to go in there and see it. It's not easy to see. It's very difficult to get in there and see that stuff.

So again, it's like flight, because in my dreams I fly a lot. So maybe that's how I relate, the dreams, the flight thing, like the deer path that you saw.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's flying, seen overhead.

MIJA RIEDEL: The perspective?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: We haven't discussed exhibitions at all yet in particular, and I'm thinking of commercial galleries now, because we've talked about university galleries and museums. But have you had ongoing—any sort of ongoing relationship with particular galleries?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I have failed miserably in connecting with commercial galleries. I don't feel my work is commercial. And I know I can—I guess the flags are probably the most commercial of all the pieces, because they're nicely framed, all the same. They're all series. And that's just two years ago.

MIJA RIEDEL: So it's been primarily university galleries and museums?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, yeah, basically. And one of the—what's his name? He used to be the director of the Mexican Museum, and then he went to [Cal State] Fullerton, and I don't know what he's doing

now. But he told me, "You know, Consuelo, you're funny. Most artists, they start with the commercial and then they go to museums. You went to the museums first, but you're going to have a base of commercial."

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I'm going, "Yeah, I think you're right." But I never did my work for money because I always felt, Well, I've got a job as a professor. That pays for the money.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Now I don't have to make work to sell. I have to make work for history. So I've never—and I've seen artists that make work for sale, but they're never going to go historical, because they're selling everything, and it's made for commerce. But mine is to become a footnote somewhere. It's to talk about history—now, the present, so the future can see it. I think that's why it's not commercial.

So the only pieces—Kenneth Trapp, bless his heart. He allowed the museums to buy my work. That's probably the most—the Sprint—I don't know how that guy heard of me. But he called me up out of the blue to get one of my pieces. So I've sold very little. Elia just liked the work and she had money. So she bought a couple of my pieces. But I have sold very little, you know.

I'm not a good presentation, commercial kind of person. On the one hand, I'm disappointed. But on the other hand, it's okay, because this is what I really wanted to be in. From the very beginning, I always said it was a footnote. It wasn't to make money, to make cash, you know.

And I really felt, Okay, I'll get a degree and I'll get a job. How am I going to get a job? Well, I don't know. You can always teach in your garage, teach weaving, teach drawing, and you can always go to Timbuktu now that you know how to push paper at San Jose State University.

You can always go to Timbuktu, any recreation center, city hall and say, "Hey look, I'll develop a program for you." I can always do that. And if worse comes to worse, dang it, there's always preschools and convalescent homes.

MIJA RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was what I thought all the way up until the last year of graduate school. I was going to do that, because there was no way I was going to get hired to get a university job, no way. There was no way my work was going to be selling.

Now, there was—when I came up north with my two pieces, I entered this Gallery 9 in Los Altos. It was a co-op. I think I made three of them, three rip-offs of my—they sold. But I don't want to do this. I don't want to do this. I want to make art. What's art? I don't know, but it's not doing the same thing over and over again.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I know it's not that. Maybe get on with graduate school here. Then I got more into what art was, and you know what, okay, commercial, go off in the middle of nowhere and just do it for yourself and who cares, or try to get a museum so you can get in history. So that's what I did. That's why I'm in so many museums. I tried.

I remember the first museum show that I was in was in Fullerton, the Fullerton Museum, and that was back in the '80s I think, or '90s. I'd just moved over here, and they had a Virgen de Guadalupe show at Fullerton Museum. Applications—I went looking in *Artweek*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, my God. I'm going to try. This is going to be cool. Oh, they only want prints or whatever. I'll just send it in anyway. They didn't say anything about fibers or textiles or mixed media because that wasn't a category at the time. I know my Virgins are good because I know they're good, and, you know, they're edgy. They'll like them. Rejection. They rejected my Virgin. Oh, my God!

MIJA RIEDEL: You called?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: "What's up?" I said, "I got rejected." "Oh, yeah; oh, yeah, I remember this. Oh, yeah, you had that textile—a weaving," I don't know, fiber; I don't know what he called it. "Yes." "Yes, well, we really didn't want to—you know, don't want to have crafter weaving in here."

"Oh really? Did you know that the Virgen de Guadalupe, her appearance was on a craft cloth, a muslin cloth? A

textile that was woven? Did you know that?" "But, but, but, but, but, well, well, well, well, okay." They let me in. That was my first museum show.

MIJA RIEDEL: That's a great story.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: That's a great story.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I was so angry that they rejected me, that the Virgen de Guadalupe, which I know was the coolest one—and I don't know what piece it was. I just know it was one of the ones that were coming out of San Jose State.

And for them to reject me because it was a weaving or a textile, I mean not painting or whatever, but not a weaving. Oh, my God! Who are you? [Laugh.] That was it—I mean, that was—I was—okay, good.

MIJA RIEDEL: What sort of changes have you seen in the craft market over your career, because that's—that's a pretty interesting beginning. Have you seen increased acceptance? Have you seen—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: In the craft market?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Wow. What I see now is everything I wanted—I'm just looking at textiles, fiber craft.

MIJA RIEDEL: Sure.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because I don't look at other crafts really except as a buyer. But in terms of critiquing as an art, it's the cloth fiber. What I've—and what I've noticed in all of the—I go to MAD [Museum of Arts and Design] a lot, as often as I can.

I go to see David, and I go to see the MAD museum, and to me, he's got the best eye. I mean, he really—wow. To be in his collection is amazing. He's got one of my Frontera flags.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, one of the Frontera flags.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, the first one. He's got it. But what I've noticed that he's—all the current craft that he's got, wow, I wish I had done that. Wow, I wish I had done that one. Oh, my God! Why didn't I think of that? Before, it was, like, yawn.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Very predictable, very—the same—I just knew where it was coming from: form, form, form.

You want to say that I wish I had made that. Behind that is that there's such a diverse approach to the media.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because the gates are falling down; there's all these different voices from all different places, high and low, that are coming in and speaking. That really excites me, and, dang, I was one of the players. That's really cool, on one hand. And the other hand it's like, Holy Ghost, Consuelo, you have really got to make good work now. [Laughs.] It's got to get better and better. Or what else is new?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But what is new is that there's so many incredibly cool, exciting voices—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —that are being expressed in the craft, but at the same time, what's also really beautiful and flowing is a continuation of classic form, classic approach, the classic—I enjoy seeing the *Handwoven* magazine. They're still beautiful. Those old ladies—

MIJA RIEDEL: *Fiberarts*, you mean?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, *Fiberarts* folded.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, right, right, right. So which one?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: *Handwoven*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, *Handwoven*.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Which is in Reno. It's one of those craft kind of magazines that show how to weave a coverlet—it's still one of my favorites—I look forward to seeing it. Then in all the crafts, I've seen that there's still people that want to make a perfect bowl, a perfect glass, a perfect blanket.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I respect that. I feel reassured of that—and that's kind of like my dream of when I graduate, I'm going to make this stuff. And to date, I don't have the time to do it. Exactly, if I have a newborn nephew, it'd be so cool to make him one of those things.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: À la Consuelo.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But something, like planting the dumb flowers. Why do I want to plant flowers?

MIJA RIEDEL: Have there been magazines, periodicals that have been important to your development?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: *Fiberarts*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay, so *Fiberarts*.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I'm so sad that it closed.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, that was a wonderful publication.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was one of the first ones that helped me in my tenure track.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because 10, 15, 20 years ago, they put me on their cover, and that really impressed the folks at San Jose State. You know, the—what do you call that committee that advances people?

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, tenure committee.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Tenure, I don't know what it was. But it published my work. It published me in my early part of the career, and it recognized how different I was without being one of these.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I appreciated it, and I know that it's done that for many artists. So sad that that closed.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, that is sad.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And the other one was—*American Craft*, I rarely had that much to do with it, but I think once or twice.

But *Artweek* was more important to me because that was during my developmental years here at San Jose State as a graduate student. I got in there a couple of times real early, '90s, late '80s. *Artweek* was almost like a negative thing because that was the Yerba Buena Center show I told you about that Elia and Yolanda went to.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And it got covered in *Artweek*.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Wow! And I swear, they listed everybody, and I'm eagerly reading this—

Wow, I'm going to be one of the names in *Artweek*.

MIJA RIEDEL: You weren't in there? What happened?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I went to sleep in the bed and covered myself, It's okay. It'll be okay. [Laughs.]

MIJA RIEDEL: They'd just forgotten?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I don't know. I never called them up. [They laugh.] It wasn't a museum. It was just the old Yerba Buena Center when it was a two-story building, some abandoned place that they renovated. So, but I just remember I was devastated because it listed on and on, just names.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And my name wasn't on it. But that was the show that Elia and Yolanda López saw my work. So that was the end of it or the beginning of it or whatever. So *Artweek* was important in that sense.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's okay.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I remember one artist who said in an interview—I read it—rejection is a badge of honor. Save them. Save those letters, because it shows you went to war and you got shot. [They laugh.] So that was kind of fun. I said, Okay. I kept that in mind.

MIJA RIEDEL: Are there any particular writers that you feel have been influential to your work in your field?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Writers?

MIJA RIEDEL: Critics?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I stopped reading fiction. Oh, in my field?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Okay.

MIJA RIEDEL: In these publications, any critics?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The ones that I have seen, they don't get the work.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Not really, just lately I've been seeing writers come out, and usually they're coming from the Chicana area, because they understand my symbols, the way I use it, and they're saying, "Quite cool," where I think a lot of writers that don't come from the border experience go, "Huh, what's that about?" So really I don't—not writers.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Not writers. I stopped reading fiction when I was 10, 11, you know. I thought, Hey, I could make a story up as well as anybody, so I'm going to read autobiographies, science, or just reference books, encyclopedias, stuff like that.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I don't really know literature because I kind of stayed away from it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, yeah, and I was thinking more along critics and art writers.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: In terms of traditions, do you think of yourself as part of an international tradition, as American, as Mexican, as Yaqui, as Huichol, as some combination of those?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: All of those, all of those.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I feel "indigenous" is a term that is a universal for any—all around the world there's indigenous people.

MIJA RIEDEL: True.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I come from one of the Americas. I am one of the American indigenous people. I have that. But like Kenneth Trapp recognized, I'm also a product of the English, U.S. culture, you know, and he saw that in the shrouds. He was affected by John Chapman, Woody Guthrie.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

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CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Dr. King, he clearly knew where that was coming from. Maybe not Zapata. Joan of Arc, he understood that one. But he could see that I wasn't that, and I think that was why he liked—it doesn't make sense. You must be cool.

I feel like I was tri-cultural, you know—English, Spanish, indigenous. I've always had that ever since I was a kid. I had to really navigate between these three different ways of looking at the world.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really? Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I just was always angry that I didn't have the indigenous being the number one. But then when I met the honey, it was okay, and that's why, Okay, let's get in the car and we'd drive two days. It doesn't matter.

MIJA RIEDEL: And did he have that sensibility even as a young person himself?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Through his father. His father was a refugee from the Yaqui pueblos during the 1900 war with Mexico—the Yaqui Nation and war with Mexico, 1900. He was eight years old and he fled the reform school, because they gathered up the Yaqui kids and the Yaqui women and all kinds of atrocities because they wanted the land.

They got a lot of land from the Yaquis at the time. But my father-in-law was an eight-year-old who ran away from the reform school that they put him in, and he ran away to Mexicali. And he also at that point was recruited by soldiers in the Mexican army, and he ran away from that after two years.

By 10, he went back to Mexicali, and because Yaqui pueblos were still a war zone, really bad stuff was happening with the Yaquis and the Mexican government. So the guy hung onto his culture. He married a Mexicana, which is my mother-in-law, who passed away at the time my mom passed away. Talk about two cats, too, but anyway. [Laughs.]

But the father was the one that talked to him about the Yaqui—"Always go back to your land," he kept insisting, "Go back." His mom didn't want—just like my mom, "Don't go back to the homeland. Don't go back there. Stay here with me." So the honey got the Yaqui thing from his dad, wanting to go back.

As soon as we could afford it, which was right after he got his degree from Cal State LA and he started working on the space shuttle as part of Rockwell International, after working at Philco Ford while in graduate school—that was in the mid-'70s or something like that—that's when we made the pilgrimage to Huichol land to see those folk.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Then after that, then we went to look for the Yaqui reservation in Arizona, and once we saw the Yaqui reservation there—Anselmo Valencia was starting to put it together as a recognized tribe by the United States, to recognize the Yaqui as a nation.

MIJA RIEDEL: This was in the '80s, was it?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: In the '70s.

MIJA RIEDEL: In the '70s?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: In the '70s, late '70s, because that's when we could start affording to travel.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They were just putting together the reservation in Arizona. Anselmo started at that point selling cigarettes on the reservation, which led to the first Indian casinos.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: We'd go down there two or three times a year for the ceremonies. Then meanwhile Marcos's dad has died, and he wanted to go back to the homeland and the mother never—didn't allow that. But Marcos stayed with that longing, "Well, we should go to the homeland where my dad was born."

So like in the '80s—because we were going to Tucson for 10 years. We saw it become—it was really interesting because the reservation at that time was in Arizona—the people that were doing the ceremony were all the old geezers, the ritual, all old people. The young thugs, the young kids, were like thugs. They were—didn't interest them at all.

And then the casino started and then we started going to—then we went to go look for the homeland connection, his relatives in the pueblo that my father-in-law was born. And we started making connections there. We met the family. And I told Marcos, "Wow, this is like taqueria. Arizona is like Del Taco, Taco Bell. This is the real stuff."

Whereas in Arizona, most of them spoke English and Yaqui, and in Tucson—I mean, over there, they spoke a little bit of Spanish and pure Yaqui. And everybody did, and the ritual was twice as long, much more intense and involving the little kiddies to the old geezers. So then we started going there. We just kept going, eight more hours, and going there.

And it was just much more authentic, much more poverty, you know, harder to stay there because the electricity would go out. The water would leave. It was dusty, you know, outdoor toilets. Everything outdoor. You can imagine, you know, the ramadas, grass houses, you know, but basically it's a lean-to.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And that's the house, and everything else is outside, you know, that kind of a thing. So it was very, very—

MIJA RIEDEL: So there aren't actually home structures?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: There were homes—oh, the homes were made of reed, you know. And now over the last 20 years the government has given them bricks.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And there's half brick and half not. Most of them are still the reed, you know. And it depends on the pueblo.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The one that's the most sophisticated in terms of the houses are actually adobe or brick, that's Potam, you know. But the one we belong to is Vicam Pueblo, which is the most traditional, meaning most houses are made of reed.

MIJA RIEDEL: Now what's the name of that pueblo?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Vicam, V-I-C-A-M. Vicam Pueblo. On the map you'll see "Vicam Switch"—

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —meaning "switch," because of the Pan-American Highway; the railroads cut right through the territory of the Yaqui. And literally, like every two or three years, the Yaquis have a problem with the Mexican government. They'll close the highway. They won't let anybody in.

It's an autonomous nation, unlike over here in the U.S., where it's a BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs], as ruled on the reservation and in Arizona. In Mexico they still have not conquered that territory, and that's why it's so cool.

The priests will not go into the Yaqui church. They have to be invited in. The *maeto* is the guy in charge of the church. He's the teacher, not the priest from the church.

There's Catholic. There's a cross there, the Virgen de Guadalupe. But it's interesting because they don't just have the Virgen de Guadalupe. They have the three Marys—the mother, the aunt, and the Mary Magdalene. Remember Jesus had those three women crying at his cross?

MIJA RIEDEL: I don't, but—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Mother Mary and his wife—his wife—Magdalene was the maid.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Mary was the mother, and the other Mary was John the Baptist's mother, which was his *tiá*, or his aunt. Those three Marys are just as important as the Virgin in many ways in the Yaqui, because they supposedly know Jesus better than we did over here because he lived with them forever, for a long time.

So it's really interesting—oh, three Marys—not one is more important than the other. But the Virgen de Guadalupe is separate. These three are the three Virgins—the three Marys, not Virgins—the three Marys. Isn't that interesting?

MIJA RIEDEL: It is.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I just find it so intriguing. It's just like, Huh. It's an altered reality.

MIJA RIEDEL: Exactly.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: To do with religion.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's so wild, and so they have this church that was built by the Mexican—forced on them. So they still use it. It's like an abandoned church, but everybody—that's all—a lot of the ritual takes place in this giant church that's broken windows, open doors.

It's just wild. It's just surreal. And every pueblo has a church and—the smallest pueblo has a shack, and that's a church. Every pueblo has its own flavor.

MIJA RIEDEL: I bet. I'm sure.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Everyone has a flavor. It's its own different people in the same family, but every finger is different. That's the same with the pueblo.

And I can say, "Wow, hi, you're a misfit. You're a drunk. You should go to Potam." Or, "You're really mystical; you should go to Torin," that kind of a flavor. "You're really into the Republican—the conservative, follow the Constitution to the rule. You belong in Vicam Pueblo."

Going back to Yaqui land—it just made my indigenous spirit that much stronger, and that's why I keep going back there. It keeps reminding me that, yes, I didn't make it up. I'm not living in Disneyland. It is true. There is some Quechan indigenous people still in the Americas.

So it's kind of fun, and the kids know that too. And there's a whole different value system, where flowers are more important than gold. That's kind of cool, you know, for me as an artist; that's like, Yes. It's like living in a metaphysical—

MIJA RIEDEL: A completely altered sense of values and reality, yeah.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yeah, totally. That kind of feeds my way of looking at art and making art the way I do. And it's just validating. Of course, I'm going to use flowers, not just because my granddaughter is there, but because they're pretty powerful, powerful things.

MIJA RIEDEL: Such a transition from your original thinking about flowers.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I know, I know, the Virgen de Guadalupe.

MIJA RIEDEL: Completely rewriting of those rules, yeah.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, the Virgin, I didn't like her. And here I am dying to make her rebozo, but I've got to pace it, got to cut through these other mothers first.

MIJA RIEDEL: Consuelo, have you done any commissioned work? Have you—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I've always wanted to.

MIJA RIEDEL: You have wanted to?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I've always wanted to.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But I don't know how to get in there.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I've always said, "Well, since I'm teaching, I'm already making money."

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I've always wanted to.

MIJA RIEDEL: And I know many artists have completely mixed feelings. Some find them interesting because it brings new challenges to their work, and others find them absolutely something they want to avoid at all costs.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I wanted to because I wanted to put my work up there that speaks about what I'm talking about.

MIJA RIEDEL: But I'm thinking of commission in terms of somebody coming to you and saying, "I want you to make something for me." Yes, I didn't think so, but—

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, and I've been wanting to. I wish somebody would, but I'm not going to—I don't have time to go seek it. But if somebody asked me, I'd love to. I know I can make time for it now that I'm retired.

MIJA RIEDEL: Short of Yaqui land and your connection with indigenous cultures, is there any other community that's been important to your development as an artist?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The Yaquis, the Chicano.

MIJA RIEDEL: Is there any sort of community at San Jose State, any other artists?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, the artists. There are so many people—because San Jose State was rich, in that it had so many different kinds of art, right—the jewelry, the crafts, the painting, the sculpture, the foundry, the glass, the fibers, digital photography. It was rich.

I would say the designers—because of the political position over there—the administration in the art department, it was a camp between the design and the fine arts.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The fine arts—when I first got there, the fine arts were like, "Huh, what kind of work is that, crafting?" The designers were like, "Wow, those are cool," because they saw the shrouds. I remember the designers—more of them respected my work than the fine artists.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I made really cool friends with the design faculty. I know they're the ones that supported me through the tenure process. "She's cool; she's really good; she's authentic." Tony May was definitely right there behind me.

He knew exactly what was going on and he was for it. Sam Richardson was like, "Well, I guess so. I guess," and everybody else was like, "Huh, oh, really." So the photographers were cool. They were, like, "Wow, I wish I could do that interesting stuff."

I felt so different. The thing is that at the university, especially at San Jose—I don't know about other ones—everybody's so overworked, overwhelmed. It's hard to get out of their road and go into somebody else's world. When I got the support, I knew it was special. So I liked that.

There was some faculty people that from the design, Joe Miller, Robin Lasser from photography, Lanning Stern from design. I remember he was the toughest guy to please. Students would cry coming out of his classes. The faculty of fine arts were just dying to get at him because he was just such a—he wanted students to be dressed always for the interview.

He didn't want students sitting on the ground. "What are you sitting on the ground for? Aren't you a student here?" kind of guy. I remember him oodling—he didn't know I was watching him—goo-goo-ga-ga-ing over my John Chapman shroud. He was so mesmerized, and I was watching him from afar.

I was watching him, and he was just so mesmerized with that shroud that I went, He really likes it. And I could tell that when he would see me in the hallway, he'd smile and nod and I was like, Wow, Lanning Stern is smiling at me. He never said, "Great job," but he would always—I could tell he was a supporter. And so those kind of reactions—kind of like gestures, body movements, and I could tell who would just, like, "Huh," but those who liked it—when they liked it, I really enjoyed their camaraderieship.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I never wanted to interfere in their space, because I know we're all busy—but I really appreciate it when they would say, "You know, that's pretty cool. You want to hang out or whatever?" Yep.

MIJA RIEDEL: Well, we have made, I think, excellent progress on these questions. There are a few summary questions.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Any more summary ones?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes. Just I think we've done a really nice job of going into detail, and in many different aspects of your work and career. And looking at things as an overview, do you have any summary thoughts about the importance of fiber as a means of expression, what it does better than anything else, its strengths, its weaknesses? And what about it that has held your attention for 30 or 40 years?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, the thing that I see that's important is that it's the authentic woman's voice—

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: —as art.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's totally theirs since dawn. So to lose that would be so tragic, and that's what really frightened me in the '80s and the early '90s.

MIJA RIEDEL: We've talked about your work in terms of cultural identity. We've talked about it in terms of political and environmental identity. But we really haven't addressed the gender issue, and that that female essence is really what matters as well.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Well, it's kind of like that quote from van Gogh that I told you, "Exaggerate the essential; avoid the obvious."

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's so obvious to me.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's such an obvious thing. Of course, it's loaded with estrogen. That's why it was so like this in the arts. I never doubted the power of the feminine, never. And so the Guadalupe was feminine. It's like, what else could I do? I remember at age 29 I was always wearing those Levis.

MIJA RIEDEL: The embroidered ones?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I remember when I was a kid, I had to go to school in old pants from the

fields because that's what we had to work in and I had to go to school in those. I was always, Oh, my God, look at those pants, and I didn't have pretty dresses.

So I said, As long as I live, I'll wear pants. I don't care. I'm going to wear pants. I don't need pretty dresses. I don't need skirts. So that's what I did, and then I was really happy when the hippies came along, because they would wear Levis and they embroidered them. Oh, I can do that, celebrate Levis and pants.

Then I hit the late '70s. And they're not embroidering these pants anymore. [Laughs.] I felt pretty, and then Joan Austin, she showed us a film, a PBS thing about the Bedouin tribes of Northern Africa, that ones that were making the Persian carpets.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Persian rugs. I'm 27, 28, and I'm looking at this film about these women that live out in the desert, traveling on camels—and this is before all these border wars and everything started happening. They'd travel migratory to feed their goats, set up camp, and I'm going, I can relate to all that. And then they'd make—bring out their looms to weave their—

MIJA RIEDEL: Backstrap looms, that sort of thing?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It wasn't backstrap. They were board, like vertical. They're Persian rugs.

MIJA RIEDEL: Oh, Persian rugs, okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: They're Persian rugs. They were always rolled up, and they'd unroll them, and then they'd set up camp, unroll them.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I can relate to that. That's pretty indigenous. I was like, Wow, look at how barren that desert is, and no wonder they're making such an incredible—so didactic, that barren desert and these incredible—like *Me Sleeping*, but they're much richer, you know.

MIJA RIEDEL: Neda talked about having a very similar experience, actually being, I think, in Afghanistan and watching the—I don't know if it was the Bedouins or who she mentioned but some migratory group camping and rolling out these exquisite rugs in that just absolutely barren desert, how profound that was.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Oh, my gosh. That was the first hit. The second hit was, Are they for real? They're lying on these giant camels, right, because they all have three to five skirts on. Oh, I know why, because they don't have a place to keep them, so they wear them, floofy, five-layered skirts.

And I remember the desert, and they're walking around in all these skirts, and then they would take—once they were on top of the camels, somehow they would grab up their skirts, and then once they're on their camel, it took them forever to get every little part of skirt be perfectly one on top of another.

And they're like giant flowers upside down. And unlike the cowboy girls that need pants, they kept their femininity with their poufy, flowered skirts. I'm looking at my Levis and I'm going, Oh my gosh, and that's when I swore, Consuelo, don't wear Levis. You're going to wear skirts. You're a woman. You're estrogen. When men wear dresses, then you can wear pants, and I never wore pants again.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And that was in '78, '79, '80, when I was with Joan. I still have that—somewhere I showed that film in the early '90s to the students. It's a PBS thing on—I don't know. But it was on flowers or something. I don't know what it was. But it was on the tribes that made the Persian rugs. It was a PBS documentary on Persian rug-making. It hit me like a rock. Ever since then, I always went for the feminine—flaunt that I'm a woman.

Knowing that empowered me. Of course, I'm going to do threads. I'm going to do threads. Every indigenous culture, the women do the thread work. They all do thread work. Why would I want to change now? So it's there. I'm a woman. I'm going to do threads. I'm not going to want to be a man and do what they do, whatever they do. I know that women do threads.

Now, it's pretty cool, the Huichol guys, they do threads. That's cool. That's cool. They even wear embroidery. Great. But they don't wear skirts. [Laughs.] That's why it's so important for me to keep on with threads.

That's why it was so sad during the '80s when a lot of the thread work was gone, and that's what's so nice now

that it's coming back and how the thread and fiber and textiles have broken the walls in the museums and it's really hot now.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's really hot. It's so hot it almost makes you not want to do it. [Laughs.] My whole thing was, If I've seen it, I don't want to do it.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's always been that too. Oh, somebody did it; I can't do it. Can't do it; somebody already did.

MIJA RIEDEL: What do you see as similarities and differences between your early work and what you're working on now?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I think the difference is that I'm much more aware of the complete context, history, and where it's coming from; whereas before, I'd come in one door and that's all I'd see. It's a historical piece and somehow it has a thread and somehow I'm going to weave it. Now I think much more about material, and the other thing is, I don't work—remember that spigot?

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I have to shut it off now; whereas before, it's like, I wonder what I'm going to do next. I wonder what I should do next. Now, it's like, Oh, my gosh; oh, my gosh. That's a big difference. Whereas before, it wasn't a spigot. It was like, Okay, I've got to turn the faucet on. Okay, is there water coming out?

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Now, it's like, Turn it off, turn it off, turn it off. That's a huge difference for me. And the thing is, the neatest thing about that is that everything that comes out, it's all related.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Totally related.

MIJA RIEDEL: And it wasn't before?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, it was, like, different compartments.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Before.

MIJA RIEDEL: That makes sense. I can think of those very specific series.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And you're right. Now, it does seem that it hits—something was struck. And when did that happen? When did you notice that happening, that the spigot was just constant and that it began to all be related?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I remember the spigot was, like, as a graduate student getting out of grad at San Jose State. The burial shrouds, I saw so many, ahhh, burial shrouds. Academia turned it off. What do you want to do? You've got to get in that show. Okay, you've got to—and that went on for like 10 years.

MIJA RIEDEL: Did the shows you want to get into inspire the work you did?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The ones I wanted to get into, for the next 10, 20—during the '90s, I don't really remember wanting to get into very many shows, because I was always being asked.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So I would always, like, I've got to get in that show. I've not got to get in. I've got to get some work for that show.

MIJA RIEDEL: I see.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So what am I going to make? What's the audience going to want? I remember the work for the—the '90s, it's kind of like that. It was more like, What work would go good for that space, for that place? What's going to go good when I go for Spain? They want me to do a show in Spain, so what should I show them over there?

That kind of what kind, what should I do, that was kind of like my mentality in the art—in the work space during the '90s.

Then the 2000s came, when I was like, I'm stuck in academia, and there's a big shift because I was going to take off. Oh, my God, I'm going to be stuck in academia. I don't know what I did in the early 2000s. I think I did a couple of installations. I don't know what I did in the year 2000s, early 2000s. But I know something happened with MACLA.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I had already done my travels. I didn't want to travel, because I didn't like traveling, you know. My mom was dying. I did Oaxaca. The rebozos were going on.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Then my mom died and I was like, Oh, man, you know. And then I got a solo at MACLA. Really?

MIJA RIEDEL: It was *Ingles Only*, I think, in 2001.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Which one?

MIJA RIEDEL: *Ingles Only*.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: And the *Anonymous Dead*, the *Xewa Sisters*?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, *Xewa*, that was my longing to go back to the loom and the *Ingles* and the *Anonymous Dead* was my anger at the whole system, the whole world—I felt so isolated because I was still recognizing Oaxaca was a big blow-up.

My indigenous was really going out on a limb. I wasn't fitting here. I wasn't fitting there. I was too Mexican for the Euro craft. I was too Indian for the Chicano. I was trying to straddle both, and I didn't want to accommodate either. I think that's why that work was the way it was.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was very historical. *Buffalo Shroud*—

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I revisited the shroud because I heard about the—how buffalo was 17 percent fat, and that's when the beef was skyrocketing to three dollars a pound and I was really angry that Bush—the disparity between the rich and the poor seemed to be going—and all these weird things were happening in our nation and in our laws.

Like the English-only, passing a law that you could only speak English in California? The Treaty of Guadalupe said, "We're going to take over California, but we will forever have Spanish and English, and the Indian will never have to decide which one they belong to." And then Reagan just signs that off so that the Indian can never again straddle. They've got to decide whether they're U.S. or Mexican Indian. And the English-only thing, it just went on, and then the [Proposition] 187 that they want to push. It's just like we were becoming Nazis. The wall was going up. All that stuff was affecting—I was getting too angry.

I was wanting to be a good professor and struggling to keep up with all these—I was letting a lot of good opportunities go by because I couldn't answer the phone because there were just too many opportunities coming up. I was always frustrated. And then my mom was going away and nobody was taking care of her and they all were looking at me.

And I'm going, Gosh, you guys are unemployed and you guys want me? You see me running like a crazy chicken and you're expecting me to take on my mom, and I have to take on my mom because, the other ones weren't doing it. It was a really bad time. Then my mom passed on. I did the *Diaspora*. I went to Texas. It felt good going

to Texas.

I did a lot of stuff with Santa Barraza in Texas. She was a really good guide—she showed me all these things in Texas, a lot of connections where I got some Texas gigs through her. I really respected her book. I was really inspired by that book.

MIJA RIEDEL: What was the book?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was her book on her work. Santa Barraza—and I was really disappointed that the Californian people over here kind of like, "Eh, Texas, Santa Barraza," and I was like, "She's good. She really is a good artist. Why are you dissing"—and then I saw. I know what it is. It's this regionalism.

It made me angry, that regionalism, nationalism, everywhere. I didn't like it and I was angry and I wanted to get of the state. Then MACLA offered me this opportunity.

My mom passed on. I was really happy that my mom took on my green world. I really have peace that she's living now in those places. She's now living in really cool spaces, because I don't think she had a happy life, and it gave me peace.

My dad was going to start living with me. That made me real happy that I didn't have to worry about him. He was going to be under my care. He was going to be living with me.

MIJA RIEDEL: This was early 2000, 2004, something like that?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: 4000, 4006, and then, yeah, by the 4005, '06, my mom had passed on and my dad was now living with me.

MIJA RIEDEL: 2004, '05, and '06.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That was during that time. So then MACLA came on and in 2005, '06—five years, I'm out of here.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I'm not going to be doing three different things all the time. I'm going to be doing pure art. I will be doing just family and art.

MIJA RIEDEL: And how has it been?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It's been incredible because that's what started the MACLA—that's what changed the whole world in terms of the ideas. All of a sudden, Oh, my gosh, the rebozos, I can weave them, and I've going to weave them for the mothers.

Oh, my gosh, I see it now. It's a celebration. It's not a wah, wah, wah. It's a celebrate. Celebrate that I'm still using the *molcajete*. Celebrate that I still love chili and they don't have chili in Spain. Celebrate the tortilla, the *maíz*.

Celebrate that the corn tortilla is authentic, and celebrate, you know. MACLA was to celebrate. Celebrate who I am. Celebrate the culture. Keep it up, and celebrate and you're going to be weaving now, you know, and do everything—and then weaving a basket. So have a good time.

Once that in the *Tortilla Interplay* performance was so—I didn't plan it. All I knew was that I had made this huge tortilla. I wanted to make a giant tortilla for the giant—I read that the tortilla sales had surpassed bread sales in the U.S. Let's make the tortilla then; celebrate that. You know what, I want to take a tortilla to the ocean and see what side is the ocean mother going to take the tortilla on. Is it going to show it off to this side, or is it going to throw it off to that side?

Robin Lasser, the photographer, invited me with her class to go down to San Isidro, and I really think she wanted somebody to front her, because she knew I knew about border and she didn't really know how the border worked.

But she knew I did border stuff so, "You want to come, Consuelo?" "Sure." "You want to do something over there?" "Well, not really." "Well, you know, think about it, you know," and I'm going, Wow, I guess I could do a

performance. I don't like performance, but you know—

MIJA RIEDEL: And that's the only one you've ever done, the *Tortilla Interplay*, yes?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: It was amazingly hot. It was too easy in many ways because it was so easy. All I did was have a really good profound, What do I want to do? and do it, and voila, it's hot. All I wanted to do, I had made this giant tortilla, the first one I made for the big basket. I was going to make a basket for six tortillas.

The first one, that was around the time Robin asked me. I thought, I've got this giant tortilla. They were calling for the giant wall. I'll just take the tortilla down to the ocean and show it—first, I'll show it to the wall, to show the wall. Here's your tortilla. Here's a tortilla, wall, and now I'll take it to the ocean. That's what I'll do.

That's all I was going to do, and I'll take care of Robin and her crew, the young'uns that are the graduate students of photography, and I'll try to be the facilitator between them and the INS and the border guards and all that stuff because I know how to deal with them.

MIJA RIEDEL: And the kids—she was taking them just over to Mexico for a field trip?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: To the borderland, yeah—she was teaching this class on installation performance.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: She wanted them to do a performance on borders, any kind of borders, and the most obvious border was the Mexican border.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right, sure.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I think that's what it was.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: So that's how I understood it, that she wanted to give them a contextual background to do a border piece.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Interestingly enough, one of those students [Julia Bradshaw] is a wonderful professor at Fresno that asked me to be in the show where I'm having the solo.

MIJA RIEDEL: Interesting.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: But that was total serendipity. She got the job—and she's from England, speaks with an English accent, and she's the one that gets hired at Fresno State for photography. Okay, Okay, get it; I got it.

I go down there and Robin Lasser said, "You're going to do performance now? What are you doing to do?" "Oh, I'm just taking a tortilla, throw it to the wall, and then into the ocean." "Isn't that a performance?" "I don't think so."

We had the discussion all the way down. She was like, "What do you mean it's not a performance?" "It's not a performance. I'm just taking this tortilla, bringing it to the wall, and then just throwing it to the ocean and see which side it is."

She just was like this and I was like this. Why doesn't she get it? And she was like, How come she doesn't get—she grew up in La Jolla, literally right downtown La Jolla, with these big mansions; father was this big muck in the big D.C., kind of—I don't know what he was, but I know he's got all these awards, a lot of money, and yeah, this mini-mansion right on the beach of La Jolla.

That's where she grew up. You mean you were there, and I was on the other side of the little hills there in poverty, and you were here dolling it up in your shortsies going to the ocean every morning figuring out what to do about life, and here I am—we had that discussion. So she was like, "You're not doing a performance?"

"No." "So what are you going to do?" "I'm just going to"—we went over that thing over and over again. So sure

enough—we got over there, and there was all kinds of stuff that was happening—that was just like, Yes, I get it.

The INS closed off the road because they know that it's been three years and every three years a lot of people go there and do this kind of stuff on the border. I didn't know that. But they knew that. Robin knew that. That's why she took them that day. But they decided that year to close the road. Why? The access to get to that place—why?

"Well, it's flooded, don't you use it over there? And there's a big puddle on the road and there's a pickup truck there." "That puddle is flooded?" "Yes, can't go by it." And Robin's like—and all the kids have never seen the border before. They're all from Ohio, New York, England.

They were all like—and I'm like, "Yep, I get it; I got it; cool. Well, you know what, there's another road over here. Let's go to that one." So we all walk, because we can't drive in. They already say we can't. Well, let's walk it. They can't say no to that. Sure enough, they couldn't, but they were looking at us. We'd be halfway and they'd stop by, "What are you guys doing?" "We're going over there walking. You can't stop us." And they went, "Keep walking." So Robin sets up her installation.

Some students set up theirs, and I'm taking my tortilla. We were like, Here's the ocean; here's the border—there's the ocean. Here's the wall that's going down like that. We're over here. We were going to drive up here. We have to walk. So we walk, and we're here at this point making our way that way.

At this point, Robin says, "Well, I really want a shot of my teepee going in," this big abode made of cloth that's with a background as the border wall. She wanted—she's a photographer and she does objects and puts them in a contextual place and photographs them.

And I said—or she was going to—"Oh, let me set up here." And then some students, I don't know what they were doing—and I'm like, "Okay, well, I'm going to take my tortilla and I'm going to throw it to the wall."

Next thing I know—so here I'm talking to myself and here's the wall; here's the tortilla on the wall, you know, having a good time, like killing time, but showing the tortilla to the wall. There's two pickup trucks, INS. "Get away from the wall; get away," and everybody's like over here going like, "What's going on over there?"

They're looking at—they're seeing me being accosted by these two—and I'm like, "Why? I'm not going to move. I'm not doing anything wrong." There was a minuteman on horseback right next to me, right next on the wall.

Literally, there's the wall and there's their path and I'm on the same place too. But they're on either side of me. There's two on that side. There's one horseman and there are two pickup trucks or the Suburban vans, whatever those—Broncos, whatever they were.

The minutemen have rifles—I know minutemen are not security officers sanctioned by the government. They're Joe Blows that have taken it on themselves to guard the border. They're not telling those guys anything. Robin, being the—knows how to deal, I guess, how to operate, she walks over. She starts talking to these guys, and I'm like, "Are we done here?"

I'm talking to the tortilla and the wall. We've got it. So I go back to where the camp is, and Robin is talking to them and I overhear them saying—I don't know what they were saying about how—Yeah, we're allowing the guys with the guns because we heard some—once in a while if you heard gunshots—Robin said, "We heard gunshots," and we had heard gunshots just a little while ago.

"You should go over there and check out the gunshots." "Ah, don't worry about it," he says. I was hearing him tell Robin, "Once in a while we have to arrest a couple of these guys that come over. They're all drunk. We have to put them in jail and sometimes they escape."

All the students are like, "What?" And I'm like, Yes, business as usual. I don't say that, but this is just—whatever craziness. Talk about surreal and everything's upside-down. So Robin is like, you know, "Consuelo, you know, move on, get away." So I move on.

We pick up camp, go now down to the wall where the pictures are being taken of me on the wall. While we're down there, there's like now four SUVs looking down at us. And so this one student had a performance where she wanted all of us to get a plate and mark up the plate and then break it. I don't know why. Like I said, I had done my thing.

I was waiting for everything to be done because Robin said she'd help me put the tortilla in there. So, "Okay, Robin, take care of your students and take care of what you've got to do, and then at the end we can just put the tortilla in." One of the students wanted all of us to participate, and I went, "Okay," and the INS was just, like, watching us now.

Then it was my turn. I know they're watching me because I was the only Mexican in the whole group. There was like 12 of us. So I get the hammer. As soon as I hit the plate, the four SUVs just—getting out, they're jumping out of their things, "What are you guys doing here?" Everybody—the kids are all scared and then Robin's like, "You know, it's okay; it's okay."

She's telling them, "It's okay; it's okay; calm down. The students are doing a performance." And I'm like, I knew it. I knew they're just watching for me to do something, you know.

Then two of the guys were getting fed up with it, the photographer kids, the graduate students. So they started taking pictures of the INS flagrantly. And I'm like, "Guys," but they backed off. They backed off because of the cameras.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: And I don't know what Robin told them or whatever. I don't know what she negotiated with them. But they went away. The kids were like, "Wow, what was that about?" I let them talk. Really, it's Robin's class. I'm just there for the ride. To make the end of the story, at the end of that, then, "Okay, Robin, is it time?" "Yes, it's time." So I was trying to put the tortilla in. "Let me take photographs of you, Consuelo." "Okay." "But I think I'm going to need your help." I was trying to take the tortilla in there.

MIJA RIEDEL: And putting the tortilla into the ocean?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The ocean, yeah. It was crumpling up and I didn't know she was taking so many photos. And then I said, "I need help, Robin. Come on. Let's take some—let's do this." So she takes her camera down, and she and her assistant help me throw the tortilla in. And it finally goes away.

MIJA RIEDEL: Floats out?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Floats out. Before it goes at the edge, it goes under, and that's when I go, Oh, after all, I'm not going to find out which way it went, because I wanted to see it float and then figure out, Is it going to go this way or is it going to go that? Which way do you want the tortilla, Ocean, what side of the border?

And that's when I went, No! After all this, two days of my life to go down there and put up with all of this nonsense was to find out, and I didn't find out. But the neatest thing and the wildest thing was, they were taking photographs of me the whole time. And that's what made it a performance.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: If they had not taken photographs, it wouldn't have been a performance. And I'm thinking, How many things like that have I done in the studio that are never documented, where I talk to myself, the object, and the spirit? I've done that lots of times. But I've never documented it or made a picture of it, and it's only because the students were there that now I have a performance that's pretty cool.

MIJA RIEDEL: Gave it a new context.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes.

MIJA RIEDEL: Yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The documentation. But I do that all the time. Every time I start a piece, every time I begin something important in the process, I'll do something to show the spirit, We're going to do this. I'm going to go into that land.

But I don't document it. And is it a performance? I don't think so. I never thought of it as a performance. On the way back it was like, Maybe it's a performance, geez, now, you know, whereas before, Nope, it's not a performance. Nope, it's not a performance. I'm just going to take—

MIJA RIEDEL: The location had changed; context had changed, yes.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Because of the documentation, it changed.

MIJA RIEDEL: Right. I'm going to pause this for one moment.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MIJA RIEDEL: So one final—one final question, Consuelo, which is, what about your work matters to you at this point in time?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The most important thing right now for me is to finish the rebozos so that I can make the rebozo for the Virgen de Guadalupe. That supersedes all the other work that I'm doing for all these exhibitions.

As soon as I finish that rebozo, which I hope is in the winter of 2012, I'd like to be weaving the Virgen de Guadalupe. As soon as I finish that, I think my artistic needing to do things is over.

MIJA RIEDEL: Really?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: After that, it's whatever the spirits want. I'll be waiting to hear what they want. But right now, I really feel the mandate is get the rebozos done.

MIJA RIEDEL: And where is the mandate coming from?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That other space.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: That other space.

MIJA RIEDEL: That you've recently left, the university space?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: No, because that space was there during the university.

MIJA RIEDEL: Okay.

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: I couldn't make that more important, because I had to deal with my mom and the university. Once I left—my mom left, my dad left, the university left; then they were talking about time—how much time do I have to listen to that stuff?

That space is now much more clearer because I don't have these other things filling up my consciousness. But now, the consciousness is filled up with that space, that same, You've got to get these rebozos done. You can do the rain for the nopal; you can do this; you can do that. But you've got to get those rebozos done.

Once you get the rebozos done, then I feel like I've completed a full cycle of what I was destined to do. I think my walk as a weaver, as an artist, was to make that rebozo.

MIJA RIEDEL: Have you had that thought before, that I need to make these shrouds or I need to make these flags?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Yes, because, remember, I had to make the shrouds to say, Thank you, heroes, for giving me this job, this studio, this M.F.A. Thank you. The other thank you, I guess, was in the tortillas, chilis, and other border things. Thank you, *cultura*, for identifying me, thank you for allowing me to use a *molcajete*, for my daughter to be using it.

Thank you for my love of chili and nopales still. Thank you that I have the connection to the indigenous. Thank you, *cultura*. Mothers, thank you, mothers, for taking care of me. Virgen de Guadalupe, I know you're the ultimate mother and let me give you this greatest honor. I'm going to weave for you the most beautiful rebozo fabric that I can think of.

MIJA RIEDEL: Coatlicue?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: Coatlicue.

MIJA RIEDEL: Coatlicue, do you see her as part of that?

CONSUELO JIMENEZ UNDERWOOD: The Virgen de Guadalupe is an extension of the latest face of that. But I feel like the Virgen is the—

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