



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

**Oral history interview with Robert Winokur, 2011
July 23-24**

Contact Information

Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C. 20560

www.aaa.si.edu/askus

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Robert Winokur on July 23 and 24, 2011. The interview took place at the Artist's home and studio in Horsham, Pennsylvania, and was conducted by Mija Riedel for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Robert Winokur and Mija Riedel have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The transcript has been heavily edited. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

MIJA RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Robert Winokur at the artist's home and studio in Horsham, Pennsylvania, on July 23, 2011, for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. This is card number one.

Let's take care of some of the early biographical information then move on to the work and teaching. When and where were you born?

ROBERT WINOKUR: I was born in Brooklyn, New York, on December 24, 1933.

MS. RIEDEL: If you would, describe your childhood background a little bit—your parents; if you had siblings, their names.

MR. WINOKUR: My father's side of the family was Ukrainian. I believe my grandfather's wife died in the Ukraine. When they got to this country, he remarried. So my grandmother on that side of my family wasn't really blood. Maybe I'll get to it in a few minutes, on my mother's side.

MS. RIEDEL: What was your father's name?

MR. WINOKUR: Harry.

MS. RIEDEL: Harry. Harry Winokur. And your mother's name?

MR. WINOKUR: Beatrice.

MS. RIEDEL: Beatrice. And what was her maiden name?

MR. WINOKUR: Rosenhaus, H-A-U-S. Well, that's German, and there's an explanation for that.

MS. RIEDEL: Rosenhaus—that is interesting in context, isn't it? Did you have siblings as well?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, I had a sister.

MS. RIEDEL: What was her name?

MR. WINOKUR: Arline.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: A-R-L-I-N-E.

MS. RIEDEL: Thanks.

MR. WINOKUR: My mother's side of the family was from White Russia, Belarus. The city of Babruysk. And the suburb, a shtetl or a small farmstead, it was Wizifka gubernia. My mother was born here. My father was not.

MS. RIEDEL: Your mother was born in Brooklyn?

MR. WINOKUR: No, Manhattan. Lower Manhattan. My father was born in Europe and came here in 1917 when he was 14, or 1914 when he was 17. [They laugh.] It was never very clear. As a matter of fact, he had—this is one of the anecdotes. The family anecdote was he needed his birthday, and so he decided Washington's birthday would do fine.

MS. RIEDEL: He didn't know his birthday?

MR. WINOKUR: Didn't know his birthday.

MS. RIEDEL: Really? Wow.

MR. WINOKUR: So—

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, there were no papers kept for—

MS. RIEDEL: But his parents didn't know?

MR. WINOKUR: His mother had passed away in Europe. His father, I don't think—was never—you know, it didn't matter.

MS. RIEDEL: And he chose Washington's birthday.

MR. WINOKUR: He chose Washington's birthday.

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting. So you were born in Brooklyn.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And grew up there?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. Let me give you a little more background on my parents—

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: —because it's sort of—I don't know if it's important or not, but it's part of the mix.

MS. RIEDEL: If it's significant to your story and your work, by all means.

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know if it is or not, but there's funny little wrinkles that I've never quite sorted out, and I might as well do it now. My mother's parents, they went up through Germany from Belarus. To get a boat to the United States, you had to go up north through to Germany to one of the ports on the northern coast.

They had some relatives in Germany, and they would have stayed, but they decided they weren't [comfortable there]; evidently this thing between Russian Jews who were peasants and German Jews who were "German"—a kind of class system. So anyway, they got on the boat and went to the United States.

During the Depression—all of this in the 1930s; Hitler came to power in 1933. [My mother was an art student at Washington Irving High School in Lower Manhattan; she got a medal for it. I have the medal around here some place.]

[During the Depression my father was a laundry route driver, and he did odd jobs like shovel coal.] So we used to take in boarders, and I slept on a cot in one—it was a big room, and the boarders slept across the room on the other side. . . .

There were two, and they slept in the big bed together; they were brothers. One of them had a big portable Zenith radio. They didn't come home till late at night, and I went to sleep early because I was very young. So I would pull out the portable radio and turn it on—I was sneaking it—and listen to all of the programs; the Chicago Theater, I still remember it—all sorts of stuff in this nether, before you fall asleep. I couldn't fall asleep because I had to turn the radio off; otherwise, they'd know I'd been listening to it. . . . Listening to the radio late at night is really, to my way of thinking, a hell of an exercise for one's imagination . . . in that I had to provide all the imagery. You know, I knew just what Superman looked like.

MS. RIEDEL: How old were you?

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know. Let's see—it was before—

MS. RIEDEL: Five, six, something like that?

MR. WINOKUR: I was born in '33. By '42, I was seven.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, or nine.

MR. WINOKUR: Or nine.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: So maybe I was six or seven years old; something like that. So I would listen to this portable radio and hear all this stuff. I found out later that the boarders were cousins of my

mother's.

MS. RIEDEL: You didn't think they were any relation?

MR. WINOKUR: I had no sense of how they were related to me; they had come from Europe later. I think there was some reference to one of them, or both of them, working in a brush factory, because they would complain about how stuffing those bristles in the boards hurt their hands. One of them was named John Sheinin. He went to Chicago and started the Chicago Medical School.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, this was in the 1930s. Anti-Semitism was not limited to Germany or to Europe. It was fairly endemic in this country too.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. WINOKUR: In other words—

MS. RIEDEL: Did you have a sense of that as a child?

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know if I had a sense of it or not. When I was a kid, there were things you didn't tell children. You were sent out of the room if adults wanted to talk about something, or they spoke Yiddish, Russian, or German, or something else so the kids would not understand, and they spoke in German or Russian, for all I know.

MS. RIEDEL: As a child in Brooklyn, did you have a sense of that at school?

MR. WINOKUR: Oh, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, you did?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. There were some incidents with teachers.

MS. RIEDEL: With teachers.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Being anti-Semitic?

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know if they were [or there was another reason]. I remember a whole semester being sat in the back of a class at the end of the first row, and nobody ever talking to me and never being called on.

MS. RIEDEL: And you think that was an anti-Semitic—

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know what it was. You don't know, A, B; I don't know what the connections are. I'm just—

MS. RIEDEL: Because I would think there was a fairly large Jewish population in New York, and it wouldn't have been—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. I don't know. At any rate, to get back to a guy named Donovan; started the OSS. He was Catholic. He was the only Catholic in the—it was the Office of Strategic Services. It was intelligence services; precursor to CIA.

There's a bit of business where the CIA is hunting for somebody to do in Castro. There's a movie called *The Good Shepherd* [2006], and the repartee is—a guy they're interviewing for the assassination is mafia. And he says, "What do you believe in? I mean, the Irish believe in this, the blacks believe in that, the Jews believe in this. What do you believe in?" And the CIA guy says, "We are American; all the rest of you are visitors."

And that sort of described the atmosphere. The State Department—there was an incident where a boat, the *St. Louis*, full of people who wanted to get out of Germany, came to the United States, and they refused to let them land because the State Department put the kibosh on it. So that boat full of people went back to Europe, basically to their demise.

At any rate, that was the kind of atmosphere that existed. There was a quota system for doctors—no Chinese, no Orientals, and 10 percent for Italians and Jews. I don't even think there were blacks included.

MS. RIEDEL: That were admitted to medical school?

MR. WINOKUR: That were admitted to medical schools.

MS. RIEDEL: I had—[inaudible].

MR. WINOKUR: So the whole medical profession was basically white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant. They were "Americans." There was that kind of atmosphere that prevailed. I don't know how Sheinin got [to start a medical school].

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: But his—the Chicago Medical School was to create an avenue for people to be doctors; to get around the quota system. . . .

My mother's brothers were involved in the unions. It was the AFL-CIO, and it was called the Joint Board. My father had a men's clothing store.

MS. RIEDEL: In Brooklyn?

MR. WINOKUR: I think it was in Manhattan; I'm not sure anymore.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you know what it was called?

MR. WINOKUR: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: He had it for a while.

MS. RIEDEL: He owned it and ran it?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, it was his store. It was broken into, and everything was taken out through a hole in the roof, and he went bankrupt. I remember he and my two uncles got their laundry trucks and they went to the store and cleaned it out—furniture, anything they could put in the trucks, and brought it home. It was on our front porch for years.

MS. RIEDEL: How old were you at the time?

MR. WINOKUR: Again, it was pre-war—this is still, like, '36, '37.

MS. RIEDEL: You were very young.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. [And I remember that my sister and I had a lot of fun playing in the pile it made.]

MS. RIEDEL: Do you have a real visual recollection of that?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. It's not just family stories? You remember.

MR. WINOKUR: People are incredulous [when I tell them]. I have a funny memory. I tell people I remember lying in a crib and looking up out through a window, and they don't believe me; and maybe it's something I've invented. I don't know. But I—so—memory while I was still in a crib? I do remember knowing—

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. WINOKUR: To the extent—

MS. RIEDEL: So I need to cross-reference all questions. I can—

MR. WINOKUR: Well, yes, I still remember. I remember gnawing on the headboard of my crib, and I can still tell you what it tasted like. It was shellacked and it had a bitter kind of crunchy taste to it. You can do what you want with that.

MS. RIEDEL: So you were clear you weren't going to work in wood and—[laughs].

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know if any of this relates to what I do.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, let's talk about your parents and what they—

MR. WINOKUR: Well, that's what I'm doing.

MS. RIEDEL: —yes, what they did and how—if you were interested in art or materials at an early age, if that was something that you were interested in or encouraged.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, my mother—my mother went to Washington Irving High School, which is Lower Manhattan.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: The couple of other people you've interviewed in that book—I think went to the same school. Somewhere upstairs in the attic in a box is a medal she got for artwork.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, really?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. She claims—

MS. RIEDEL: She worked in clay, right?

MR. WINOKUR: Not in clay. I don't think she ever touched clay.

MS. RIEDEL: White clay; she made jewelry?

MR. WINOKUR: That's another story.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: I'll get to that. But she took a sort of . . . pride or something like, "You're an artist because you got my genes." . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Because she was proud of the fact that you're an artist. . . .

MR. WINOKUR: It was just one of these things she would tell people.

MS. RIEDEL: I see.

MR. WINOKUR: Not that she stood there and bragged.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: But anyway, to get back—her brothers, my uncles, were involved in the unions, and so my father got involved. His business went bankrupt . . . and he became a laundry route driver. They found a job for him where they worked. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: So a pretty austere childhood, it sounds.

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know. I never thought of myself as being poor or poverty-stricken or without. I don't remember ever being hungry, anything like that. It was before the war, because I remember that Sheinin, after he'd started the medical school, came back east to fundraise while the World's Fair was on. So he took my parents to the World's Fair. [I stayed home.]

MS. RIEDEL: And which year was that World's Fair?

MR. WINOKUR: [1939.] . . . I have stuff upstairs, photographs that I inherited of the archbishop of Chicago and Sheinin together.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. WINOKUR: Because the Catholics benefitted from the medical school too. Anyway, I guess what I'm sort of alluding to here is a sort of demi-aristocracy—I don't know how to explain it. I was sent to a summer camp for children; my sister too. One of my bunkmates was a kid named Louie Gompers, who was Samuel Gompers's grandson, who was the ALGWU— Women's Garment Workers Union. [Everyone, their kids, and staff were connected in some way to the unions.]

MS. RIEDEL: So it wasn't perhaps just religious background, but maybe political leanings as well, is what you're saying? . . .

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Communist?

MR. WINOKUR: [No, more socialist, Marxian. "Be an artist, maybe you'll make the world a better place."]

MS. RIEDEL: That's fascinating. . . . So that must have been very—

MR. WINOKUR: Well—

MS. RIEDEL: —yes, I would imagine why you didn't choose—well, I'm sure you wouldn't share that with—

MR. WINOKUR: I had this sense of—like I was one of these kids who was switched at the hospital.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. WINOKUR: Like I got the wrong parents.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: Always—it was like I didn't—I had to be careful not to be identified with them in some way, in some quarters.

MS. RIEDEL: I see.

MR. WINOKUR: Religiously and politically.

MS. RIEDEL: And was your mother of similar persuasion and similar conviction?

MR. WINOKUR: I don't think she was as outspoken. She ran the house [and later she cooked].

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: So she couldn't participate in wild philosophical fantasies—[inaudible]. At some point, I think my—it was my father—said, "Being an artist is good. They'll cure the world."

MS. RIEDEL: Sorry?

MR. WINOKUR: That's—"They will cure the world; artists will make the world better."

MS. RIEDEL: Really? Your father said that?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, something like that.

MS. RIEDEL: So he must have been supportive, then, of your choice.

MR. WINOKUR: I think in those days, fathers were visitors. They went off to work; they came back. If you did something bad, you were threatened by [the thought that they would punish you].

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: "I'll tell your father when he gets home."

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: . . . This whole idea of the father being involved in rearing children today is completely foreign to me.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: The idea that you spent quality time with your kids—I don't know that my father and I ever had meaningful conversations, that I can recall now. He was like the man who wasn't there.

[Not that I was an easy kid.] I was sitting up on top of a mailbox just horsing around. Teachers came by, and one said, "Get off of there!" I said, "You can't tell me that; school's out." So she left. The next day I got called down to her room. She took me into the stairwell, grabbed me by the ear, and slammed my head up against the wall.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, and she was good at it, because she grabbed my earlobe; she didn't leave any marks. But the point was, you're sitting there with your mouth open.

MS. RIEDEL: That's pretty shocking.

MR. WINOKUR: But—

MS. RIEDEL: It was commonplace back then, I guess.

MR. WINOKUR: Teachers ran their rooms. Nobody complained about—[inaudible]—she slapped you around. So it was—because they were doing what they supposed to do, and you were turned over to them. [Parents didn't hover.]

MS. RIEDEL: Did you have art classes as a child? Was there art in school?

MR. WINOKUR: No, except for kindergarten.

MS. RIEDEL: So, no drawing.

MR. WINOKUR: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you draw as a child, regardless?

MR. WINOKUR: I think I did draw. I would draw on the backs of my father's laundry cards, and they thought that was wonderful. I recall moments of painting in kindergarten, splashing pigment.

MS. RIEDEL: But not something that continued through junior high or high school?

MR. WINOKUR: No, I think the public schools—no art, except maybe music classes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. Any visits to any museums?

MR. WINOKUR: No, no.

MS. RIEDEL: So art was not something that was important. . . . And your mother didn't take you on the weekends?

MR. WINOKUR: My mother worked. I was at the school and she went off to work.

MS. RIEDEL: Weekends, anything like that?

MR. WINOKUR: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Any relatives that were artistically inclined or interested?

MR. WINOKUR: Not that I'm aware.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. WINOKUR: Which was why I think I was in the wrong family.

MS. RIEDEL: And did you understand that you were interested in art from an early age?

MR. WINOKUR: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Why did you think you were in the wrong family?

MR. WINOKUR: . . . They were assimilating; . . . they were first generation.

MS. RIEDEL: Your father, to be sure, right?

MR. WINOKUR: My father and my mother—

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: —were first generation. They worked hard not to be—"Don't act like a greenie." And they didn't speak Yiddish or Polish or Russian; they spoke American.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: . . . They didn't observe holidays the way my grandparents did. There were all sorts of distinctions. My grandparents lived in a neighborhood, and a lot of their brothers and sisters lived within walking distance, on the same street. My parents lived in the next neighborhood. It was a bus ride; it wasn't within walking distance.

MS. RIEDEL: It was important to them to assimilate?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, by separating, they could assimilate and make it clear they were not foreigners.

MS. RIEDEL: What was important to you as a child?

MR. WINOKUR: I can't think of a thing.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. WINOKUR: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, you mentioned the radio and imagination.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, but specific, tangible things. I can't—

MS. RIEDEL: So you didn't love to draw; it wasn't something—painting—

MR. WINOKUR: No, no.

MS. RIEDEL: You were not enthralled with images or radio?

MR. WINOKUR: No, I think I was a kid who was just enjoying [being a kid]. Best I can think. I was one of the heroes on one of these radio programs, something of that sort.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: There was a fantasy thing going. But no, I did not think I was going to become an artist.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. Was there any expectation about what you were going to do?

MR. WINOKUR: I was going to go to college.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: There was never any doubt about that.

MS. RIEDEL: Now, your father was a Navy welder—

MR. WINOKUR: Well, once the war started, the U.S. Navy taught him to be a welder. . . . He was assigned here in Philadelphia, so we all moved to Philadelphia.

MS. RIEDEL: And one other thing, too: you have mentioned a memory of watching your mother

make jewelry out of clay—

MR. WINOKUR: Okay, let's stay here and—

MS. RIEDEL: So you moved to Philadelphia in—what was the year?

MR. WINOKUR: Okay. Well, let me go back to New York before—just before. At any rate, even if we lived in the next neighborhood and we were within bus distance, we had a telephone; they didn't. A telephone was expensive—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —but it was important to have a telephone because that's what Americans had. I don't know if that is the exact—but that's my take on it.

At any rate, my mother could call a neighbor, who would convey a message to my grandparents; they didn't have one, though. At any rate, there was this kind of closely knit enclave within a 10-block area. I don't think my mother was ever without family. Suddenly the war came, and we moved to Philadelphia. He became a welder.

MS. RIEDEL: What year was this roughly?

MR. WINOKUR: Probably about '42. Pearl Harbor was '41, December—

MS. RIEDEL: So you were nine.

MR. WINOKUR: So I was about nine, 10. I guess I have to tell you...northeast Philadelphia was basically open farmland. There was just open farmland, though it built up after the war. It's called the Great Northeast and it's now row houses. But during the early part of the war, all these people were being moved around for war work had to have housing, and so there was what were called "war projects."

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: And we took up residence in a war project called Pennypack Park Village, and we lived on Stardust Lane.

MS. RIEDEL: Stardust Lane?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: This is what I read about nonfiction—can't make that up.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, but it's good enough for fiction.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Yes, that's true.

MR. WINOKUR: So the way things worked at that point was this war project. It took up maybe a hundred, 200 acres of streets with cul-de-sacs and these row houses. I didn't learn till about 10

years ago that the whole—that the place, the project that we lived in, had been designed by Louis Kahn.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. WINOKUR: Really.

MS. RIEDEL: How extraordinary.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, it was meaningless until I became an artist, and—which I turned around, well, that must have had an influence on me.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. WINOKUR: . . . It was a nice house. It was in this large project that had a village center, or co-op or a community center. And there were all sorts of community activities: Boy Scouts, bandage rolling, and fire wardens, and people volunteered. . . . There were all sorts of meetings that worked out of this community center. So they had [ceramic] classes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: The way things worked was, my father worked in a shipyard. All of Philadelphia was a huge war factory, the Frankford Arsenal, shipbuilding, a major port. Up and down the Delaware River, boatbuilding—worked in one of the places called Cramps Shipyard. The factories worked 24 hours a day for seven days a week. [The shipyard worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week.]

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: And they had this rotation schedule. So for four weeks, he was on from 8:00 to 4:00 p.m. Then the next four weeks, he was on from 4:00 to 12:00 at night.

MS. RIEDEL: Midnight, right.

MR. WINOKUR: To midnight. The next section, he was on from midnight to 8:00 in the morning. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: So there were two—eight weeks out of each cycle, when he wasn't home.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: At least, he was, but I didn't see him [much, because I was off at school from nine to three].

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: My mother had been without—this was the first time, I think, in her whole life she'd

been disconnected from her family. So my sense of it was that she was [very lonely, so] she took classes in ceramics.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: This is what I was getting around to.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: So she would bring home this big wad of white stuff, clay, wrapped in wet towels—there was no such thing as plastic—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: . . . She would sit at one end of the table. I sat at the other end of the table and did my homework, and she sat at the other end of the table and did this . . . ceramic jewelry.

MS. RIEDEL: She was making beads out of white clay?

MR. WINOKUR: Beads and earrings and—out of white clay.

MS. RIEDEL: Earthenware, porcelain? Who knows.

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know what it was.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: It was white clay. Then she would take all the stuff she made, take it to this center; they would fire it; she would decorate it; they would fire it again.

MS. RIEDEL: So she glazed all these ceramic beads, and they would fire them?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, they weren't all beads. They were flowers [pins, jewelry, too].

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, medallions, pendants, that sort of thing?

MR. WINOKUR: Medallions, all sorts of stuff.

MS. RIEDEL: Earrings.

MR. WINOKUR: [Earrings, too.] She made ceramic jewelry.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh.

MR. WINOKUR: She would put plastic backings on them for earrings.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Bright colors?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, bright.

MS. RIEDEL: And then how—where would she sell them?

MR. WINOKUR: I don't think she sold them. I don't know what she did with them. She probably just did it for herself and friends. It was for her, not for—she didn't have to make a living.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: [At that point] she was a stay-at-home mom for the first time in her life, too. She was—so—

MS. RIEDEL: Now, in Philadelphia, she didn't have to work, whereas in New York, she did work.

MR. WINOKUR: She didn't have to work. [The Depression is over.]

MS. RIEDEL: I see. Now, and then did you begin to play with the clay yourself?

MR. WINOKUR: No.

MS. RIEDEL: No?

MR. WINOKUR: No, I had nothing to do with—

MS. RIEDEL: You did your homework; you didn't touch it.

MR. WINOKUR: I did my homework; I didn't touch it. I was impressed by the fact that they came back with all these colors, but that was about the extent of it.

MS. RIEDEL: So how then did you decide to go to Tyler [School of Art]?

MR. WINOKUR: Well, the war was over and we went back home.

MS. RIEDEL: You moved back to Brooklyn?

MR. WINOKUR: Back to Brooklyn.

MS. RIEDEL: So now you would be how old?

MR. WINOKUR: Nine, 10, 11, maybe 12—'48, '47, or '46; 1946.

MS. RIEDEL: So you were 13 or 14—so you're moving back for high school.

MR. WINOKUR: I was still in grammar school, P.S. 179.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: So I hadn't graduated out of grammar school yet.

MS. RIEDEL: Eighth grade.

MR. WINOKUR: Nineteen forty-eight, I graduated and went to high school. There were occasionally mural projects in grammar school. The whole class had to do something on *Hans Brinker* or *The Silver Skates*, but no artwork.

MS. RIEDEL: Is that anything that you enjoyed especially or—

MR. WINOKUR: Well—

MS. RIEDEL: No?

MR. WINOKUR: I didn't think much of it. I thrived. I was [an adolescent].

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: When I got to high school, I didn't do too well. I don't know if it was adolescence or what, but I just didn't do too well.

MS. RIEDEL: Were you not interested? Was there some sort of dyslexia?

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: What's it—not Alzheimer's, but what kids have autism.

MS. RIEDEL: ADD [attention deficit disorder]?

MR. WINOKUR: Autism; ADD is another thing.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: I'd hop from one thought to another. I may have been ADD before there was a name for it. I don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: An Asperger's sort of problem?

MR. WINOKUR: Asperger's or autism. I think they are all kind of part of the same thing—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —in that everybody has some autism or Asperger's.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. There's a continuum, to be sure.

MR. WINOKUR: It's like it covers a whole raft of sins; [it's called adolescence].

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: From extreme to another. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: That's a contemporary term.

MS. RIEDEL: Were there certain subjects that were very appealing to you and others you weren't

interested in at all?

MR. WINOKUR: I did very well . . . in geometry.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, okay.

MR. WINOKUR: I couldn't get my head around algebra.

MS. RIEDEL: But you loved geometry and spatial—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, spatial things.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: And it was funny because I needed some algebra to get through geometry.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: . . . I dug chemistry simply because when I took an arts class, a ceramics class, I had to deal with plaster of Paris. So I was getting the chemistry of plaster of Paris while I was working with it. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: So you were taking ceramics in high school?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, there was a ceramics class in high school.

MR. WINOKUR: There was an art department in [high school].

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, let's talk about that. So you began to explore art in high school.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: Because—[laughs]—I don't know, the school was divided into sort of categories, and you signed up for a category.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: If you were going to college, you were in an academic program.

MS. RIEDEL: Exactly.

MR. WINOKUR: If you were going to go out and work, you were in a commercial—

MS. RIEDEL: Vocational, right.

MR. WINOKUR: —a vocational category; there was a third category—I was in an academic category. I had to learn a language. I had a choice of French or German or Latin, so I chose

French. I didn't do very well in it. So my grades were down and I was sent to an adviser, and the adviser looked up and down these columns, and he looked at me and he said, "Let's get your grades up; take art and first aid." So that was how I was sent to an art program, to improve my grades. And I was good in art; I was some kind of shining light. I knew what that white stuff was all about. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Could you draw and paint as well?

MR. WINOKUR: No.

MS. RIEDEL: The ceramics—

MR. WINOKUR: Although ceramics was doing sculpture.

MS. RIEDEL: It's interesting; it was three-dimensional.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: It was three-dimensional art classes.

MR. WINOKUR: And just for the record—

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: For background, for your information, painters will tell you otherwise, but sculpture's a lot harder than painting.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. [Laughs.]

MR. WINOKUR: It really is, because you've got this other side to deal with. Painting, it's all on the surface. But painters think they're aristocrats of some sort.

MS. RIEDEL: So you arrived in a ceramics class your sophomore year?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, somewhere around there.

MS. RIEDEL: Something like that. And do you feel like—you obviously had found your place.

MR. WINOKUR: I had come home. Yes, I found myself.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: I was a star.

MS. RIEDEL: So you were the class artist?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting. And what did you make?

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: Was there instruction?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, there were assignments.

MS. RIEDEL: Were there pinch pots? Were there wheels or—

MR. WINOKUR: Pinch pots—anything you wanted. Yes, pretty much.

MS. RIEDEL: Coils, sculptural work?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you model things based on—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, but out of my head. It didn't have to be anything, although there was an art class that I took which—a component of it was sculpture, so you did plastic clay on boards, relief sculpture. So you essentially did two with a three-dimensional aspect—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: However you want to define what a relief is.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: But that was separate from ceramics.

MS. RIEDEL: So how did this affect your trajectory in terms of the academic versus the commercial or vocational?

MR. WINOKUR: Nothing.

MS. RIEDEL: You were able to mesh the two?

MR. WINOKUR: I managed to graduate. There was no honors; there was no nothing. I just graduated. But I was encouraged to apply to—[laughs]—you're going to love this—there was still the Korean War; there was still a draft. If you didn't get into college, you were subject to draft.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, this would have been '33, '43—you would have been—1950, '51?

MR. WINOKUR: Fifty-one, '52, somewhere in there. I had enough savvy to blackmail my parents.

MS. RIEDEL: To say that you wanted to go to college?

MR. WINOKUR: No, I was going to college; there was never a doubt. They couldn't afford it, so it was me or my sister. I was going to college; my sister wouldn't; that was a given. "Where you going to go to college?" "What are you going to study?" I decided I want to go to art school. "Für das ein leben macht?"

MS. RIEDEL: The translation of which is?

MR. WINOKUR: "From that you make a living?"

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: So I said, "Well, it's art school or the Army?" So I knew, given the two evils, art school would win.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Art school trumped the Army, I see.

MR. WINOKUR: So that's how I got to art school.

MS. RIEDEL: I haven't heard that story before; that's interesting.

MR. WINOKUR: I applied to Alfred and I got rejected. I'm glad I didn't [get in], because Alfred at that time—you spent two years doing academics and then you moved into the ceramic program. I didn't need more academics at all.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: That was the last thing I wanted. The guy that taught me ceramics was a guy named Harry Allen.

MS. RIEDEL: At Alfred?

MR. WINOKUR: No, in Erasmus Hall.

MS. RIEDEL: I see, at high school.

MR. WINOKUR: In high school. He encouraged me to go look for an art school. I remember I said, "Where do I—?" He said, "Well, Alfred's good, but—" And I said, "Do you know anything about it?" He said, "No, I don't know anything about it. There's this guy named Hua Kai Quan teaches over at the Brooklyn Museum; go talk to him—Hua Kai Quan."

MS. RIEDEL: And did you?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: At the Brooklyn Art Museum?

MR. WINOKUR: The Brooklyn Museum of Art; he was teaching ceramics classes there. He was an Alfred graduate.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah.

MR. WINOKUR: I went over there to ask him what he thought of it. He was sort of, "Yes, go; it's a good school." That was the extent of it. So I applied there and I got rejected. So I was fishing around for an art school, and I got this—

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, so you only applied to Alfred?

MR. WINOKUR: No, I applied to a whole bunch.

MS. RIEDEL: Including Tyler.

MR. WINOKUR: Including Tyler. Tyler was one of the few that responded positively, and so I went down and interviewed and took a test. My mother prevailed upon John Sheinin, who was the president of the Chicago Medical School, to send a letter of reference for me.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah.

MR. WINOKUR: Boris Blai was a Russian. Sheinin called up Blai and spoke to him.

MS. RIEDEL: I see.

MR. WINOKUR: And I suspect that helped [they both being Russian].

MS. RIEDEL: I see.

MR. WINOKUR: So I got into Tyler.

MS. RIEDEL: How fortunate. . . .

MR. WINOKUR: It always helps to have a senator for a father in this world.

MS. RIEDEL: So you started in Tyler in 1954?

MR. WINOKUR: I guess.

MS. RIEDEL: Or '53?

MR. WINOKUR: Let me refer to my resume here. Okay, '56, I graduated—

MS. RIEDEL: Fifty-two—

MR. WINOKUR: —so four years—'52.

MS. RIEDEL: Rudolf Staffel was teaching there then?

MR. WINOKUR: He was. Yes, he was teaching ceramics.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Okay. And were you—

MR. WINOKUR: Well, let me clear up something, because [Tyler was a school of fine art. I was all art from the very get-go.]

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: Academics were incidental, 4:00 in the afternoon—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —English, sociology, psychology. The faculty from Temple University came up north to the suburb, Elkins Park, to teach academics. It was a professional art school. You were taught to be an artist, not an academic who knew about art. It was really unique then. [Even more so today.]

MS. RIEDEL: Not an art teacher—

MR. WINOKUR: Not an art teacher.

MS. RIEDEL: —but to be an artist, a practicing artist.

MR. WINOKUR: If you wanted [to teach], . . . you could opt to stay on for a fifth year and get a B.S. in a bachelor of science and education degree.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: So you could become a teacher, but you still have four years of art rather than four years of education.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. WINOKUR: Which is a whole other [thing].

MS. RIEDEL: And was the idea to work as a studio artist? Was it geared towards commercial art?

MR. WINOKUR: No, it was to be an artist.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. WINOKUR: Nobody talked to you about making a living. I remember some kid had a review in sculpture and had the misfortune of raising the question of [having] a resume, and he got chewed out. "Resume? What's this bullshit with a resume? You—what have you done [so far]? You don't need a resume; you need to learn to be an artist."

Today kids come to art school, . . . not only do they have a resume from high school, they have a website. . . . The world I was born into, grew up in, really doesn't exist anymore.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: You're just foreign to what exists now.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: The kids that exist now, they think this is how the world always was. They live in fantasyland, from my point of view. From their point of view, it's real. [But reality is no longer shared.]

MS. RIEDEL: Well, you had just started at Tyler. You were talking about how the emphasis was on

art and not on academics.

MR. WINOKUR: Okay. okay.

MS. RIEDEL: And we've mentioned Staffel.

MR. WINOKUR: No, okay. Blai was a Russian. He claims he stopped over in Paris and worked with Rodin. He told some really outrageous stories. When you think about it, they really were outrageous. I don't know if Paula told you, he claimed that he had this model, and it was so hot, he got into the bathtub [when he was done]. She got into the bathtub and she became pregnant.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. She did mention that.

MR. WINOKUR: [Laughs.] We students, among ourselves, would ask, "Okay, Blai, what were you doing in the bathtub?" They were really outrageous stories. But Blai's education [philosophy was in the form of a] gymnasium; it was a European structure. It had nothing to do with what we think an [art school should be like now].

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: It's a whole other thing. You became an artist by apprenticing to an artist. ["You learn by doing."]

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: Or you went to Paris. [There are very few art schools in the country like that now, but Tyler was like that.] . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: It was not [academically based].

MS. RIEDEL: So it was more like a guild system, and you would choose one material or another?

MR. WINOKUR: You were given a teacher and—but—I don't know how to describe it exactly.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, let's talk about your experience.

MR. WINOKUR: Okay. You showed up and you were given courses.

MS. RIEDEL: So you showed up, and what were you given?

MR. WINOKUR: I was given painting and drawing and sculpture.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: I think initially I was assigned two electives. Then maybe in the sophomore year I could pick other electives. But for four years, whether sculpture or painting, I had a drawing course. My foundation courses were drawing from life, and I drew the figure till it came out of my ears. Occasionally there was a holiday, a break or something new—as a wrinkle in the mold, you

could do an animal. They would bring in a horse or something [into the studio].

But you drew from life; you worked from life. [Art was a painting of a female figure.] . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Did you have a sense of what was going on in the art world?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Was there reference to contemporary work?

MR. WINOKUR: I mean even in high school—

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: —I knew about Abstract Expressionism.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. WINOKUR: The kids I hung out with, we all had favorites, and my—

MS. RIEDEL: Who was yours?

MR. WINOKUR: I think it was Franz Kline at that point; maybe, I'm not quite sure. I distinctly remember some of us going up to the Museum of Modern Art, and we thought somebody's *White on White* was outrageous. You know, how could—

MS. RIEDEL: You hated it.

MR. WINOKUR: No, we didn't hate it, but how could somebody get famous doing that stuff? There was that kind of—

MS. RIEDEL: Did you go to MoMA frequently?

MR. WINOKUR: Not very frequently.

MS. RIEDEL: But you did go?

MR. WINOKUR: I was aware it was there.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: I knew it was there, and I went there a few times.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you go to the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art] as well?

MR. WINOKUR: No.

MS. RIEDEL: But MoMA—so that's—yes, so you really had a sense of what was happening.

MR. WINOKUR: I went to the Brooklyn Museum.

MS. RIEDEL: Right; there we go.

MR. WINOKUR: It was closer. I would during high school; I didn't—just coming back to me—my parents, I don't know where my sister was, again, but my parents were both working. So I'd come home and nobody was home and I was bored. There was nothing to do, and I wasn't going to do homework. So I discovered that, for a dime, I could get on the New York City subway system and go somewhere. All I had to remember was where I got off. And so I would go someplace; I'd get off [the train and] wander around. When I was tired and I'd had it, I'd get back on the subway and go home.

MS. RIEDEL: So, explored the city.

MR. WINOKUR: I just wandered around, anywhere. I don't think I ever went as far as the Bronx because it was too long.

MS. RIEDEL: So did you have a sense of exploring the city and discovering—

MR. WINOKUR: ...It was mostly curiosity. I didn't feel like it was an expedition, if that makes any difference.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: It was just killing time, in some respects.

MS. RIEDEL: But occasionally you'd go to a museum as well?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you see anything that was inspiring to you?

MR. WINOKUR: I liked two things; two things really stuck with me. One was the whale at the Museum of Natural History.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: Do you know the whale?

MS. RIEDEL: I don't.

MR. WINOKUR: It's on two floors; the second floor is really a hole in the floor above it. So there's a balcony halfway up all the way around. You can go up on the next floor and see the whale at eye level. If you were down on the first floor, you could walk under the whale. So I remember being so pleased that I could stand under there and see the whale swim by over me. That was fascinating.

And then the other one was these aboriginal boatmen at the Brooklyn Museum. [They were] in this boat, rowing. There was no water, but they were in this big, huge boat, and they were rowing along. The Brooklyn Museum was like a Victorian—there was all this anthropological stuff in Victorian scenes, big glass things with wood, that kind of thing.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: Anyway, I don't know if I—

MS. RIEDEL: So there was actually then a real—in high school, things shifted, and there was a real emphasis on not only working in art but in seeing art as well.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, there was [laughs]—the group I hung out with, mostly they were women.

MS. RIEDEL: Mostly women.

MR. WINOKUR: Mostly women.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: Then there was this other guy, Mike, and it was our crowd. We were—all of them were very smart. I just kept my mouth shut; I just didn't really want them to know how dumb I was. We would go on Christmas Eve, on my birthday up to St. Patrick's Cathedral. We would go ice-skating in Central Park. At midnight, we'd go down to St. Patrick's for mass. It was sort of, you know, [diversity], before [the word was] the verb du jour.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: Mike was Italian; his family was—they were first-generation Italian. I spent a lot of time with him; Easter, Christmas, I was there rather than at home. And I think I have more of a sense of myself as Catholic, in some respects, than I do as Jewish.

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting.

MR. WINOKUR: If somebody mistook me for being Italian, that's fine. I felt more comfortable, and it was some way of hiding out.

MS. RIEDEL: Right; easier to navigate the world.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So moving back to Tyler then—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: —you had these classes assigned; you had a number of electives—

MR. WINOKUR: Okay.

MS. RIEDEL: —and you were working in both 2-D and 3-D.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: But are you still identifying more as a sculptor? . . . Do you remember who was teaching; any particular professors of significance to you?

MR. WINOKUR: [At Alfred, John Wood.] I remember that was Rudy Staffel in ceramics.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: . . . [At Tyler I] mostly hung out in ceramics. I think if I had to nail it down, I majored in sculpture and ceramics at Tyler. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Photography?

MR. WINOKUR: There was no photography. I didn't know photography until I got to Alfred.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. So what you studied with Rudolf Staffel—would you describe that experience?

MR. WINOKUR: It was a ceramics class; it was basically the extension of Erasmus Hall.

MS. RIEDEL: And so was there wheel work? Was there slabs, coils, pinch pots, all of that?

MR. WINOKUR: There was wheel work, coils, anything you wanted to do.

MS. RIEDEL: And did you also have glaze calculation? Did you learn how to fire in a kiln?

MR. WINOKUR: . . . There's this story about this kid who wants to be an actor, and he works in front of Off Broadway at a delicatessen. He waits tables for years, and finally he gets his big break. He calls up his mother and says, "Mom, I got this big break; I'm going to be on Broadway in a play," and he goes on and on and on about how wonderful it is. The mother's duly impressed. She asks about the play and one thing and another, [and finally she asks], "Well, what part are you going to play?" And he says, "Oh, I'm going to be the Jewish father." And there's silence. He said, "Mom?" She says, "Yes?" He says, "Well, what's the matter?" She says, "Nothing. I just thought you were going to have a speaking part." [They laugh.]

As I describe my relationship with my father, he sort of wasn't there – [well, he works . . . sort of . . . Silent Sam. I knew all about silent men. Men did not say much. True men did things, but they did not talk much.]

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: Rudy was one of these. For the most part, he hardly ever spoke, and I knew all about having fathers [who never seemed to say anything].

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: Who didn't talk.

MS. RIEDEL: And I know that oftentimes artists will teach not by speaking but by demonstrating. Did he demonstrate?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, capably. It was just painful [at times]. . . . There were these long pauses, and you'd just have to sit there and wait until he gathered his thoughts, and then he'd pick it up and

go on.

Let me make a—put this as a footnote.

[END CD1 TR1.]

MR. WINOKUR: Oh, I think all of teaching is as subject to fashion as women's clothes is; it changes. Always—it has changed. The model art teacher today is very much different than art teaching was like then. You would do your work, and they would walk around and stop and see what you were doing and say, "Why don't you move that over there," or "Put a bird here," or "Erase this," and they would move on. Maybe once or twice, maybe they would have a review. [We referred to it as "nondirective" teaching.]

MS. RIEDEL: Critique?

MR. WINOKUR: A critique, yes, where everybody put their work up, but that was about it; none of this bullshit about standing there and having each person in the class talk about their neurotic [fantasy] relationship with their grandfather. That never existed when I grew up. You weren't—even in art history, you were lectured to; you didn't ask questions. It was all one-way.

But essentially you taught yourself; you taught yourself by doing it, with some direction.

MS. RIEDEL: Was this true in the class with Rudy? Was it true also in the other classes?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, it was.

MS. RIEDEL: The drawing, the painting?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, okay.

MR. WINOKUR: Some [teachers directed] more than others. [At some point the term "nondirective" teaching came into being.]

MS. RIEDEL: It was a different way of teaching.

MR. WINOKUR: It was a fashion in teaching that John Wood taught—was a similar kind of [teacher].

MS. RIEDEL: At Alfred.

MR. WINOKUR: At Alfred.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: Referred to as "Silent Sam." They would talk to you if you asked them a question, but you had to ask for it. If they hear this, they may be offended, but this is my perception of it.

But I think there was a different kind of teaching then than now. It was like it had to do with, if they told you something and you did it, it was not your artwork; it was theirs. And to not contaminate your aesthetic, they would keep a distance, or keep hands-off.

MS. RIEDEL: So they were encouraging a sense of experimentation? Am I inferring that?

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know. I don't know if you can—if it was that simple.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: But Blai's favorite reference was John Dewey.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Right, Paula [Winokur, married to Robert Winokur] mentioned that yesterday.

MR. WINOKUR: John Dewey was involved with Stella Elkins Tyler, who gave the land for Tyler; she knew Dewey. He was to dinner and stuff like that. Blai knew Dewey and Dewey's [philosophy]. It's more elaborate than this, but Dewey [proposed learning by doing].

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: There's *no* book you can read to learn to be an artist. You can't be talked into being an artist. You do it, and they were there to direct you. But I don't think they were there to teach you in this current sense of the term. Now, I don't know if—

MS. RIEDEL: That was your experience.

MR. WINOKUR: That was my sense; that's the best I can do.

MS. RIEDEL: So what did you take with you from those four years? When you were ready to graduate, what were you taking with you, and what had you decided would be your next step?

MR. WINOKUR: I went to Alfred.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right, but had you decided you were going to then be a ceramic sculptor, or you were going to be a production potter? How was that evolving, or had it not?

MR. WINOKUR: . . . It had not, and I didn't care much what I made, just so long as it involved clay.

MS. RIEDEL: Now, I also understand from Paula that Rudy was just beginning the Light Gatherers at this time?

MR. WINOKUR: I don't believe he was working in porcelain at that point. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: So he was still exploring himself.

MR. WINOKUR: [We all explored ourselves, all the time.]

MS. RIEDEL: He hadn't gotten to the Light Gatherers?

MR. WINOKUR: No, and this, I think, because everybody was so concerned, the emphasis was so much on the uniqueness of the individual, that you didn't want to be seen as copying or being influenced by others. Everything—that your artwork should be unique to you. I think Light Gatherers were probably done after I'd [gone to] Alfred.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, you'd already left Alfred.

MR. WINOKUR: [I think] Abstract Expressionism happened, and it was [suddenly] okay for him to do the Light Gatherers.

MS. RIEDEL: But not for you.

MR. WINOKUR: But not for me.

MS. RIEDEL: There was no sense yet of Peter Voulkos and what was out there on the West Coast?

MR. WINOKUR: Oh, yes, there was. But I was [not going to be] caught imitating Voulkos. And so I did not do what I really wanted to do at Alfred.

MS. RIEDEL: Which was?

MR. WINOKUR: Make sculpture—

MS. RIEDEL: Ah, okay.

MR. WINOKUR: —and make pottery. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: But the Alfred—the emphasis was still on perfect pots, wasn't it?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, it was, and so I conformed. I went to Alfred *not* to learn to make pottery but to learn everything I could about clay, ceramics [at Alfred. Rhodes said, "Sculpture was something you made for the next church sale." "Alfred then was a cross between Song pottery and the Bauhaus." —Ken Ferguson].

MS. RIEDEL: Who was teaching [there then]?

MR. WINOKUR: Charles Hander was still there my first year. He retired to pass away my second year. Ted Randall, [John] Woods, Daniel Rhodes. There was a guy who taught woodworking, Kurt Ehtdol.

MS. RIEDEL: And had Rhodes written his book yet? [*Clay and Glazes for the Potter*, 1957; 2000.]

MR. WINOKUR: Not just yet. I think it was published in my second year.

MS. RIEDEL: So a real emphasis on clay composition, on glazes, that sort of thing?

MR. WINOKUR: [Firing] pottery, making glazes, making clay bodies. It was all the process, as far as I [could tell].

MS. RIEDEL: Was there Japanese influence yet? Bernard Leach, all of that? Yes?

MR. WINOKUR: All of that.

MS. RIEDEL: Shoji Hamada?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, Hamada had been a visiting artist, or he'd come through on this world tour of his. [Kitaoji] Rosanjin had been there. [Also Marguerite Wildenhain from Pond Farm in Guerneville, CA, came and did a workshop there.]

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: Voulkos called her a Nazi.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, dear.

MR. WINOKUR: She had this dramatic, Bauhaus take on things. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Wildenhain.

MR. WINOKUR: Wildenhain, Marguerite Wildenhain. . . . Throw 10 plates—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —and there you may use to decorate them, a line, an S-curve, and a triangle any way you want. Here's how you put your touch. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: But she was a product of the Bauhaus; it was that headset. It was . . . form follows function and, "Here is a block of steel; file it till it becomes [a perfect cube] . . . and you will enjoy yourself." [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Did Vivika Heino—was she there when you were there?

MR. WINOKUR: No, not—definitely no.

MS. RIEDEL: Neither of the Heinos—

MR. WINOKUR: No, but there was a string of Japanese potters. This was after the war, and they'd come and go; I remember there were about two or three of them.

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

MR. WINOKUR: But I don't remember their names.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: The emphasis was on—I think I told you this—Ken Ferguson's take on it was [that it was a] cross between the Bauhaus and Song pottery.

MS. RIEDEL: And Ken Ferguson was a student at the time you were there?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, he was.

MS. RIEDEL: Anybody else?

MR. WINOKUR: Norm Schulman.

MS. RIEDEL: Was a student?

MR. WINOKUR: A student, grad student. Victor Babu was an undergrad. [Dave Morris.] There were a whole bunch of others; I lost track. [Dave Shanner came in my second year.]

MS. RIEDEL: So were you learning as much from the students as from the teachers?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. Yes, indeed. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: What was your take on Alfred? . . . Functional pots, wheel work?

MR. WINOKUR: If you did it, "Oh, you don't want to do sculpture; sculpture's what's going to end up at the church sale next year." It was really—nobody made sculpture.

MS. RIEDEL: Beautiful brown pots.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Cone-10 reduction.

MR. WINOKUR: Reduction.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: Voulkos was a kind of hero, but you couldn't work that way. That was the anti-pot.

MS. RIEDEL: So Voulkos was a bit of a hero. That was the anti-pot you could—admire—you could admire that but not imitate—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: —or learn from, take off from.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. WINOKUR: It wasn't, at least for me. Now, I don't know what Schulman or Ferguson or any of these other people had on it. But it was—

MS. RIEDEL: What about the figure? Was that happening at all?

MR. WINOKUR: I had put that all aside.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: It was not till recently that I remembered I had all this experience doing the figure, and why aren't I doing that now? So I went back and started doing St. Francis. . . . I feel no guilt about going back and revisiting my past. I'll do it all the time, go back. One of the reasons I don't do commissions very well—and it's not that I don't look for them, because I always have one done—but I always had the feeling that if I could do it again, it would be better. It was always that kind of thing. So, not that I haven't done them, but like I said, I'd go back and redo them, or I'd go back and redo things I'd done. ["You will do it till you get it right!"]

MS. RIEDEL: So was the idea when you were graduated from Alfred to start production pottery, to find a teaching job? . . . What was the goal?

MR. WINOKUR: To teach college.

MS. RIEDEL: And so you went from Alfred to Denton, Texas, right? Or we're skipping something. What was—

MR. WINOKUR: [Understand this,] the world has changed. Harder went around and he said, "Ken, you're going to Archie Bray; Schulman, you're going to Rhode Island School." He handed out the jobs. There was a guy who teaches photography at Tyler who had this quip, Bill Larson. He said, "Alfred? Oh, Alfred, yes, that's the Mount Sinai of ceramics." And it was; it is.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: So anybody who wanted a ceramic teacher called up Alfred, said, "I got a job here. You got somebody?"

MS. RIEDEL: Sure. Right, right.

MR. WINOKUR: And Harder went around and handed them out. You didn't have to make applications.

MS. RIEDEL: And he didn't post them in—

MR. WINOKUR: They weren't posted. There was no "political correctness." You didn't have to [adhere to a quota system]. Harder decided who was going to go where, and he based it on what he had seen after you'd been there two years. This person was fitted for that. Archie Bray was a job that Ken was suited for.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. WINOKUR: And there was a logic to it; it wasn't terrible. It only became terrible when women started feeling they were out of it. They were—rightly—they had a justifiable complaint, but it wasn't anti-feminist in any sense. At any rate, that aside. But Harder decided [that I had] better stay on for the summer.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. And why was that?

MR. WINOKUR: They weren't happy with what I was doing, quite frankly, and I wasn't either.

MS. RIEDEL: And why was that?

MR. WINOKUR: It was just pottery; it was dumb. It was that I did the problems.

MS. RIEDEL: But you weren't bringing anything unique to it?

MR. WINOKUR: I wasn't bringing anything to it.

MS. RIEDEL: I see. So they wanted you to have some more time?

MR. WINOKUR: [This job request came] in the late summer. Everyone else had been assigned. "Here, Winokur, you're going to North Texas."

MS. RIEDEL: Everybody left there with a teaching job or with some sort of a job?

MR. WINOKUR: Pretty much. There was some opportunity early on—there was a porcelain works in North Carolina, and I think I was—Harder put my name up, but they didn't want me. And I know why, but—

MS. RIEDEL: Well, you weren't doing anything in porcelain at the time.

MR. WINOKUR: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. . . . So you went to the University of Texas?

MR. WINOKUR: No, North Texas State College, Denton, Texas. "Denton is the Athens of the Southwest, being equidistant to Dallas and Fort Worth by 40 miles." [They laugh.] That was Denton Chamber of Commerce. I have that whole thing about Denton, and there was a point where I had it down pat in a Texas accent; I was great entertainment.

MS. RIEDEL: This must have been just such a complete shift.

MR. WINOKUR: It was culture shock.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I would imagine.

MR. WINOKUR: And I think from—

MS. RIEDEL: Now, you—because you were teaching ceramics as a full-time professor?

MR. WINOKUR: No, I was teaching ceramics at the first year; I was a sabbatical replacement.

MS. RIEDEL: And it was a full-time position?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: It was a full-time position. It became a tenure track when [the ceramic teacher] returned and I was kept on. I was kept on to run the two-dimensional visual design program, foundations—

MS. RIEDEL: Right, okay.

MR. WINOKUR: —which didn't exist when I had to invent it, decide what material was covered. So I basically taught that for the next four years, that and occasionally art history, but not clay.

We got to Denton late at night and we stopped at a restaurant. I distinctly remember pulling off the road and going to a phone box. There was a light on over the phone box; there were locusts all around the phone box. To get to the phone box, you had to step on all these locusts. You could hear, *crunch, crunch, crunch*, [to get to the phone] to tell both Paula's parents and my parents we'd arrived.

Then we went into the restaurant, and I said, "I'll have a sandwich and a beer." "Beer, honey? You can't get beer here." Denton is a dry county. Everything in Texas was local option, so each political entity decided on their own [whether or not to sell alcoholic beverages].

We had students who drove from Denton to Dallas, 40 miles, for a beer on a Friday night. The guy I came with was from Yale, named Paul Zelanski—he taught painting. Paul lived out in a place called Ponder, which was a little farm road community about 10 miles outside of Denton. And he lived in a chinchilla house. One of his students' fathers owned Texas Instruments. They had this farm—

MS. RIEDEL: A chinchilla farm.

MR. WINOKUR: It was a vacant chinchilla farm. The chinchillas were gone, but there were all these buildings. So he lived in one and he had this studio in the other. He'd drive in for class every day, 10 miles. He had this thing—he would go around Denton, and all his friends, particularly those people from up north, he'd tried to talk them into coming out and having a studio and living out in one of the houses on the chinchilla farm.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: I mean, they're all vacant except for the two. After a while, he confessed that Ponder only had about 18 citizens. If he got 18 North Texas faculty to move out there, they would have a voting option; they could vote Ponder wet.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. WINOKUR: [I asked him,] "Well, what do you want from all this?" He said, "Oh, nothing much. You can call me the Prince of Ponder." [They laugh.] That was the whole of it.

MS. RIEDEL: Prince of Ponder.

MR. WINOKUR: At any rate, where were we?

MS. RIEDEL: Well, you were teaching, but you were not teaching clay.

MR. WINOKUR: Okay, I was teaching.

MS. RIEDEL: And you had experience—

MR. WINOKUR: From [the moment we] went to this restaurant—it was local option—from that moment, I couldn't wait to get the hell out of Denton. I hadn't been there but 10 minutes that I knew we were going to leave. So the next four years was spent sending out letters looking for a job. There would be a bite here, bite there; nothing much.

I'd already bought a piece of land and given up. Finally this thing came through in Peoria—that name which shall not be re-mentioned—shall not pass my lips.

MS. RIEDEL: You passed through Peoria and taught there a year, for the record.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, for the record.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes. And then for some reason—

MR. WINOKUR: Okay. Now, let's go back to Texas. We were a fish out of water, and somebody—this guy I met in a photography shop—said, "Where you from?" et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. He said, "Go over and join the Denton Unitarian Fellowship," and we did. It was a fellowship, so it was all these people gathered together for spiritual comfort of one sort or another. There were people from all over the country—from Northeast, from the West Coast, from the Midwest—there. They all got jobs at [NTSU] and had been gathered there. The only thing that held them there was the university. We were "Jewnitarians," "Cathlitarrians," "Protetarians," "Buddhitarrians"; we were all hybrid.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: One of them was from Albany and he was teaching philosophy; we got to be friends with them. He got a job back in Albany teaching philosophy in New York State and we kept in touch with them.

MS. RIEDEL: This was the Loyas?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. We kept in touch with them. They wrote this Christmas letter. In the Christmas letter, she was talking about inheriting this farm in western Massachusetts, complaining about they had this thing and they didn't know what to do with it, and it [was] a problem. And I sent them a note saying, "We'll be glad to take it over for you in exchange for setting up a pottery." And they said, "Sure. Come."

We drive up there, take a look at the place over Easter break, went back, and prepared to leave. . . . Come May, we loaded up everything in a U-Haul truck; Paula drove the car with the trailer; and we went to Massachusetts.

MS. RIEDEL: To set up a production pottery?

MR. WINOKUR: To set up a production pottery in the barn—

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. WINOKUR: —and live in the house.

MS. RIEDEL: Nineteen sixty-four.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So you were going to live in their house; you were going to restore the barn, or turn it into a studio?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, I did do that.

MS. RIEDEL: And it was on 200 acres, something in—

MR. WINOKUR: The property was 200 acres, most of it in rocks and trees.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And this was in western Massachusetts?

MR. WINOKUR: It's in Ashfield.

MS. RIEDEL: In Ashfield, okay.

MR. WINOKUR: Ashfield is about—oh, about 20 miles northwest of Northampton.

MS. RIEDEL: Is that house still there, do you know?

MR. WINOKUR: As far as I know.

MS. RIEDEL: And you set up Cape Street Pottery?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, because it was on Cape Street.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: Real logical.

MS. RIEDEL: So had you learned at Alfred how to set up a pottery? Did you invent as you went?

MR. WINOKUR: We've got to backtrack.

One of the things—and I can't remember when, but it seems like there was never a time when uncles and aunts and somebody didn't want to know what you were going to do when you grow up. One of the jokes I tell is—I got so sick and tired of it, I would tell them, "I'm going to be a garbageman so I can wear a uniform." That shut them up.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. WINOKUR: At one point I remember [when asked what] I'd like—"What are you going to be?"—I'd seen this movie about construction workers, really taken with it; I wanted to be a builder.

My parents were first generation, but there was a lot of Old World still about them, and their response was, "We don't know anybody in the building trades."

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: So, they couldn't apprentice me.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: They couldn't get somebody to take me on, but I'd always had this—a sense of spatial—of building stuff. I don't know where or how, but when it came to putting up a building, I knew everything there was I needed to know. I knew how to lay out studs; I knew how to nail; and I knew what a foundation looked like. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Your gallery here in front of the house.

MR. WINOKUR: [I hired a contractor,] not because I couldn't do it: I needed a crew, and I was willing to pay them to do it. I designed the damn thing. I knew what the roof was going to look like; I knew how it's going to sit; and I knew everything. I don't know how I learned it. Maybe I learned it from sculpture at Tyler, of building or making molds. I had this facility—

MS. RIEDEL: For sculptural, three-dimensional thinking—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, for spatial thinking.

MS. RIEDEL: —but also—

MR. WINOKUR: There was no problem. I looked at a drawing and I looked at a blueprint, and I knew how it worked.

MS. RIEDEL: You had a sense of the materials that needed to be used?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Or you would go to the lumber yard and talk to somebody—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, [that too].

MS. RIEDEL: "I want to put this up and how, what do you recommend?"

MR. WINOKUR: "I need sheeting." "You could use—," the guy at the building is saying, "You can use this, this, this, and this." And he'd tell me what—"Well, this has insulating value; this doesn't; this is stronger." But you pick that stuff up doing it; I learn by doing.

It never entered my mind that I couldn't convert that barn, and by the time I got up there, I knew that the barn was three sections. One side had been the horse barn; the center had been for wagons in and out; and the other side had been a tack shop, and that kind of thing. All the hay was up in the two lofts on either side. All I had to do was bridge over the loft. I now had one big room, which didn't have to be divided up. It remained divided in three for the structure. I never [alter the

building].

MS. RIEDEL: Did it need to be insulated?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, I insulated it; that's easy. You take—

MS. RIEDEL: And then you—

MR. WINOKUR: You rent a stapling gun and you staple the damn stuff between the studs.

MS. RIEDEL: And was it—did—

MR. WINOKUR: And I put the sheetrock up too.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you build a wheel?

MR. WINOKUR: I built the wheel in Peoria, because by Easter, I already knew we were going to leave, and I needed another wheel. We already had one wheel.

MS. RIEDEL: Were you prepared to build a gas kiln as well?

MR. WINOKUR: No, I had never learned how to build a gas kiln. Norm Schulman came by [the farm], and we sat up all night in my kitchen, and he walked me through building a kiln.

Then I called one of the brick companies in Springfield, Massachusetts. The salesman drove all the way out, and he sat there, and we went through—I told him what I needed, how I needed it. He said, "You'll need this many bricks of this, this many of this, this many of that, this many of this." I said, "Fine," and I placed the order. A few days later a truck pulled up and unloaded all the brick.

MS. RIEDEL: And you built the kiln?

MR. WINOKUR: I built the kiln; it wasn't a very good kiln. The first firing went for about 24 hours and we never reached bisque temperature.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, dear. Bisque temperature?

MR. WINOKUR: It was a terrible kiln.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: My one complaint about Alfred—John Emery was the only person I knew who ever built a kiln, and he didn't actually build the kiln. He was also a graduate student, [but he drew it, drew to working prints].

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: He didn't build the kiln. He did it all on paper from books, and he drew it, but I don't think he ever built the kiln. He took the drawings and everything with him. He was going to build a pottery in Kennebunkport.

MS. RIEDEL: Now, what kind of—were you trying to build a catenary-arch kiln?

MR. WINOKUR: No.

MS. RIEDEL: What were you going to build?

MR. WINOKUR: I built a [sprung-]arch kiln. The only problem with it—it was all right. The only problem was that I knew nothing about flues and inlets.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh.

MR. WINOKUR: So it was basically in reduction as soon as I lit a match.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh.

MR. WINOKUR: It was just too small a hole, so I tore it down. I had to use the brick I had, so I couldn't expand it. The next-best thing was a catenary-arch kiln, and I went and bought a hard brick for the liner, where I had—I don't remember, but I do remember—did Paula mention Myrna Minter?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: Okay. Myrna came up for a few days while I was building the kiln. I had a hole in the ceiling for the chimney, and I let—they came down. There was this brick arch, catenary arch; looked liked coming into St. Louis, you know, the Saarinen Loop. Pot handle.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: Looks just like that. That's a catenary arch.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: And made out of hard brick, all fitted, and it's just standing there by itself. They were downstairs chatting. I went upstairs, lowered myself down through the chimney hole onto the damn thing, onto this arch, and started flexing, and it held; I was amazed. So there they were, standing there laughing their heads off, and I'm jumping up and down on this arch, and it didn't collapse; I was delighted.

I think, if I do recall now, we had come down and NCECA [National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts] had its first meeting here in Philadelphia, and they spent the whole [session] talking about kiln building.

MS. RIEDEL: Ah, that's where—

MR. WINOKUR: We took a lot of notes. So there was that, but this was my first hands-on. We came down because the kiln wasn't working, so we had to find out what we could do to fix it.

MS. RIEDEL: And then Paula said you spent the next couple of years making production pots—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: —and traveling around Boston and New York, Philadelphia?

MR. WINOKUR: Through '66.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: I think we would have stayed [in Massachusetts]. The Loyas didn't want to sell any of their property, and we looked at some places around town. There was a big old garage in Ashfield that was just too—at any rate, it never came to having to make a decision about staying. Paula's parents—her mother was failing, father, or both of them; I don't recall at this moment, but she went down every other week or so [to Philadelphia].

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: She had babysitted for the Staffels.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. She did mention that.

MR. WINOKUR: She'd [kept in touch with the Staffels], so she'd go over and visit the Staffels when she was in town.

Tyler had a school in Rome, and Rudy was being sent by Tyler to teach sculpture in Rome. Rudy wanted to know if I would take over for him while he was [to be] gone; he was going to be gone for three years.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow.

MR. WINOKUR: And I don't know if she told you this: she really didn't want to tell me this.

MS. RIEDEL: She did say that. She just said she debated whether she should tell you or not.

MR. WINOKUR: She even admits—she said I would have killed her if I had found out about it.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: So I didn't think I let [the thought bounce] once; I said yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Because you were ready to get out of there. It wasn't working out with the Loyas and —

MR. WINOKUR: Well, it wasn't working out, and being a production potter is harder than farming.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: It is really hard work and it's full-time work; it's like farming. You go to sleep and it's there constantly.

MS. RIEDEL: So every day, you were throwing, you were trimming, you were firing, then you were loading up the car, taking it—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: —and selling. Was the work on consignment? Was it all sold outright?

MR. WINOKUR: Well, it was—

MS. RIEDEL: Did you do fairs at the same time?

MR. WINOKUR: It varied. A lot of it was—they would take the work and then they would send you—you'd send them an invoice and they would pay it later.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, and these were shops? Were there galleries yet?

MR. WINOKUR: Mostly, it was a whole range of things. Anybody who sold ceramics would do—we'd go through the phonebook, pick out furniture stores, and go from one to the other. We'd stop the car, get out, look at it. If we didn't like it, we'd go on to the next one. If there was something going there, we'd go in and ask them if they wanted to buy pottery.

MS. RIEDEL: And did you establish any long-term accounts?

MR. WINOKUR: There were some. Not that I can name them right now.

MS. RIEDEL: But you were able to sustain yourselves from that business—

MR. WINOKUR: For two years.

MS. RIEDEL: —for two years, yes.

MR. WINOKUR: Let me put it this way. In Texas, it was like TIAA-CREF: part of your salary you contributed to a retirement fund. They took it, but they really didn't consider it in the pot until you were tenured. At any rate, whatever money [they put aside], I got back.

MS. RIEDEL: When you left Texas.

MR. WINOKUR: When I left Texas. So I had \$5,000 saved from the Texas thing. And we used that—at least half of it, say \$2,500—to build the pottery, buy material, clay, glazes[, and brick].

I do know for a fact that when we left the farm, we still had \$5,000. So we basically made back our overhead and we managed to live on it. We were eating and we didn't have to pay rent.

MS. RIEDEL: And just to talk about the production pottery a little bit more—

MR. WINOKUR: Okay.

MS. RIEDEL: —before we move on to Tyler. This was all high-fire reduction?

MR. WINOKUR: It was cone 9.

MS. RIEDEL: And it was mugs; it was all functional work, right?

MR. WINOKUR: [We made one-of-a-kind,] handmade, utilitarian, functional tableware.

MS. RIEDEL: Brown pots.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, they were gray. They were stoneware, cone-9, -10 reduction.

MS. RIEDEL: I've seen photos; they're gorgeous.

MR. WINOKUR: Cups, mugs, casseroles—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: Ashfield is an old, pre-Revolutionary War town. They celebrated their 150th anniversary way before the United States. We were still up there, so we made cups, Ashfield cups, 1774 to 1974. Don't hold me to the dates.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: You could make the greatest cup in the world, but it was still going to sell for 12 bucks, retail for 12 bucks.

MS. RIEDEL: Twelve bucks back then sounds like a lot.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, you got six dollars, no matter what, no haggling. I don't know how many we made. We made them in red, blue, and maroon. They're collector's items—

MS. RIEDEL: So this was copper red and that sort of—

MR. WINOKUR: . . . It was a shade of red. . . . So there were opportunities to make money.

MS. RIEDEL: Were there street fairs, craft fairs that you did?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, we went to Mt. Snow—

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: —the ACC [American Craft Council] thing, and we had a booth.

MS. RIEDEL: What was that like? How many people were there?

MR. WINOKUR: Oh, it seems thousands.

MS. RIEDEL: Thousands?

MR. WINOKUR: It seems like it; I don't know how many. It was first-come, first-serve, so I'd go up there and sleep in the truck, so that when the doors opened in the morning, I could grab a good booth instead of being way in the back. [We collected a lot of fingerprints.]

MS. RIEDEL: So this was inside, not outside?

MR. WINOKUR: It was inside the ski lodge, for the most part.

MS. RIEDEL: And it happened during the summer, every weekend? I'm not familiar with—

MR. WINOKUR: No, I think once a year. Seemed like it was still warm, [though] I don't think it was summer yet.

MS. RIEDEL: And this was just the beginning of the real interest in functional ceramics.

MR. WINOKUR: I remember going up to Mt. Snow and watching Voulkos demonstrate.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: What was he demonstrating?

MR. WINOKUR: He was on a Randall wheel and he was making these vases. He'd tear them up and throw them on a pile. I have photographs, slides upstairs of him working.

MS. RIEDEL: Wow. Oh, those would be fun to see.

MR. WINOKUR: I'd have to—

MS. RIEDEL: Later, [laughs] not now.

MR. WINOKUR: Okay, not now. Maybe this evening I'll look for them so you can see them tomorrow.

But he was just tearing the clay up. If you thought the sun rose and set with the pot, this was anathema, heresy.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. And were people excited, offended, both?

MR. WINOKUR: Oh, it was like—[laughs]—it was the same reaction that Pollock got.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: Remember that movie—you can still see it. It's a big plastic sheet. The camera is down underneath it, and Pollock is standing on the other side facing down. He's painting onto the plastic, and so the camera's recording the making of the painting from behind. At Tyler [when it was being shown], there were groans and hissing. Somebody in the back stood up and said, "Okay, why don't you spit on it?" They were really antagonistic about it. Well, they were antagonistic about Voulkos's stuff too.

MS. RIEDEL: What was your thought about it?

MR. WINOKUR: I seemed to remember, "Jeez, I wish I could do that, but he beat me to it." [They laugh.] I wish I had enough sense to make the ceramic jewelry the way my mother did because then I would be more famous than Arneson. [They laugh.] I mean, there was something—

MS. RIEDEL: She was doing it when it wasn't really—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, when it was still considered chinchy—the word is "tchotchkes."

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. So you were happy to leave production pottery and start teaching?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, I was. One, I could make something; I could make art. I no longer had this formula. I didn't have to work for somebody else anymore, which is basically what production pottery is. You're making stuff for sale. You do the best you can with as least [amount of] labor possible.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: You don't decorate. If you've got to glaze it yet, the glazing will be the decoration. So you dip from both sides and have a yellow strip.

MS. RIEDEL: When did you start salt glazing, and how did that come about?

MR. WINOKUR: I got a grant from the NEA.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: And I built a salt kiln.

MS. RIEDEL: And you mentioned that during the time you were in [New England], you really began to see a lot of salt[-glazed work].

MR. WINOKUR: It was all over the place.

MS. RIEDEL: But had you been aware of it before?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: You were aware of it in Alfred? . . .

MR. WINOKUR: Every antique shop in New England has salt-glazed crocks and jugs.

Bennington, which was just a few miles away, was where Norton Pottery was. Norton was a major producer of salt-glazed crocks and jugs, because there was no such thing as refrigeration [at that time]. And Troy was not far away.

MS. RIEDEL: Troy, New York?

MR. WINOKUR: Troy, New York. Troy is the top of the Hudson River. It's not very navigable much beyond Albany, which is why the Erie Canal went in there. So all the manufacturing and shipping that went on in New York and New Jersey went up river by boat to Albany or Troy and got offloaded and went on the canal's west. Farm goods were taken on board, but farm goods never weighed as much as manufactured goods, so they would take on clay or rocks or weight to make the trip down navigable.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. WINOKUR: [For ballast,] they took clay up river, because there's not really much clay, decent clay, in New England; it's all rocks and stone, but they have a lot of sand. Anyway, Norton got the clay from Troy. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: [Across the river from Troy was Albany.] Albany slip was the liner for all these crocks and jugs; it was the inside glaze.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: Norton got Perrine or Jordan [clay], and they made crocks and jugs and shipped them, or distributed them, throughout New England—butter, milk products, dairy products were put in these [containers] and put in streams to keep cold—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —because there was no refrigeration.

MS. RIEDEL: So what was appealing to you about this salt glaze? Nineteen seventy-four, I think you had a sabbatical, or you took—

MR. WINOKUR: Well, I don't know why, because it's a lot of extra work; it's a lot easier to fire stoneware and be done with it. But there was something kind of appealing to salt glazing in that things happened in the kiln when you salted that were unpredictable. They were gifts. All sorts of great accidents happen that don't happen in an electric kiln, [even in a reductive kiln]....

The Chinese—they put everything—well, it's stoneware, but it's all wood-fire kilns, but they [put all the work] in muffles, big clay boxes.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: So they're [very clean]. But with throwing salt in—

MS. RIEDEL: And how does that actually work? . . .

MR. WINOKUR: [You throw salt in the kiln when it's a red heat or when the salt breaks down. It's sodium chloride, Na_2Cl . The chloride goes off as a vapor. The sodium is a flux, and it interacts with the silica in clay and forms a glaze on the clay.] . . .

There was that element [that accidents were gifts] involved in it, and it's a coming-together thing. It was all the salt glazing in New England. Norton was nearby; I could see all this stuff.

MS. RIEDEL: So you moved [to Philadelphia]. . . . There was a big shift, it seems, in the mid-'70s, where your work becomes much more sculptural. There's a shift to salt glazing, and the scale—purely functional.

MR. WINOKUR: No, not purely. I was taking liberties with the pottery as a sculptural form, which is what Voulkos was doing, taking the form—

MS. RIEDEL: Sure. Yes, that's all.

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know if this is a good opportunity, but in my mind, it doesn't matter what you make in terms of subject. In other words, it could be a pot; it could be a house. The subject matter [seems] irrelevant. I could make art out of a pot; I could make art out of a house; I could make art out of a figure. [Subject is arbitrary—a Madonna or a horse—one will do just as well as another.]

MS. RIEDEL: Sure. Right. It's all a vessel taken to one extreme or another. [A house is] a container of sorts.

MR. WINOKUR: There's this business of form, an element. Doesn't matter whether it's the Madonna and Child, doesn't matter whether it's a rider on horseback, doesn't matter whether it's a nude reclining figure or a pot. They become a kind of [form], a context within which to work. . . .

[END CD1 TR2.]

MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Robert Winokur at the artist's home and studio in Horsham, Pennsylvania, on July 23, 2011, for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. This is card number two.

When card number one ended, we just started talking about salting and your whole interest and finding a way for chance to enter into the working process or enter into the work.

MR. WINOKUR: The chance thing is – let me just talk about this.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: There's this thing—genetic makeup and behavior. The thing that I have in mind is [there are two groups of chimpanzees]. Genetically, they're identical; they have no difference whatsoever; they're born that way. Chimp in group A puts his finger down in a hole and the termites crawl up, and he licks his finger. Chimps over in group B take a stick and put it down the hole.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: The termites crawl up and they lick the stick.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: So they're both chimps, but one's learned something one way, and the other's learned something another way.

MS. RIEDEL: One's using a tool.

MR. WINOKUR: It doesn't matter—

MS. RIEDEL: That's not where you're going.

MR. WINOKUR: —whether you call it a—that's not where I'm going with it.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: It's not the matter of a tool; it's about what you learn, about what you're taught.

MS. RIEDEL: All right.

MR. WINOKUR: I am what I am because my society made me this way. I had no choice in the matter, to a greater or lesser extent. Even—and this is relatively new research—there's a lot to indicate that human beings have no choice in the matter of making relationships; they cannot not make relationships. Take A and B and put them together and make C; it's just part of the wiring.

So everything after the fact, what they become, what they do, how they do it, is all a matter of behavioral learning. Is it—you know the James boys?

MS. RIEDEL: The James boys?

MR. WINOKUR: The James boys.

MS. RIEDEL: I don't.

MR. WINOKUR: Not the ones who robbed railways; the ones who were intellectuals.

MS. RIEDEL: Which James?

MR. WINOKUR: Henry and his brother.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure, okay.

MR. WINOKUR: [William] is [considered] the father of American psychology, [William] James. The other James [Henry] wrote novels.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: Anyway, and this is almost a quote, "There is no place in the brain scientifically speaking that you can point to and say, this is the mind." The entire brain is involved. So you may think intellectually, philosophically, literally about something and you work on the speech side of your brain or—but when it comes—this is my contention; I don't know how much substance there is—but that the brain is sort of a muscle and you can exercise certain parts of it. In exercising, it becomes agile in that activity. . . . There is an intellectual part of the brain, but there's also visual intelligence, which is not the same as intellectual intelligence—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —and there is audio intelligence, which is not the same as the other two.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. . . .

MR. WINOKUR: Okay, that's all I can kind of—an attempt to explain myself and how I became what I am. That's what there is. Maybe it takes more thought than that.

MS. RIEDEL: So I have a question—related questions. We were talking just before we started this card about something you'd said about embracing ideas that enter the work because of chance.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: How does what you're saying relate to including chance into the process or into the work?

MR. WINOKUR: All right. The chance is that the grocery store clerk is going to drop a bottle of milk and I'm going to jump back. I may bump myself, and I may not, but I will think about it later, and it might be a great idea. Maybe I can build a piece of sculpture. This is all conjectural. But, in other words, chance [is chance].

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: It can be anything you remember.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, so here's my question. Then we're talking about salting as a glazing process in that it adds an element of uncertainty to the final outcome of the pots. So is that a—

MR. WINOKUR: That and chance, completely [unplanned, unpredictable].

MS. RIEDEL: Is that where you got the idea—is that part of the salting influence?

MR. WINOKUR: Well, not directly, but I had to apply for an NEA grant to get the money to build the salt kiln. [Had I not gotten the grant, I would not have built a salt kiln, or I might have built a small one.]

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: I'll give you [another aspect]. I've got a mind like a red-velvet-lined sewer.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] That's quite an image.

MR. WINOKUR: Okay, so there's this mind in there somewhere.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: And all day long, all the time, conscious and maybe even unconscious, all this stuff pours in there—things I see, things I hear, things I feel, by radio, by movie, by—I don't know, it all goes through there. At the bottom of this sewer is a little thimble, a little golden strainer, and all this goes into my mind and down through the sewer and out the strainer in the bottom. There is something about the strainer that I can't explain, certain kinds of particles get caught in the strainer; they remain; they stay behind; they become memory; they are memory. . . .

Stuff remains behind in this filter, and that becomes the gist, the substance of the things I

remember, the stories I tell, the marks I make on a piece of clay, how I interact with people. That's the idea of chance. That's my definition—my explanation.

MS. RIEDEL: And so how those particles pile up in relationship to each other—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, how I deal with them—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —how I use them. Do I use two ounces of this and an eighth of an ounce of that? The quantities of the relationship are—I don't know why I do that.

I came across this—how to work this in. I was given a present, a recording of *Bachianas Brasileiras* [1930-45] by Heitor Villa-Lobos, and the liner notes of the recording quote Villa-Lobos as saying, "I wondered what kind of music Johann Sebastian Bach would have written had he been born in Brazil in the 20th century." . . . It led me to wonder what kind of sculpture Andrea or Luca della Robbia could have done had they been born American in the 20th century.

Okay, so there's this thing about making connections, accidents, fickle finger of fate kind of things that come together in that moment, become memory, and are sifted through, repropportioned, and come out at the end of your fingers creatively.

MS. RIEDEL: Maybe let's take an example of experiences of yours that have influenced your work and see if that sheds new light on this. I'm thinking of some of the travels you've done.

MR. WINOKUR: I didn't pick Rudy Staffel.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: He was thrown on me. "Here; here's your teacher; go"—it could have been anybody.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, but we don't—as you said yourself, there's not necessarily a lot of influence from Rudy Staffel in your work.

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know that.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: I can't say—

MS. RIEDEL: But there are some things that seem more directly related.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, tearing up clay and reassembling it? I could say that's Rudy's.

MS. RIEDEL: That's true. Was he doing that then?

MR. WINOKUR: Well, look at the Light Gatherers.

MS. RIEDEL: But you said that he was doing those much later.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, then I got influenced much later. I mean that it didn't happen at the moment I met him. And maybe it only happened because I knew him and I knew what he was doing.

MS. RIEDEL: Let's think about the influences that you think of consciously.

MR. WINOKUR: Okay.

MS. RIEDEL: You mentioned Paul Klee; you mentioned Abstract Expressionism—

MR. WINOKUR: Willem de Kooning.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, right.

MR. WINOKUR: Diebenkorn.

MS. RIEDEL: Diebenkorn.

MR. WINOKUR: Giacometti.

MS. RIEDEL: Of course.

MR. WINOKUR: I don't see much in pop culture. I'm left cold by chrome-plated balloons of rabbits. So, Voulkos and calligraphy by Zen masters.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. WINOKUR: You can say, well, it's all brushwork. Remind me to show you my brushwork.

MS. RIEDEL: It seems as though you did hit a place in the work where your interest became increasingly on drawing on the surface of the pieces.

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know if—

MS. RIEDEL: And the tables, the wedges?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, they're drawings. They're very crisp, very linear, but they're drawings, and they're drawings based on the form that they're being put on; there's that connection.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: [There is the] whole business of the Dazzle Boats. They seem to run off all over the place and defy the form, but they're there because the battleship's there. I don't know if that answers—

MS. RIEDEL: In the early '80s—late '70s, early '80s—there was an increasing move towards sculpture in the work. There was increasing use of geometric form and pattern and grids. We were looking at the tables upstairs.

MR. WINOKUR: [And?]

MS. RIEDEL: And you mentioned you had taken a trip to Italy. What was the impetus for this change for this work?

MR. WINOKUR: No, no, no. One of the phenomena of the last 100, 200 years is the art book. I can go to Borders and I can get a Monet [book] and I've got Monets. I can look at them at my leisure. I can look at Diebenkorn, de Kooning. And influence, at least for me anyway, it's not one for one. I don't look at something and I go make it.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: So there's this whole kind of—something builds up and—

MS. RIEDEL: Synthesis.

MR. WINOKUR: —I don't even think that I'm doing so-and-so. But the influence is there. I don't have to travel to Italy to experience something; I can look at books on Italy. At some point I thought I was going to be a Zen potter, a Japanese potter. Somebody looked at what I did and said, "The Japanese don't do anything like this." That ended that; it just turned it off.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. WINOKUR: I thought I was emulating Japanese, and maybe in my—how I felt about Japan; it didn't matter. And then you see something and you like it, but it doesn't mean you're going to be influenced by it.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: I spent a month in China and I don't feel that it had any effect on my work. I spent a week, maybe a week and a half in Italy, and God, there are these plazas all over the place [in my work].

MS. RIEDEL: Let's talk about that. That would be—because traveling is in one of the questions on that.

MR. WINOKUR: Okay.

MS. RIEDEL: So let's talk about the travels that have been significant to the work.

MR. WINOKUR: But I said I spent a month in China and didn't get hardly any—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: But you've got to remember my art history [courses] were heavy on Renaissance. When I was in Italy, I was reliving a portion of my education, or supplementing it. So why shouldn't it happen? I don't remember spending much time on Eastern art, Asian [in art history classes].

MS. RIEDEL: Sure. And so some sense of Italian plazas, architecturally, in terms of light, in terms of layout, in terms of composition, influenced—

MR. WINOKUR: Impressiveness, awed by something. You stand in front of these things, and you look up and—how do you keep yourself from falling over on your rear end? You know, it's not a tit for tat. It's not A plus B; it's a feeling, a gestalt. I don't know what the term is, but you sort of gather.

MS. RIEDEL: Is that sense of awe important?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, the sense of awe is important, but I think what caused the awe.

MS. RIEDEL: That makes me think of the importance that you've given to children's art in your work. Is there a correlation there in your mind?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, I like the enthusiasm, the improvisation.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: [I was talking to] John Wood once, and I said something about kid's art, and he said, "Kids never get it wrong."

[With kids' art, a lot of what you see has to do with who picks it.] So I said [to some of my students who teach children], have the kids draw something, collect the stuff, and let me look at it. I've got some of it in a folder. It's all really mundane, nothing to write home about—occasionally, maybe. But I really at this point have nothing that I would have concluded that the stuff she picked was what she liked, and that I'm going through and responding to her choices. Not what the kids made, which is kind of removed from the moment. When you see it, you know it. Some of it's right on and some of it's just [dull].

MS. RIEDEL: Now, of the things that we were looking at upstairs this morning are some of the fabulous little paintings and compositions, sculptures, that your sons did that you had the presence of mind to stop and really have a closer look at.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, I documented them. And then maybe out of nostalgia, maybe out of—at some point they looked good. They work sufficiently so I could rip them off. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: Well, there's a looseness to them, and it makes me think of certain things that have been said about Klee's work or certain Picasso pieces, Miró—there's an aesthetic you're drawn to.

MR. WINOKUR: Winton Marsalis, who runs the jazz [workshop] in New York. Just off Columbus Circle there's this edifice to music and ballet. Winton Marsalis runs a jazz thing in there, so he's become a kind of a senior diplomat, spokesman, for American jazz.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: He was asked about it, and he says, "Jazz has to do with improvisation and spontaneity. In order to get to a point where you can do that, you've got to practice eight hours a day." It's not contrived; it's not stiff. That's essentially my take on art. You do it till you get it right, and it takes a long time. One of my complaints about contemporary art education is that they're so busy becoming famous, they haven't bothered to learn how to make something. There's no maturity to it, if that makes any sense.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure. There's mastery of materials to some degree.

MR. WINOKUR: But good jazz is mature.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: It has a structure, a quality; it sounds right. The classic story—I've told this and I've had people finish the story for me because they've heard it. Italians love opera, so there's the La Scala Opera House in Milan, and there's this opera going on. The tenor sings his piece, and he finishes. The whole house applauds and there's "Bravo, bravo, bravo! Encore, encore!" So he sings the aria again and again, the second time, the third time. Finally he steps in front of the curtain, the curtain closes, and he thanks everybody sincerely and from the bottom of his heart. He really feels fully inspired and everything. But the show has to go on, and he has to consider his voice.

From way upstairs in the galleries, the cheap seats, somebody [yells down], "You'll do it till you get it right!" You will do it till you get it right. Even if it takes that kind of embarrassment or whatever, you do it till you get it right. I don't have the sense that anybody works hard; they do it because it's awesome, not because it's right. The world I grew up in doesn't exist anymore.

MS. RIEDEL: Are there pieces in your experience that you've made where you feel, that one's right?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Can you give—

MR. WINOKUR: I do that as a form of editing, send things around and show them because—I'll tell you what, there's *Two Barns on the Wall: Whitewashed* [2004]. There's a white flash on it. As soon as that came out of the kiln, [I thought it] was great. And I've showed it around and it's been received well; I think it's a great piece.

MS. RIEDEL: Is that one of the houses we're talking about?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, it's a series of houses.

MS. RIEDEL: Is that maybe *The Other Side of the House* [2001]? Is that the one we're talking about?

MR. WINOKUR: No, no, that's another one.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: [With] *The Other Side of the House*, I've had other people tell me it was good. With [*Two Barns on the Wall*], I knew I'd done well, *Two Houses on the Wall: Whitewashed*

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, *Two*, okay, that's the title.

MR. WINOKUR: *Two Barns on the Wall: Whitewashed*. But that's the answer to your question.

That rarely happens, where you open a kiln and bingo! But it doesn't happen very often—to stay with it, if that's any kind of explanation.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, no, that's helpful.

MR. WINOKUR: Connected?

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, you're on.

MR. WINOKUR: This is by Kirk Varnedoe, who was the director of the Museum of Modern Art—he's passed away recently—who said, "I really believe in hard-looking at real things, individual pictures and sculptures, not just historical situations but physically—physical reality of objects. I feel the theoreticians have lost some of the great joy of art, which was a sensual immediacy and complex kind of intelligence that is not literary or verbal intelligence; the notation that ultimately it is the theory which is the viable and worthy part of art history, it seems to me, an entirely rank prejudice."

MS. RIEDEL: An entirely—sorry?

MR. WINOKUR: "An entirely rank prejudice"—that art history is the arbiter of everything.

Like I said, to follow up this thing, the whole idea of a manifesto, of making art based on a manifesto of great overriding theory. Political whatever, feminism, Republican politics, neopolitics, that kind of thing is kind of like a—it has nothing to do with the work. In a sense, as I've said before, it doesn't matter whether it's any of those things or nothing at all. When you're done with the work, it has to look right, and at that point, if there's a manifesto there, it's irrelevant. But if all that's there is the manifesto, invariably the work kind of doesn't come off.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: Okay?

MS. RIEDEL: So what has moved your work from functional pots to more sculptural pots to tables to wedges to houses to asparagus?

MR. WINOKUR: I sort of thought you'd ask that sooner or later. Val Cushing, essentially an Alfredian who makes pottery, said, "What you do looks the way it does for the reasons you do it."

So while I was on the farm making pottery for a living, it looked the way it did because I had to make it to sell. It had to work on somebody's table; it had to work when they put coffee in it and put their lips to it, et cetera. I made the stuff I made at Alfred because I had teachers to please; I had to conform to a hierarchy. When I got to Tyler, I had tenure to contend with. Fifty cups wasn't going to get me tenure, but being in a gallery was. Getting a review in *Art in America* was [going to get me tenure].

I know all about adaptation and assimilation; I learned that from my parents. So I adapted as each situation changed and what the situation called for. Here I am retired and I don't have to assimilate anymore, or I have to assimilate to retirement, which is my own set of criteria, not somebody else's.

MS. RIEDEL: But nonetheless, the work evolved while you were at Tyler, through the tables and the wedges and the—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, but they evolved within the context of the criteria.

MS. RIEDEL: But what about the evolution was significant to you? What prompted the evolution?

MR. WINOKUR: It didn't matter to me, as long as I was making something in clay. Sometimes it was good; sometimes it wasn't. All I wanted to do was move clay around, and if somebody would hire me to tell other people [how to do that], that was fine.

MS. RIEDEL: Color became more or less important? Patterns?

MR. WINOKUR: It was at hand. If I had a chip and I had the recipe for that chip and I liked the way it looked, I'd use it, fold it in, make it one of those little bits of grit at the bottom of the thimble. When it came out of the kiln, I could look at it and take pride in it, enough pride to want to show it to somebody else so that I wouldn't be laughed off the stage. But it was fine; I didn't care. It didn't matter.

In a funny way, it only matters to you, the viewer. I wonder if there's some kind of fallacy in the assumption that if you look at my work and you like it, if you talk to me, you can find out why you like it.

Do you see what I'm getting at here, this whole process?

MS. RIEDEL: No.

MR. WINOKUR: I guess what I'm doing is questioning the idea of this interview.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I get that. [They laugh.] I think I'm getting that.

MR. WINOKUR: Will somebody listening or reading all this stuff get any real insight as to why my work looks the way it does? They may; one thing may not have to do with the other. It may, I don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, I'm sure everybody has different thoughts about why the work looks the way it does.

MR. WINOKUR: [Perhaps.]

MS. RIEDEL: It's a question of why—your opportunity to talk about how it evolved for you.

MR. WINOKUR: I can tell you how it evolved for me, but to what extent that had to do with its appearance is kind of [connected to the viewer's experience].

MS. RIEDEL: Okay, so let's talk about how it evolved for you, unrelated to how it appears. Working process is one of the questions that we'd like to address.

MR. WINOKUR: [Okay.]

MS. RIEDEL: So let's talk about your working process.

MR. WINOKUR: All right. If I worked on the wheel, no matter what I did to it, it always looked wheel-borne.

MS. RIEDEL: Of course.

MR. WINOKUR: The whole thing about clay moving in a circle and your fingers on it—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —it was always there. Rudy Staffel has this thing about the purple pig, in which I tell you, "Close your eyes, and you may think of anything you want to, but do not think about a purple pig." You close your eyes and there's that damn purple pig, okay? You don't get rid of something by telling yourself not to think about it; you get rid of something by doing something else, by thinking about something else. It's a kind of Zen thing. . . . You transfer; you change one thing for another. If I don't want to be associated with pot-making, realistically, I've got to get off the wheel.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: And there's a transition thing—those wall hangings are wheel thrown.

MS. RIEDEL: The ones that we looked at upstairs earlier today—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: —that really haven't been shown much; they were earlier.

MR. WINOKUR: The ones that I connected up with aerial views, I would throw cylinders, slice the cylinder, lay it down; they already had markings on them from my fingers [and the wheel]. I would lay it down flat and draw into it or finish what was already there. But now, instead of seeing it in motion 360 degrees from one point of view, it was slit and laid down flat so I was seeing the whole diorama as a ribbon at once.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. So this comes many ways—

MR. WINOKUR: That's a process.

MS. RIEDEL: So this has a lot to do—

MR. WINOKUR: That's how I got off the wheel.

MS. RIEDEL: It had a lot to do with your spatial orientation, it sounds like.

MR. WINOKUR: I could play—I could use the process to alter your orientation.

MS. RIEDEL: And you talked about when you were younger and that ability to think spatially.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So you were playing with the space and the form.

MR. WINOKUR: Maybe this [will help]. I don't know. . . . [Wedging clay is a good example.] Take the clay, and if I slice it in half and then take the large part and slice it again and look at the form, I've got something that looks like a bird wing.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: So if I do it again, I've got two bird wings. And if I put it on either side of a form, I've got a flying pot. Do you see what I'm getting at? It's looking at what you're doing and what's happening, and making and putting it in another context.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure. So it's the process itself that—

MR. WINOKUR: —that alters the transitions.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, the image is evolving within the process.

MR. WINOKUR: Playing with how you know viewers see, the psychology of the view.

You know Rudolph Arnheim? *Art and Visual Perception* [2004]. Actually, I saw a copy of it at Borders yesterday. Rudolph Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception*, it tells you how the human being sees and why and how it does—it's like movies. Take a strip of movie of a train, and you take a strip of movie of a dentist drilling somebody's tooth, and you splice the two of them together and put a train whistle on a soundtrack, and you have somebody screaming because their mouth is being worked on.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, we talked about this earlier, too, is this putting together the idea of that "exquisite corpse," putting together unrelated images or—

MR. WINOKUR: And creating something [else].

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. WINOKUR: But it works.

MS. RIEDEL: Sometimes, definitely, and sometimes it doesn't, depending on—

MR. WINOKUR: Movies deal with it all the time.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, but it depends on what you're juxtaposing. Sometimes they have something to say and sometimes not.

MR. WINOKUR: No, no, no, it works all the time. You ever watch television? Watch commercials? Maybe in a 30-second commercial, you may have nine cuts. It's bits of film that have been spliced together—

MS. RIEDEL: But very specific images juxtaposed.

MR. WINOKUR: —to get you to think—to come to the conclusion that the splicer wants you to [come to].

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: That the filmmaker wants you to [accept].

MS. RIEDEL: And is that [what] happens for you in the studio—

MR. WINOKUR: It's done all the time to manipulate thought.

MS. RIEDEL: —is that [what] happens for you in the studio?

MR. WINOKUR: Sometimes, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: I'll take something and look at it, thinking, if I take this and put it with that something, a third thing will happen.

MS. RIEDEL: I'm thinking about the houses and how they've broken down into—some are very art historical references; some are local references.

MR. WINOKUR: Kind of. I would prefer that they were not art historical.

MS. RIEDEL: You talk about—there's *Brancusi's Barn* [*With Ladder*, 2001]; there's—

MR. WINOKUR: I name them; the names come afterwards. With me, names are amusing bits of information that may or may not relate to the piece. Like *Brancusi's Barn* was just because I liked Brancusi, but it had nothing to do with anything Brancusi ever did. But it has the ability for the viewer to somehow try and see some kind of connection with Brancusi, which is not really there. [It's a kind of joke.]

MS. RIEDEL: So it's something that you're bringing in that's unrelated that applied to it.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, . . . I'm manipulating the viewer.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, okay. And you're putting together two things that don't necessarily have anything to do with each other.

MR. WINOKUR: Just to have fun.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, is humor an important part of your process or an important part of the work itself?

MR. WINOKUR: It's an ancillary kind of thing.

MS. RIEDEL: It seems like there's a lot of humor in the work.

MR. WINOKUR: [Yes, there is.]

MS. RIEDEL: The asparagus pieces don't—

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know if I intend it. Actually, I think with the asparagus there was this idea with that flimsy, thin, flexible kind of [vegetable] bunched together to support this confounding weight.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: They work that way. Certainly the viewer looking at it can say, "Oh, they're so—it's erotic," or "It's this," or "It's that." I don't care. For me, I've accomplished what I started out to do, and maybe a little salt here and a little pepper there, and a slice of onion, to change it a little bit and play with it.

MS. RIEDEL: It seems that there were three series that were working concurrently—the houses, the shrines, the figures. Did they—

MR. WINOKUR: Well, the houses and the shrines are one and the same. They're a rose by a different name.

MS. RIEDEL: You don't make any distinction in the—

MR. WINOKUR: They're houses, but a lot of—if you're Catholic, you'd know that the monstrances up on the altar are little glass houses with the little boxes with windows in them; they're houses with a shinbone of a saint or a strip of St. Francis's cloth. They're houses! The reverence comes from you, the viewer, and the location. [Being] in these huge cathedrals [helps].

MS. RIEDEL: Do you think of your work as having a religious or a spiritual sense?

MR. WINOKUR: [Yes.] Do I believe in God? I don't know. [There is an element of] "To whom it may concern." I don't know, but on the other hand, I'm not sure what people mean when they say "spiritual."

MS. RIEDEL: Well, I'm asking you, so that would be what you think.

MR. WINOKUR: If I'm going to tell you, I've got to have a basis for communication. I don't, and so I end up saying, "I don't know," because I don't want to—

MS. RIEDEL: Does it feel that way to you?

MR. WINOKUR: Sometimes, but it's the same kind of thing as being patted on the back and telling you, "That's nice."

MS. RIEDEL: We can look at the work in terms of spiritual or a religious sensibility, a political commentary, a social commentary, gender commentary, ethnicity. And some things seem—I would think that I look at this work and it certainly feels much more one than the other, but I'm wondering —

MR. WINOKUR: But that's what you're bringing to it.

MS. RIEDEL: That's right. So now I'm asking you.

MR. WINOKUR: I really don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: So what do—when you—

MR. WINOKUR: Am I saving the world? Maybe. How, I couldn't tell you. That gets back to what I said about my father saying, "Artists will make the world whole," or something. [I guess I'm still wanting to see if it does.]

MS. RIEDEL: Do you think that's true?

MR. WINOKUR: Well, if it's not, I've wasted my time, but I'll never know. I'll come back in 500 years and see if anybody remembers anything I've done.

MS. RIEDEL: Upstairs, you mentioned *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*[1995] and the importance of translating.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. Oh, yes. Do you know what *The Hitchhikers Guide to*—

MS. RIEDEL: I'm familiar with the book from my background.

MR. WINOKUR: It's actually very humorous. But it—and this is only one incident in it; I've just adopted it. But in it, he has what's called the "Babel Fish." Here he is traveling in the universe, going from planet to planet, and there are all sorts of creatures, and he's able to communicate with them, to talk to them, because he's got this Babel Fish. Actually, the Babel Fish is a little tiny thing he inserts in his ear. It's not a big fish like the photograph. But it has something to do with communication, being able to talk to—

MS. RIEDEL: And that makes me think of—

MR. WINOKUR: There's no work based on it, if that's where you're going.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. No?

MR. WINOKUR: I can't say, "I did this piece because of that," and if it did, I wouldn't do the piece.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, the work feels like a transformation or an evolution, a translation from your experiences and your memory that you were talking about earlier, into form and color.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, but how? I don't know [how].

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Does it feel like that's true? Does that seem accurate to you?

MR. WINOKUR: Somewhat, but I'm really not sure if it's even a valid—okay, let me put it this way. I do not know how my life experience converts into visual elements that I make—exactly.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: There's this—

MS. RIEDEL: You don't know how. You don't know how it does—

MR. WINOKUR: I have no control.

MS. RIEDEL: —but do you think that it does?

MR. WINOKUR: It may. That's all I can tell you, it may. Sometimes more than others, some experiences more than others. Like, having visited Italy, I can say—I can point to this and say, that was done because I saw this. In other situations, because I saw a pornographic movie, maybe—

MS. RIEDEL: We were looking at some of the photographs you'd taken upstairs, and there was one of a highway. It was black with the two white lines running down the middle.

MR. WINOKUR: Oh, with the guy [painting a white line down the middle].

MS. RIEDEL: And it maybe almost had a certain Diebenkorn quality to it, too. So visually, how your mind might associate and—

MR. WINOKUR: That's an absurd picture; it's very funny.

MS. RIEDEL: No, but it's beautiful.

MR. WINOKUR: Right, but it's a very funny picture.

MS. RIEDEL: And it strikes you as funny?

MR. WINOKUR: Can you imagine? Imagine [painting a white] line down the interstate?

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, no, I'm not talking about that one.

MR. WINOKUR: Oh, which one are you talking about?

MS. RIEDEL: I'm talking about the one of the two white lines going down the center and the yellow line coming from the side—

MR. WINOKUR: Okay.

MS. RIEDEL: —and the little tiny yellow dot.

MR. WINOKUR: That's a paint splash.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, but it's—

MR. WINOKUR: Okay, but it exists only because I chose to photograph it; it was something in my experience.

MS. RIEDEL: But it's something that visually spoke to you.

MR. WINOKUR: [Yes, there is a linear structure in my work,] but by the same token, [that is similar in the way Diebenkorn assigns space. Similar kinds of space breakups in Wyeth, the barns. It's not

all from one place.] . . .

I know it's not a one-for-one experience. In a sense, what I make has to do with a raft of experiences that I'm unable to—they're only together because they're in my mind, and I'm not even conscious of them.

MS. RIEDEL: That's helpful.

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know why one little bit of grit in the thimble, the strainer, stays behind and everything else goes through; I have no idea at all. [Laughs.] What I thought was the funniest joke I can remember from my adolescence, probably even from grammar school, was the story about the two nuns who played leapfrog in an asparagus patch. It's a sight joke. Think about it. It's a dirty joke from an adolescent's point of view. When we were kids in a schoolyard, I thought that was one of the funniest jokes I'd ever heard; it's still with me. I think of it every once in a while when I'm doing asparagus. [There is an erotic element connected to asparagus.]

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: [Laughs.] There it is.

MS. RIEDEL: There it is.

MR. WINOKUR: Incidentally, with political correctness, I've been [re-educated]. [They laugh.]...

MS. RIEDEL: And have you done many commissions?

MR. WINOKUR: Paula has.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: I've done a few. . . . I think there's about three or four on my resume. I don't really like them. I don't, and not because I don't like doing them. It's this thing that I spoke about before. I always have this feeling, if I had the opportunity, I could do it over again; I would do it better. And maybe it's because it's at somebody else's direction, that I wouldn't have done it that way for me, but that's what they wanted. Anyway, . . . I really don't knock myself out to go looking for commissions.

MS. RIEDEL: Some people have mentioned that sometimes they bring interesting ideas that might not have occurred to an artist otherwise. This sounds like that's—

MR. WINOKUR: I don't have any trouble finding ideas.

MS. RIEDEL: Ideas? What do you think of as the most important commission pieces that you've done? There's a large wall early on, right?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, that's the Trammell Crowe buildings; that was the largest one. I don't know that—

MS. RIEDEL: Is that in Philadelphia?

MR. WINOKUR: It's out here in the western suburbs of Philadelphia—what you call a business campus or something.

MS. RIEDEL: Trammell Crowe? . . .

MR. WINOKUR: [Yes.]

MS. RIEDEL: We've talked about Italy a little bit. Are there other travels that have had an impact on your work, your life? Paula talked a lot about the Southwest, and you've mentioned it. Do you feel like that's had an impact on the work?

MR. WINOKUR: Well, I don't know. [Maybe with regard to] the line drawings and geometry; I don't see any buttes or canyons.

MS. RIEDEL: Color-wise?

MR. WINOKUR: Color-wise maybe. But that's [a matter of the ceramic material]. Choosing glaze [and a clay body].

MS. RIEDEL: Spatially, you feel more influence from the interest to Italy?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, because there was so much architecture and streets and moving, crossing [over] each other. Even open plazas are divided. There's all sorts of linear things; even the tiles on the ground mark off [spaces].

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Have you been to Italy a few times?

MR. WINOKUR: No, just once.

MS. RIEDEL: Just once. And do you remember when that was?

MR. WINOKUR: Let me check my resume.

MS. RIEDEL: It was before, I imagine, the Italian façade. So was it sometime in ['93]?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, it's here somewhere; there's a whole list of things. I thought it was more than that—I'm not remembering. It's a strange phenomenon, having to commit your memory to paper during—exhibitions, collections, commissions, awards, professional—

MS. RIEDEL: We can add it later, yes.

MR. WINOKUR: It seems to me at some point I had—that's yours.

MS. RIEDEL: I have another one.

MR. WINOKUR: Go ahead. I can do this and talk.

MS. RIEDEL: We've talked about how you think about all of the work as a variation on form. What do you see as the similarities and the differences between the early work and the more recent?

MR. WINOKUR: One was [that I] dealt with pots and their parameters, and then the later work is rectangles or other geometry. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Do you think of the work in a Minimal context?

MR. WINOKUR: No, I don't think I'm a Minimalist. But that doesn't keep somebody else [from thinking] that I would be Minimalist. I don't think of the wedges as Minimalist, but I can see how somebody else might. The *Two Barns on the Wall* would be construed as Minimalist.

I've got a thing with Minimalism. It's a label that people give to certain kinds of work. In my mind Minimalism is like tweaking something, and you keep paring it down and eliminating it, and tearing it down, and finally all you're left with is air to tweak. It's a reductive kind of thing.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you not think about some of the work as reductive—

MR. WINOKUR: No.

MS. RIEDEL: —some of the houses being tweaked and tweaked and tweaked, or the asparagus pieces?

MR. WINOKUR: No, no.

MS. RIEDEL: No? How do you think about them?

MR. WINOKUR: I think of them as constructions. Minimalism to me is like, you take something and it's reduced to its basic element, or less than its basic element, or less than its less-than-basic element.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. WINOKUR: And then finally all you're left with is a note that you write to yourself and put it on the wall. [The laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: There's nothing else left. I don't want to go there.

MS. RIEDEL: Over the past 40 years, what has inspired the work? How has that changed, or what was similar, and what's different?

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know. I don't know a thing about art, but I know what I like. I don't know a thing about art, but I like what I do. And it seems to be that I do this stuff, and sometimes it goes in the trash or in the shard [pile], and sometimes it goes in the closet. And sometimes I show it and show it and show it, and it doesn't go anywhere; nobody buys it. It ends up back here in the storeroom or in the closet, something like that. I've got a storeroom out there that's full of what I call "pimentos." It's a whole closet full of stuff that I like, but I've never had the opportunity show them to anybody or anything.

MS. RIEDEL: Now, you did show with Helen [Drutt English] for decades, yes?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. Is that a question? [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Well, I would just—one of the questions on this is if you would describe your relationships with dealers. It sounds as if there you had one primary relationship for many years.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, it's funny. In hindsight, maybe we should have had other dealers. But Helen—particularly Paula—Helen did wonders for Paula. . . . Looking back, we should have had some other people. The relationship was such, I suppose, that we didn't look for anyone else; it made us lazy in that respect. I mean, why hunt for a gallery in New York? Helen will take care of it, and we left it there. One of the reasons I built the gallery onto the house was because she closed her gallery. I figured I could invite people out here to look at work, all else failing. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. WINOKUR: So, we'll have a sale in October and send out e-mails. That may induce them to come out here, but I'm not on a main highway. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: What changes have you seen in the market for crafts since you've been [at it]?

MR. WINOKUR: It has changed. First of all, there was a clear demarcation between craft galleries and main— . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Mainstream, commercial, yes.

MR. WINOKUR: Mainstream; galleries.

MS. RIEDEL: Fine art galleries, yes.

MR. WINOKUR: Fine art galleries, that was okay. Galleries handle painters, not so much sculptors, and that was what we would have aspired to.

MS. RIEDEL: Was to be in a fine art gallery that carried sculpture?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. We didn't see ourselves in craft galleries. To a certain extent, it affected the kind of work we did, at least for me. In other words, we didn't want to be in craft galleries; we weren't going to make pots. There are people around us that still make pottery. They do it very nicely, but that wasn't what we wanted to do.

More recently, I noticed New York galleries who...took on Betty Woodman.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, yes. I don't know who shows her work.

MR. WINOKUR: [Max Proteck.] But it was through that gallery, and I'm sure the wheeling and dealing, that got her the show in the Metropolitan.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: If you're with a gallery, they are going to put on a show; they'll arrange for other things to happen to promote the gallery's work.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. . . .

MR. WINOKUR: But I did get a review in *Art in America*; it's not all hopeless, and that was a while ago. . . . The fact is, yes, things have changed. So things that may have been considered craft 10 years ago are being accepted in museums and mainstream galleries.

MS. RIEDEL: So you're seeing progress being made.

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know if it's progress or not.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: It's a change.

MS. RIEDEL: It's a change.

MR. WINOKUR: It's an alteration—a metamorphosis.

MS. RIEDEL: And is that something that you would like to see for your own work? Would you like to see it in—

MR. WINOKUR: I'd like to have a show in the Metropolitan.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know that I've got enough work [but, yes, I would].

MS. RIEDEL: I know Helen closed quite a while ago and you've got the gallery here, but do you think about looking for a new gallery? Can you think of a gallery in New York where you would like to see your work? Is it something you'd actively like to see happen?

MR. WINOKUR: Somebody on Madison Avenue, close to the Guggenheim [would be nice]. . . .

[END CD2 TR1.]

MR. WINOKUR: But I'm not holding my breath.

MS. RIEDEL: And you're not actively pursuing it?

MR. WINOKUR: We've put out feelers every now and then, but nothing happens.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: Or nothing has happened. But by the same token, here you are interviewing me for the Smithsonian. I've got pieces in the Smithsonian, which is, I don't know—

MS. RIEDEL: One or two, I think, yes.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, so I'm not being completely overlooked. The Michener, which is in Doylestown, is a museum there. That was a phone call [while we were talking yesterday].

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: They're coming down here to take a look at something for an exhibition. So I'm not a household name yet. [They laugh.] And I guess that's what I aspire to be.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you think of yourself as part of an international tradition or an American tradition, or do you not think about it in those terms at all?

MR. WINOKUR: I don't think—we were in Europe, in Paris, last September, and the work being done by the French people was European, obviously European, in my mind, so I don't see any connection with the Old World. To a certain extent what I do is American, if you want to pigeonhole it that way.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you think of it as part of an American tradition?

MR. WINOKUR: No. There's an American school of art that is different from European schools of art. . . .

You walk into a gallery and say, "Oh, this is Southwestern art. It looks like a Dalmatian, and it's a landscape. [Laughs.] It has the Southwest shrubbery and cactus and all that stuff." It looks Southwestern—

MS. RIEDEL: Well, I think it's interesting.

MR. WINOKUR: —even when it's abstract.

MS. RIEDEL: I think there isn't a particular school or type of work that you associate yourself with. Is that accurate, or is there?

MR. WINOKUR: I guess the best I will say, [is that I am of the] Northeastern United States [School of Art].

MS. RIEDEL: Okay. . . .

MR. WINOKUR: I'm certainly not mistaken for a Californian.

MS. RIEDEL: No.

MR. WINOKUR: Although I do [asparagus]. Well, that's a whole new wrinkle, but I've got a piece in L.A. County [Museum of Art].

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. WINOKUR: Somebody there made a mistake.

MS. RIEDEL: It was part of that *Fire and*—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, *Earth, Fire*, whatever [*Color and Fire: Defining Moments in Studio Ceramics, 1950-2000*].

MS. RIEDEL: I can't remember – *Earth, Fire*, and something. Yes, that was a wonderful show. *Earth and Fire* maybe, or something.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Has technology affected your work at all?

MR. WINOKUR: No, it's just made me resentful. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: How is that?

MR. WINOKUR: Oh, I don't know how to describe this exactly. One thing that's very critical, and you will not—I may be the first or second person you'll ever hear this from. All the history of art, all of it till Judy Chicago, I don't know, pick a time—all art history taught has to do with light falling on a surface and being reflected back—canvases, frescoes on walls, even sculpture, although there's physical modulation there—it's all reflective. Light hits it, gets absorbed, and you see red. Or say, light hits the back of it and it absorbs, and that part of it looks green. It's all reflective.

Every computer you look at is backlit. All the light comes from behind the image, which is a whole other thing. It's even, it's uniform, it's without texture; something's missing. And I don't see it as the panacea of human—of Western—of humanity, but there's a tendency to believe it is. There's a kind of taking the wash water, letting the baby go. I don't know if any of this makes any sense. There is something about it that misses the point.

MS. RIEDEL: Of seeing an image on the computer, or computers?

MR. WINOKUR: About a reverence for it, about dependence on it—

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: —about philosophies of humanity, of living, of how one responds to people. You're pre-computer, no?

MS. RIEDEL: I am pre-computer, yes.

MR. WINOKUR: Describe a friendship.

MS. RIEDEL: Describe a friendship?

MR. WINOKUR: Tell me what it is about you and another person that makes a friendship.

MS. RIEDEL: Communication.

MR. WINOKUR: No, there's more to it than that.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, you tell me about a friendship then.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. More than an acquaintance—

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: —more than somebody you pass on the street, someone who you're fond of talking to who will exchange things, ideas with; who will, in the middle of the night, send a dirty joke just because it's funny. Holden Caulfield talking about—God, I've got it here somewhere—talking about Eustacia Vye . . . [in Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, 1878]. [He liked Thomas Hardy and thought he was] the kind of guy that he would like to be able to call up in the middle of the night and just chat with.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: That's the sense of friendship, of if somebody told me so-and-so was sick, I'd call them up; and if I had to, maybe I'd go see them, even if they were in New York or in Baltimore or, you know, a distance.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: Even physical relationship.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: That kind of—but not just sexual. There are all sorts of—instead of saying goodbye, you reach over and pat somebody on the shoulder as if there's a sense of distinction in there.

My sense with digital things—people brag about they have 500 friends. But the concept of friendship has really changed; what a friendship constitutes is by the boards now; it's a whole different thing. There's nothing—it's impersonal; it's trivial. There's no cement to it, to speak of. It's all electronic gadgetry. It doesn't catch a cold. It doesn't have to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night; it doesn't fart. All these kind of things that you expect out of a relationship and aren't there, other than a little blip and maybe other little blips, and this mouse.

So I'm reading [a book] on training of dogs, just read this whole thing. It says, with a dog, you tell it to sit, and the dog sits for a while. With a computer, you tell it to sit or whatever [command is] comparable, and it will stay that way forever. There's things about sentient beings that have nothing to do with digital, electronic kind of things; they're foreign. And yet there's sort of this whole rush to them. In the process of rushing to them, there's a lot of shit being lost or changed.

I said earlier, the world I grew up in, that the world I was born into—the world I grew up in really doesn't exist anymore. It's gone, except in my head maybe. People my own age, even they don't remember. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: So can I infer from that that there is something very vital to your work and to your working process about the process itself and about working with your hands?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, it doesn't exist if I don't touch it, if I can't feel it, if I can't squeeze it. I won't look at you, but I'll tell you, it's like grabbing a tit in the dark. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: We should talk about the erotic element of your art that's definitely evolved.

MR. WINOKUR: There is that.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: And it's a human condition. People don't talk about it in polite society, but it's there.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, and it's interesting to think about how the work has become increasingly figurative. Maybe that's an outgrowth of exactly what we're talking about right here and now.

MR. WINOKUR: Maybe it is.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Maybe it's gone from being [inaudible] to being sentient beings having relationships.

MR. WINOKUR: I'm much too modest to suggest that what I do or who I am is the epitome of humanity. I don't know if I'm saving the world, that kind of thing. I don't know what I'm doing, other than I'm making things I like. But if I've got to choose between the human being and a computer, human beings win every time, even if they're the nastiest human beings. A computer's no friend.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, it does seem that there's certain— . . . watching the data only goes so far in that it is all relationships.

MR. WINOKUR: Computers and digital work—[even] the gadget du jour is all data, isn't it? It's all zeroes and ones, [when you] come right down to it. There's no blemishes, nothing unpredictable.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you have a sense of—

MR. WINOKUR: I think that's a good word. Unpredictability's what [is missing]; the unexpected is a critical part, in art, in music—

MS. RIEDEL: Agreed.

MR. WINOKUR: Not "different"—"unexpected."

MS. RIEDEL: I understand.

MR. WINOKUR: There's a big difference.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Is that something you actively court in the work?

MR. WINOKUR: No, [I don't, but] it happens and it's a fortuitous accident. That's the phrase—"fortuitous"—but I'm perfectly willing to accept it, adopt it, call it my own; look what I did. I created a situation where it could happen. If I were very honest, that's the best I could do, but I did it.

MS. RIEDEL: I was talking with Judith Schaechter, as you know, a couple days ago, and she was saying that that is something she actively looks for in the work. She likes to be surprised by the work. She does not want it to be what she thought it was going to be when she started. It needs to go someplace she couldn't—these are my words, not hers—go someplace where she couldn't have

imagined it when she started the process—

MR. WINOKUR: [Yes, indeed.]

MS. RIEDEL: —that that's an important part of the process.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. Otherwise, why bother?

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. WINOKUR: One of the most boring, grinding, deleterious [that's the good work] is firing an electric kiln. It is so fucking predictable. There—you put it in, you turn on switches, you turn it off, you open the lid—just what you expected. It's clean; there's not a fart in a carload. With cone-9 reduction, it's clean and it's fairly predictable, but it's not boring. It's not as boring as an electric.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: Raku is the other end of the spectrum. Soldner and Reitz, maybe a few others who were into this spontaneity thing, they thrived on it. I don't think about anything; I close my mind and I splash the glaze; I can't do that. I'll take it with a brush and put it there. If something happens, well, I created the situation to make it happen, but I need some control. This mindless Zen thing doesn't—I like it, but I won't do it. Not that I can't do it—

MS. RIEDEL: But that's one of the things that appeals to you about the salt, though, is the element of surprise.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, because I can throw half [of the kiln load] away, but there's one or two pieces in there that are worth [keeping]; throwing the rest of it away, maybe, if I'm lucky.

I'll tell you something comparable; it's not on my resume or anything. One sabbatical I spent the whole semester, once a week, taking a calligraphy course, Chinese brushstrokes. I have drawers full of this stuff. I'm surprised; I'm really rather good at it, or I was. You need practice, because as soon as you think to move to the right, it dies. So you practice forever—and this is what I'm talking about; it's a summation of what I just said. You spend hours with the brush, moving it over the paper, and at some point, it becomes muscle memory. You're no longer thinking—it's like your elbow's greased.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: You lay down a brushstroke and it's great. It took a long time—it takes a couple of days even, if you know what you're doing, to lay down a brushstroke. I tried drawing this—the kids, but they're absolutely rebellious if I try to teach them to do that.

You take a piece of paper and you draw lines so you have three-inch spaces, and you do nothing but put the brush down and pull it from one line, every three inches. You keep repeating it and repeating it and repeating it, and you do page after page, 16-by-20 lines; then you just keep doing it; then you throw it away.

At some point, you don't need the lines. You can lay down a line, one after the other, in the same place without the grid. You do it till you get it right, and that seems to be in direct contradiction to this current sense of art—the idea of doing something—of practicing eight hours a day.

I think some of those figurines that I'm doing now are great. I don't know why they were what I was doing in undergraduate school; I was doing the figure. I just thought, hell, why not go back and do the figure now? Suddenly there were no longer tight studio studies. The good ones had a life of their own and I know how to do it; I learned how to do it a long time ago. I don't know if I'm answering your question here or not.

I remember what was called commercial art, advertising. But you sat, and you had a lettering class, and you did the letter L six inches, and then you'd do the letter O, and you laid out the word "love." Then you spent hours redrawing it, but you made a trace of it. And you took an arbitrary marble disc, and you put it in between L and O within the grid, and you had 32 marbles of volume, empty space. So then you went to O and V, and you put in 32 marbles. So visually, the spacing between the letters was the same. You could do it by eye; people learned to do it by eye, but some letters need more space than others. You don't want to sacrifice the equity for the volume of the letter, and that would change if you changed the typeface or the size or shape of the letter. [It's called kerning, I believe].

The computer will do it—all that for you—in three seconds flat, if it takes that long; Adobe Illustrator or whatever they use. You can do lettering on any two-dimensional surface. Sharp edges, no blots, no smudges; it's perfect. Within something that took a student, or even somebody who worked in advertising, weeks to do is now done in three seconds flat.

Okay, to that, praise the computer. But to do something else other than that, a computer really won't do it. I mean, it might; I haven't tried it. There are things that—advertising, where people insist they can draw with a computer—but I've never seen anything good out of it. Where you use the mouse and make a line.

MS. RIEDEL: No, I've heard it used more successfully as a 3-D CAD design. Yes dimensionally, I think it's—

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know of anybody in their right mind [who] would [want to] make a piece of sculpture that looked like CAD [inaudible], unless they were making a social comment. It's terrible-looking sculpture.

Oscar Wilde quips, "Everybody is amazed. Everybody is awed by the fact that a dog can walk on its hind legs." And the quip goes on—"not that it does it well, but that it does it at all." CAD will make you a three-dimensional model, but it's really not good sculpture—at least not yet; nothing that I've seen. I'm not ready to—at this moment, I'll fight that battle [to concede].

MS. RIEDEL: I'd like to go to something you were just talking about a couple minutes ago about the figure and the reentry of the figure into your work.

MR. WINOKUR: I was saying that the subject is not critical. I could be making a house; I could be making a horse; I could be making a Madonna; I could do angels—

MS. RIEDEL: It doesn't make any difference to you if you're making a house or making a figure?

MR. WINOKUR: No. When I get done, it should work [visually].

MS. RIEDEL: Do you make any distinction between them at all?

MR. WINOKUR: One's a horse and one's a house. But in terms of the quality of it—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —it doesn't matter to me.

MS. RIEDEL: No, but the final product is quite different.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes and no. For me, it's more important what it is at the end, regardless of whether it's a house or a figure.

MS. RIEDEL: Can you say more about that? I'm not following you.

MR. WINOKUR: In my mind, there's an intrinsic quality about the thing—

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, sure.

MR. WINOKUR: —regardless of its subject matter.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I understand that.

MR. WINOKUR: In a sense, the subject is a form. In other words, there must be 50 million Madonnas, some are great and some are not. There may be 50 million horses. Every public space in the world must have a horse with a mounted rider in it, at least in the Western world; some are great and some are not. So in my mind, what you make is a form, a structure, a parameter.

MS. RIEDEL: Are there no metaphors or narratives associated with your subject at all? For example, you've got St. Francis reappearing repeatedly; you've got ladders or containers—

MR. WINOKUR: That's an afterthought.

MS. RIEDEL: It's an afterthought. So the fact that it's St. Francis—

MR. WINOKUR: It would be a figure in any case. That I put a vagina or a penis on it, that's [to direct] viewers. In other words, I can determine the sexual [characteristics], but the figure itself, it doesn't matter whether it's male or female.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. That's why you said, Frances with an E or Francis with an I.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: What's the point—you've gone out of your way to make that point, though.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, it's a joke. With women's lib, if I do too many St. Francises, I must be a male

chauvinist pig. "What? You don't do women? What's wrong with women?" Or if I did women—the feminists were all over de Kooning because he was depicting women in such a "terrible" way. It's a great painting. But it depends on your headset. If you're looking for an icon for your manifesto, it's one thing. If you're looking for a good painting, it's something else.

In other words, beauty's in the eyes of the beholder. In a sense, the viewer brings something to what you see. You want to try something? It may work for you. Go to a museum and go through a show and intentionally avoid reading the signage; just look at the work.

MS. RIEDEL: I've done that.

MR. WINOKUR: Have you done that?

MS. RIEDEL: Of course.

MR. WINOKUR: Okay. Then go back a day, maybe later that afternoon later, and read the signage and see if you agree with the point of view of the work.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: There's all sorts of propaganda in the signage—

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: —that has nothing to do with the image.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, right.

MR. WINOKUR: Okay.

MS. RIEDEL: Somebody's point of view or—

MR. WINOKUR: Or propaganda for—

MS. RIEDEL: Can be, sure.

MR. WINOKUR: Which is more important? The work stays the same; it doesn't change. What alters is your view, or how you view it, based on what you've been taught or told or informed that you ought to see, based on something that [may or] may not be in the work in the first place. I wonder if Frida Kahlo thought she was—

MS. RIEDEL: So does it not matter to you if what you bring to the work is accessible to anybody else at all?

MR. WINOKUR: Oh, it can be accessible to anybody, but what—

MS. RIEDEL: Because I'm hearing you say—we're talking about somebody experiencing a work of art. We're talking about a curator or somebody who's put the show together, writing the sign. But now we're talking about you and your work and what your reasons are for the work, your way of

working—

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know that—

MS. RIEDEL: —that it can be very different things—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: —because sometimes they overlap and sometimes they don't.

MR. WINOKUR: There's no reason for me to do anything other than to keep my hands busy so I won't be bored—the nature of this Robert Winokur. Once it's out of the kiln, maybe even before then, how somebody views it is their business. I've relinquished control once I've set it in stone, once I've set it, done it, in which case the viewer—if the viewer is Josef Stalin, he may see something [very] different than Mahatma Gandhi. See, they're bringing all their baggage to the image. All I've done is set up a stage set, to a certain degree. I can't control it after that point. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: But what keeps creating those stage sets interesting for you?

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know. I'll retract that to a certain extent. I make a figure, and then I make another one, and then I make another. I make 40 in a shot maybe. I don't know which one is the best one until I'm done and I pick the best one out of the lot. I may throw some away, but I've not created a masterpiece in one shot. I do it till I get it right.

And I think one of the fallacies is the idea of the masterpiece, that somebody in a drunken—not even a drunken stupor, not even high—jumped up out of bed because they had a dream, went to the canvas, and now it's hanging in the Louvre or in Castelli's. That's where I'd like to be, Castelli's. The idea of a masterpiece may exist, but in my mind, it's erroneous.

MS. RIEDEL: I don't know that—

MR. WINOKUR: Well, you go to a museum, and you only see that one.

MS. RIEDEL: I don't think anybody listening to this interview believes in that kind of image of a masterpiece.

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know. But it's a—

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I would doubt it.

MR. WINOKUR: For every de Kooning at MoMA, there may be 40 or 50 others that were passed over.

MS. RIEDEL: Absolutely.

MR. WINOKUR: But to get to that one, that masterpiece, there was a whole editing process.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: People tend to think of the artist making that one masterpiece once.

MS. RIEDEL: I don't know that people tend to think that.

MR. WINOKUR: No?

MS. RIEDEL: No.

MR. WINOKUR: The Western culture is very different from Eastern culture in that the West has an antiquarian's attitude about art. The unique, one of a kind is a beautiful stamp, but it's out of 500 million one-cent stamps. This one was a mistake because it was printed upside-down, so it's not worth billions of dollars because it's great art. It's worth its infinite value because of its uniqueness; it is one of a kind. In China, they're still making Ming wine hu wares just like the one in the Metropolitan.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: And they are still manufacturing them.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: [Any one of which] could be in the Metropolitan. [In reality] they're all equal.

MS. RIEDEL: Different values, different sensibility. Yes, of course.

MR. WINOKUR: They're different values. People who view Western art, maybe . . . people who've grown up in [the West], have this antiquarian's headset, see different things in a museum. . . .

We were in China [inaudible]. The conference was over and we were out on the town for the evening. You had to walk down through this park, and on the other end of the park—the government was just starting to loosen up, so if you grew vegetables, you could sell them to keep the money; you could sell antiques; there were little businesses you could have, aside from working for the government. So there was this park in this open space on the other side of the park with food vendors selling their wares, household goods, woven goods, fabrics; way down at the end were antiques. This was consumer driven. This was capitalism at work in China, the nascent vestiges [thereof].

We'd gotten ahead of the rest of the group, and we were standing and waiting for the others to catch up with us. Myself, Richard Notkin, one other guy, a Canadian, and we were just sort of shooting the breeze. Suddenly there's these two Chinese gentleman, in the middle of the summer but they're wearing long overcoats. Looked like something out of a Mack Sennett movie, funny cops.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: One of them has a box under his arm; the other one speaks some English. He opens the box and pulls off a dirty old towel. In it is a ewer, a Song dynasty ewer. almost immaculate—no chips, no marks, no stains, immaculate. Almost the same one that's at the

Metropolitan. As a matter of fact, the one in the Metropolitan probably came from the same place.

So there's this scrap of paper, and they write a number; we write a number. There's this haggling going on back and forth. Notkin and I didn't want the thing, but the Canadian participated, and finally they agree on 40 yuan. This is about \$80—very inexpensive translated in dollars. The Canadian takes his box, the dirty towel, wraps it up, and we walk away. Suddenly the two Chinese gentlemen are gone. They just [snaps fingers] evaporated. The Canadian says, "Where'd they go?" And Notkin says, "Back to get another ewer."

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Right.

MR. WINOKUR: In the West there's a kind of sense of immorality. [It's a forgery.] . . . In the West it's considered immoral, illegal, and there are laws against it—of duplicating something and selling it as your own. But the Chinese do that all the time. They have a whole village cranking out Song dynasty ewers. And it's not just one person; the whole village is involved in that manufacturing.

MS. RIEDEL: Is this an allegory that some way relates back to your thinking about your work?

MR. WINOKUR: Well, I don't know how I got there. What were we talking about?

MS. RIEDEL: When? What were we talking about when?

MR. WINOKUR: Just a few minutes—when I started this.

MS. RIEDEL: I don't know. I decided to just let you follow this train of thought.

MR. WINOKUR: Okay. It was a reference to—

MS. RIEDEL: Holden Caulfield used to—

MR. WINOKUR: The masterpiece.

MS. RIEDEL: So, yes.

MR. WINOKUR: [In the West, work in a museum is venerated. Its veneration, in good part, comes from being unique—one of a kind.] In China, lots of parts of the world, unique and one of a kind is not a consideration.

MS. RIEDEL: And does this then, is this—

MR. WINOKUR: Our whole view of art is [based on] whether it's unique and one of a kind as opposed to [the quality of] the work itself. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: What are you working on since you've retired? . . .

MR. WINOKUR: The fact is, retirement is a different box.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. But since then, now you've returned to the figure after many, many years—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: —and you're—that whole new, kind of abstract sculpture.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, it won't matter a hill of beans who sees it or how they respond to it. I can do what I want. I don't have to have my dean's approval, the committee's approval, the department's approval....

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

MR. WINOKUR: Interaction with people has changed. . . . Underlying everything we talked about, whether it's a house or a horse or a figure, [whether subject is important]—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —underlying everything, in my mind, [there is a] sense of structure. Something—line, form, shape, color, texture—all those parts work together. They seem to fit even where there's not any [discernible subject]; the empty parts [the negative space work, too].

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: I have a yardstick, as it were, and when something fits that yardstick—the yardstick being made up of all these things I've talked about—I've accomplished what I set out to do; the other stuff gets thrown away. Alfred North Whitehead, on symbolism, talks about how you're standing in a room and you look across the room and there's a chair. Now, most people will simply see a chair, [especially] if they're tired, but it doesn't take but a split second to put all the parts together and come to the conclusion you're in the presence of a chair.

Whitehead's contention is an artist will put off coming to that conclusion. He or she will see line, form, color, shape, texture, negative space, placement in space—all these components—as separate entities to be manipulated, adjusted, reassembled, re-made, and retranslated into two dimensions or three dimensions; that's the distinction.

So it didn't matter whether I used a chair [as a subject]; I could use anything. That's how I feel about my work, that it's a makeup of numerous parts that have to work together. Doesn't matter whether it's a house or a figure. They're different, but there's an underlying substrate that is universal to everything I do. That's as best I can [do to] sum up. I keep thinking about it, but that's the conclusion I've come to at this point in my life.

MS. RIEDEL: That sounds like a good place to leave it for today.

MR. WINOKUR: All right. I was looking for a good windup.

[END CD2 TR2.]

MS. RIEDEL: This is Mija Riedel with Robert Winokur at the artist's home and studio in Horsham, Pennsylvania, on July 24, 2011, for the Smithsonian Archives of American Art. This is card number three.

And Robert, before we begin today, you wanted to make a couple emendations to thoughts from yesterday, clarifications—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, footnotes.

MS. RIEDEL: —footnotes, okay.

MR. WINOKUR: There we go.

MS. RIEDEL: Please.

MR. WINOKUR: These relate to things we talked about yesterday. This was Holden Caulfield, *Catcher in the Rye*[1951].

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: What I was talking about, Eustacia Vye, [Holden says], "I read a lot of classical books, like *The Return of the Native* and all, and I like them, and I read a lot of war books and mysteries and all, but they don't knock me out too much. What really knocks me out is a book that, when you're all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it. That doesn't happen too much, though. I wouldn't mind calling this Isak Dinesen up. And Ring Lardner, except that D.B. told me he's dead. You take that book, *Of Human Bondage*, by Somerset Maugham, though. I read it last summer. It's a pretty good book and all, but I wouldn't want to call Somerset Maugham up. I don't know. He isn't the kind of guy I'd want to call up, that's all. I'd rather call old Thomas Hardy up. I like that Eustacia Vye."

MS. RIEDEL: Is that an artist statement or—

MR. WINOKUR: That's an excerpt from the book, *The Catcher in the Rye*.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, but these are your words, right?

MR. WINOKUR: No, I'm quoting from the book.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, really? Oh, okay.

MR. WINOKUR: This next thing that I've got here—this is a conversation I had with Rudy Staffel. It has to do with teaching.

MS. RIEDEL: So this is a dialogue between the two of you?

MR. WINOKUR: Rudy Staffel: "Teaching's a perfect profession." Winokur: "How so?" "Really, it's teaching, psychiatry, and the ministry; those are perfect professions. Again, teaching, psychiatry, and ministry." Winokur: "Okay, why are they perfect?" "Well," said Rudy, "In teaching, psychiatry, and the ministry, if the student, the client, or the congregant does well, it's because you're so good. If the student, client, or congregant does poorly, it's because they are so lazy."

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] That's Rudy Staffel, really?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Was this for the article you wrote about him?

MR. WINOKUR: I don't really recall [when we had that discussion], but I do remember [having it].

MS. RIEDEL: And this excerpt you read from *Catcher in the Rye*—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: —this refers to our conversation yesterday. . . .

MR. WINOKUR: We were talking about the farm. On the farm, we made outright, downright, forthright, utilitarian, functional stoneware [pottery]. We made pottery that would sell. I have a sub-note here, and I'll put it in, but I may erase it later—

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: —which is that [John] Kouwenhoven makes a statement in his book on design [*Made in America: The Arts of Modern Civilization* 1948]: "In America, art is either European or useless."

MS. RIEDEL: Did you agree with that?

MR. WINOKUR: At some point, it applied. All I wanted to do—and this is me speaking—all I wanted to do was make things out of clay. And if I had to, I would survive by adapting.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, that is interesting.

MR. WINOKUR: For me, I think subject is essentially arbitrary.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. WINOKUR: And in quotes, "I'm so easily assimilated."

MS. RIEDEL: So the main thing was really the material.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, and the process. The other book I was referring to is called *The Innocent Eye* [1997].

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: It's by Jonathan Feinberg and it's—

MS. RIEDEL: I don't think we talked about that on the disc, though. I think we talked about that upstairs.

MR. WINOKUR: I knew I'd remembered it and wanted to clarify.

MS. RIEDEL: But what in particular about that book was significant to you? Let's say that on the

card.

MR. WINOKUR: Okay, the quality of children's art. There's that; there's a kind of spontaneity and innocence and directness about children's art that I kind of feel connected to or that I would strive for if I could; something along those lines, or when I remember it, I strive for it. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: And this book cited various artists who were working in that genre.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, let me finish. It's Jonathan Feinberg; it's a connection between Matisse, [Mikhail] Larionov], Kandinsky, [Gabriele] Münter, Lyonel Feininger, Paul Klee, Picasso, Jean Miró, Jean Dubuffet, and children's art.

MS. RIEDEL: Alfred Stieglitz, the photographer?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, the one who was connected to Georgia O'Keeffe.

MS. RIEDEL: Stieglitz.

MR. WINOKUR: I can never get the two straight.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: But he had a gallery on Broadway—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: Two fourteen-something Broadway.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: He regularly showed children's art about once every two or three years.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, really? I didn't know that.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, I think I've got that. General kind of statements here—"The house is a unique kind of container, pot, one that's imbued with a deep set of profound symbolic and multilayered psychic associations." Another point, "The human memory does not remain fixed over time. It becomes reworked, reconstructed, and integrated with other memories, all of which are distorted and changed as time passes." It's kind of like a lava lamp.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Right.

MR. WINOKUR: One thing flows into another, and you kind of—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —you sum it up by saying, "Well, I can't remember," or you remember something that never really was.

MS. RIEDEL: The amorphous blobs that are constantly reforming.

MR. WINOKUR: "Assume that the thought process, the way we think, is subject to the same physical laws of the universe as our bodies, is that gravity and motion act upon us, its inhabitants, and affect the conclusions we come to about ourselves and reality. If that's true, then perhaps these same forces apply to some indefinable way to human and therefore creative judgment. If this is so, then the aesthetic choices we make as artists are limited and are predictable as the universe around us is."

MS. RIEDEL: And this is your writing? This is not—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, I believe this is my writing. [If it's not, I've come to believe it is].

MS. RIEDEL: Just wanted to confirm.

MR. WINOKUR: "There's another aspect just beyond description, subliminal, pre-conscious, that has to do with a kind of mysticism or magic or improbability, spontaneity, and emotion, that bring forth ritual objects for unknown rites."

MS. RIEDEL: Was that written in relation to any work in particular?

MR. WINOKUR: It was just the general, that there are things I do that I can't explain.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right. And do you recall when you wrote that?

MR. WINOKUR: Two thousand two. [Perhaps. It may be something I've been thinking about over a period of years.]

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: It was a collection of general statements. I've already said this is—Stieglitz—okay, I've already talked about that. Heitor Villa-Lobos, that seems to sum it up. There are the rest of these statements—I've already sort of referred to yesterday.

MS. RIEDEL: I do think that one of the things you read, though, brought up a thought that I had last night when I was thinking back on our conversation—

MR. WINOKUR: [Which is?]

MS. RIEDEL: —which is really the importance of symbols in your work, directly and indirectly, and that's something that you seem to have mined over time.

MR. WINOKUR: Is that a question?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, it is a question. Would you agree with that? Can you elaborate on that?

MR. WINOKUR: I'm not sure. Can you sort of restate it?

MS. RIEDEL: Well, I think there are, in many of the images you've chosen—the house, I'm thinking of in particular, and shrines—they can be trawled over and over again symbolically. They can be looked at as vessels and containers. To your point earlier, they're really loaded with symbolism in

children's art; they're iconic forms. Is that something you consciously chose or you were unconsciously drawn to?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, the house is loaded. [I choose symbols that will have an impact that people can relate to.]

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: To a kid, houses [have to do with] love, identity, location, a lot of things about who the kid is. The house is picked for a purpose. The asparagus is sort of picked out [because it] has other loaded things, so I don't know if I was consciously picking symbols for a [specific] purpose—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —for a known end, if that's a better way of putting it, but they work.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, the house seemed an especially well-suited form and metaphor and symbol for you to work with, because I'm thinking about the houses that you've looked at from the outside. The houses then became more about the inside. At some point, there was a back and forth between a house and a shrine; there were run-on houses. There's a drunken horse in front of a house.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, it lends itself to all sorts of manipulation. It's like we talked about film editing yesterday, about splicing and cutting.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, right.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, I can take the house and put a horse in front of it, and it sort of becomes something very different than a woman sitting in front of it.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: If I open it up and put a woman with an angel kneeling before her, it becomes something else, so that you can take the same set of symbols and juggle them for some sort of outcome.

MS. RIEDEL: Is it accurate to say that you've done that throughout your career, just chosen symbols and juggled them?

MR. WINOKUR: Not with pottery. . . . When I was doing pottery, it was all given.

MS. RIEDEL: Following the functional work, though?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, it was just a cylinder. What could I do with it? How could I deal with it? But at some point the sculpture became a whole different thing. I had to provide elements—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —as opposed to a wheel, which is a given element.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. Let's talk today a bit about your teaching career, because you taught for [39] years at Tyler.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: We haven't touched on that yet.

MR. WINOKUR: No.

MS. RIEDEL: So you started there, I believe, in 1966, correct?

MR. WINOKUR: I started at Tyler in 1966.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: I had taught before at North Texas State.

MS. RIEDEL: What classes did you teach over that period of time?

MR. WINOKUR: Well, in North Texas, I was hired as a sabbatical replacement—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —so I only taught ceramics for the first year, year and a half, until I—

MS. RIEDEL: Right. I think we covered that yesterday, yes.

MR. WINOKUR: After that, I was teaching two-dimensional visual design for four years. On the farm, I wasn't teaching at all.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. [They laugh.]

MR. WINOKUR: At Tyler I was hired to run the ceramics program.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. You replaced Rudy Staffel for three years.

MR. WINOKUR: And when he came back, it became a two-person department.

MS. RIEDEL: So how was your teaching at Tyler different than what you'd experienced there with Rudy? Were there specific skills that you worked on?

MR. WINOKUR: This is how you throw; it was mostly process.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: The idea of process being viewed with [some degree of] contempt hadn't occurred yet. There was a shift of time when the aesthetic was the important thing, and it didn't matter whether—look how generalized sculpture has become. It's almost a critical studies course by itself. Well, prior to that, it was process oriented; there was an expectation of what you made. Everybody knew what ceramics look like.

That was something I thought of yesterday, or since yesterday, was that each age seems to know what the art of that age looks like. There's a kind of an acceptance of an appearance that nobody seems to object to. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: How would you describe the changes in that appearance that you've seen in 30 years?

MR. WINOKUR: It was certainly no longer pottery; it's become concept oriented. It has more to do with talking than with doing.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. WINOKUR: That's the way it seems to me. You used to walk around and talk to students about what they had in front of them, what they were working on. By the time I graduated, there wasn't much of that.

MS. RIEDEL: By the time you—by the time you finished—

MR. WINOKUR: I'm sorry, by the time I retired.

MS. RIEDEL: —right, exactly, yes; just confirming.

MR. WINOKUR: We left off with yesterday with, does art history end with Judy Chicago?

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, right, you wanted to say something about that.

MR. WINOKUR: And it's like—history is the past. Where does the past end, or when does the [present become history]?

MS. RIEDEL: I see.

MR. WINOKUR: There's a kind of fault line. Maybe 30, maybe 50 years ago, somebody in art history studied 16th-century Venetian stage-set design as their thesis, and then they were experts in it. They had credentials in it, and they expected to go off and find a school with an art history program to teach 17th-, or 16th-, century Venetian stage-set. But there are so many art historians, there are no longer jobs for them, and their thesis [has little currency]. So they've become curators as opposed to art history teachers, and I think that's changed the whole character of art teaching in general.

MS. RIEDEL: How so?

MR. WINOKUR: Well, it's become this is kind of conjecture—out of my head; I may be way off. There may be things I'm completely missing, but my sense is the nature is such that you have art historians in curatorial positions, in museums, in—

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: —choosing exhibitions [of contemporary art]. The choices are based on their art historical experience, not their artistic experience, so what gets funded is not what the work is about

but what the head is about. And again, this is all kind of a conjectural thing, but it seems to me a lot of verbalization and talking going on rather than the emphasis being on the making of art and what it looks like.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you feel a need or did you feel compelled to make adjustments in your own curriculum over this period of time to address these challenges?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So how did your curriculum change?

MR. WINOKUR: Initially I taught ceramics; I taught kiln building; I taught ceramic chemistry.

MS. RIEDEL: Glaze calculation.

MR. WINOKUR: Glaze calculation and all that.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: The academic stuff.

MS. RIEDEL: Components of clay, that sort of thing.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, yes. Within about two or three years, 2000, 2001 thereabout, I just abandoned teaching it.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So no more kiln building? No—

MR. WINOKUR: Well, kiln building went out too.

MS. RIEDEL: And no more glaze calculation?

MR. WINOKUR: No, no ceramic materials.

MS. RIEDEL: No ceramic materials whatsoever? No wheels?

MR. WINOKUR: No, I didn't teach it.

MS. RIEDEL: No slabs?

MR. WINOKUR: Oh, there was the making process, but not the how-to.

MS. RIEDEL: So the construction, the skills, but not necessarily the supporting infrastructure, the—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, the chemistry and the physics or the mechanics.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: There didn't seem to be any interest in it. Those were courses for ceramic majors, and there was grumbling and complaining.

MS. RIEDEL: So the emphasis became much more focused on design?

MR. WINOKUR: No! On the concept—

MS. RIEDEL: Concept, right.

MR. WINOKUR: — as opposed to an object.

MS. RIEDEL: Then process, too, because the process really went by the wayside.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, and that's my sense of it overall. I can't give it to you year by year.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: But towards the end of my time at Tyler, it had shifted. The nature of teaching art had shifted too. It was different in each [field], but—

MS. RIEDEL: Were you shifting from a ceramics focus to a mixed-media focus or a broadening?

MR. WINOKUR: The graduates were mixed-media. There's one graduate making living room furniture out of cement as opposed—if you stretch the concept of what ceramics is—

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: —you can fit cement in. That kind of thing.

MS. RIEDEL: And did you see an evolution in the curriculum that included more—not art history, but a sense of what was going on in the contemporary field?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: I had the source that they all read, *Art in America*.

MS. RIEDEL: And *Artforum* and—

MR. WINOKUR: *Artforum* and—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: It was [critical studies].

MS. RIEDEL: But maybe not *Studio Potter* or *Ceramics Monthly*?

MR. WINOKUR: "Nobody reads *Artforum*. They look at the pictures." [Sarah Thornton, *Seven Days in the Art World*, 2009.]

MS. RIEDEL: And did you see a shift then in the sort of periodicals that the students were looking at? Did they start off looking at *Ceramics Monthly* and *American Craft*?

MR. WINOKUR: No, I don't think that was—it was pretty much accepted that *Ceramics Monthly* was a hobby kind of periodical.

MS. RIEDEL: *American Ceramics* or *New Ceramics*?

MR. WINOKUR: I think *American Ceramics*, while it was still in business, held some sway, but there was only about four or five years and it was gone.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: But I think—

MS. RIEDEL: *Ceramic Art and Perception*?

MR. WINOKUR: Well, I don't know. I'm only speaking for Tyler here.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: At some point—and I probably [helped] set the policy in the department—that it wasn't a bad idea to have ceramic majors take courses in sculpture.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: The idea of looking at space. But sculpture became more about concept, and I had this feeling that they were corrupting my clay students.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. WINOKUR: Okay?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: And that the horse had already been let out and I couldn't call it back.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. So the emphasis became so much on concept that the material was sacrificed to some degree, do you think—

MR. WINOKUR: It wasn't—

MS. RIEDEL: —or what could be learned from the material?

MR. WINOKUR: Well, I had this discussion with Nick Kripal, who took over and runs the place now. You couldn't have a ceramic department without clay, so we had to keep that as a kind of basic component, but I suspect now that they moved downtown into new facilities, maybe the undergraduates still learn the ceramics, but generally, the ceramic graduates are all headshots, head cases, concept oriented, and the other ones who are supposedly going out and teaching ceramics too.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you find any strengths in that evolution, or do you find particular weaknesses in that shift?

MR. WINOKUR: You know, Huxley's *Brave New World* [1932]. I can't do anything about it, but I miss what was. I don't know what the future will be like.

MS. RIEDEL: Some artists have suggested that a lot of the evolution of the work happens in the process of working the material.

MR. WINOKUR: Somewhat, but if you [substitute another] material, the character changes. In other words, if you're doing very little with clay, change is less affected by the material.

MS. RIEDEL: So what I'm asking, I think, is, do you feel that there are things that are lost for contemporary students in not having that relationship with the material?

MR. WINOKUR: [Yes, indeed!] There will be very few potters in the future, as such, at least from Tyler. There may be other schools where they've been able to hold the line, as it were.

MS. RIEDEL: But ceramic sculptors—because you yourself haven't been potting per se in decades.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: So do you—

MR. WINOKUR: I do. I touch the wheel every once in a while.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. WINOKUR: There are [a] few people still around who say, "I saw Winokur throw once!" I don't know if this is pertinent, but this story comes to mind. There is this cub reporter who is given his first break, and for the Sunday supplement, he's going to go out and interview the richest, most famous dinosaur ever.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. WINOKUR: So he writes down all these questions, and he does all his research, and he goes there and he talks to J. Pierpont Dinosaur and—you know, where was he born, and they go on and on and on and on. Finally the kid thinks it's a great interview, [but it] needs a good windup. He asks J. Pierpont, "Well, what do you predict for the future?" And J. Pierpont sits back in his chair and puffs on his cigar and tugs on his suspenders, harrumphs, and says, "Well, why bigger and better dinosaurs, [of course]."

In a sense maybe you're asking me to predict my [future] on the verge of my demise. You're asking me to predict—I don't know that I'm going to become extinct. You can ponder that—[laughs]—or whoever reads this can ponder it.

MS. RIEDEL: I think what I'm trying to ask is what changes you've seen in your students over these three decades, and the strengths of the evolution that you see in the new students as opposed to

the weaknesses, and maybe what's being lost. But maybe you don't think about it that way.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, generally, and this is a wild reach, I think over a period of 30 years it's gone from a camaraderie, a sense of community with craft, to individual, independent artists. I think that's a pretty fair [assessment. The idea of there being a kind of nobility in physical labor has gone away.]

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, that sounds—yes.

Do you see a place for universities in American ceramics, in American craft, heading into the future? Based on what you've said, it sounds like there's an evolution away from specific material to mixed media.

MR. WINOKUR: I have a concern with teaching art in academia at all. I somehow think—let me see if I could find this. Could you stop that or—

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

[Audio break.]

MR. WINOKUR: This is McNeil Lowry he was the head of the Ford Foundation, years and years and years ago: "The marriage of art and academe is a marriage made in heaven, for only heaven could have thought up a relationship of two so dissimilar and unrelated entities. A couple so mismatched and incompatible, it's a wonder it's survived this long. Academe is verbal. It organizes, categorizes, formularizes; it aspires to be scientific, objective, clinically detached and right."

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. WINOKUR: "Academe is essentially verbal. Art is, as I've come to understand it, emotional, intuitive, nonverbal, subjective. It is not easily, if at all, reduced to a quantifiable entity and eludes being reduced to formulas. Further, it is essentially irreverent and illogical. What I find extremely distressing is the pressure put on art faculty, usually by an administrator with little or no understanding of how art works, to only accept students who score high in SATs and have IQs of 150 or better and a grade point average of 3.5." That "art's a good place for misfits."

MS. RIEDEL: And—

MR. WINOKUR: I've heard any number of people say this—that really art flourishes in a valley of nonconformity.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: But it's not academe. Academe, in a sense, wants pliable students, conformist students, students that perpetuate the mold, as opposed to questioning it. The reason in the '30s, if you wanted to be an artist, you'd do a couple of things. One is, you could go to, say, something like the Art Students League or the Chicago Art Institute, which did not grant degrees. You went there to learn to be an artist. Rudy Staffel went to Chicago Art Institute. If you couldn't afford to go to Europe, to Paris, or to Italy or somewhere—there's Irving Stone, the movie, the crazed van Gogh

cutting off his ear.

Middle class parents shuddered that their children would starve in an attic, but they were willing to buy into academe because they would offer a degree, a credential and respectability. So they would be willing to send their children [to a state university], but not to a garret in Paris. And Harvard doesn't teach art; it teaches art history and has a couple of courses in painting so art historians will have some idea about what the people they're studying historically were doing.

Yale, on the other hand, has a very strong art department; it's the back door to Madison Avenue [advertising]. There's a connection there.

Generally speaking, I think you'll learn art, but it'll be a kind of academic art; not really art, if that makes any sense. It's an art that's accepted, that's compatible, that doesn't—look at all the trouble the NEA had because it was giving awards and encouragement to people who were irreverent, homosexual, and so on. There's this—

MS. RIEDEL: —tension.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, tension's a good word, between being an artist and being a member of an institution.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: And that's—

MS. RIEDEL: Now, was that clear to you, too, as a practicing artist?

MR. WINOKUR: To a certain extent it was, although since I was attached to an academic [institution], I had to go the party line.

MS. RIEDEL: And needing to be tenured.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, and conform. But since I've retired, I'm doing things that I wouldn't have thought about—I might have considered, but I wouldn't have executed while I was still teaching. There was always this thing, too—being an artist teaching, you don't want to do things and show stuff that's going to impact badly on the people you're teaching. Showing your work is a form of teaching.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: It folds back on you.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: So you make what will enhance your position amongst your students, aware of how the students view you. There's that kind of circulation.

MS. RIEDEL: And the new work, let's just touch on that since we're here, and then I want to talk a little bit about community. But the new pieces, *When Contrasts Collide* [2011], *When Intuition*

Confronts Logic [2011], they're very concept oriented. They're very concrete objects as well, extremely different than anything you've done before.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: I was thinking they relate, at least in composition, to a couple of much earlier pieces I mentioned yesterday. Those cross and crystal pieces? Do you remember the ones I'm thinking of?

MR. WINOKUR: Oh, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: How did you describe those?

MR. WINOKUR: They're sort of –

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, the *Poised Crystal with Cross* from 2004, 2006. In terms of forms, they feel related to that, but conceptually they feel like a real deviation color-wise, surface-wise.

MR. WINOKUR: Pottery for the most part is from the bottom up; it's a vertical art form. You throw on the wheel and you pull it up.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: And a lot of my work is from the bottom up.

MS. RIEDEL: Right, that's true.

MR. WINOKUR: It relates to—

MS. RIEDEL: —the ladders, the houses, yes.

MR. WINOKUR: But that triangular form you just referenced, the new work, *The Three Sisters* [2010] thing—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —are all, well—

MS. RIEDEL: —dramatically horizontal, yes.

MR. WINOKUR: That's where the break is. In other words, I'm dealing with [horizontality]—

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes, yes.

MR. WINOKUR: —as opposed to vertical. For me, that's a major breakthrough. It was a major shift in approach.

MS. RIEDEL: What inspired that? What caught in the sieve or the drain that—

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know. Yes, I don't know.

MS. RIEDEL: Is it something that you'd been interested in before?

MR. WINOKUR: No, it was just—if I'm going to break—this is something I've never done. And so let's see where I can go with that.

MS. RIEDEL: The materials are shifting too.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: They're a little bit mixed media.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: You're actually painting on clay now; not glaze, right, but paint.

MR. WINOKUR: I'm being assimilated. [They laugh.] [I am of this world.]

MS. RIEDEL: Tape—graphics tape?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, there's house paint, electrician tapes because of their colors—

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: —this blue tape—you put down tapes, and then you paint in [between] and pull the tape away, and the edges remain [sharp]. I'll find some other stuff to lie on there, too, in juxtaposition with the salt glaze.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: They play one off against the other. I suppose you could label that concept oriented, but in a sense it's more [a visual,] art oriented—dealing with visual contrasts. [I like contrasts.]

MS. RIEDEL: That's true.

MR. WINOKUR: —one up against the other and see what comes of that.

MS. RIEDEL: And then technically to have something literally floating in the air.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, yes, which is—I don't know how far back, but that's a sculptural concept. The idea of horizontality is really sculpture rather than ceramic in its history, tradition, whatever—that kind of thing.

MS. RIEDEL: It used to be impossible to have ceramic with the tensile strength to support a form like that.

MR. WINOKUR: I'll tell you another one. When I was still in graduate school at Alfred, epoxy was just coming onto the market. The idea you could repair a brick was a major breakthrough. I went to a show . . . —

MS. RIEDEL: RIT?

MR. WINOKUR: —of Dan Rhodes. He made some pieces, but if you looked down under, you could see where parts were glued together with epoxy. They hadn't achieved translucence yet—

MS. RIEDEL: Ah, okay.

MR. WINOKUR: —so there was white globs of stuff. But it was strong; it held the parts together. So now you could make parts and assemble them after firing, just like computers. You can do post-reduction [they laugh] with post-production.

MS. RIEDEL: Have you worked at Penland or Haystack, Arrowmont, any of the [summer] craft schools?

MR. WINOKUR: I taught at Haystack, and Paula did one at Penland; we did one at Anderson Ranch. They are affectionately referred to as "art camps."

MS. RIEDEL: Right. And how do you feel those stack up in relation to a university program, the strengths or the weaknesses of that?

MR. WINOKUR: [From the student's point of view,] you get to work with someone who's well known or hot for the moment.

MS. RIEDEL: Has a skill you'd like to learn or—

MR. WINOKUR: Something like that.

MS. RIEDEL: —a way of working that you're interested in?

MR. WINOKUR: But they seem to be mostly adults. There's some kids, but it's a sort of mixed group, from what I see. I haven't done it in a long time, but . . . they seem to be adults looking for a summer diversion.

MS. RIEDEL: So you didn't find them too—anything particularly serious going on there?

MR. WINOKUR: No. In terms of producing a piece of work? No, I don't think—they're six-week things; four-week, two-week stints. You just barely get to make something and—not even in two weeks, because you have to account for firing times. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Any value to doing certain—

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know, they certainly make for a nice vacation, a working vacation, in a sense. I don't know how students feel about them.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: I think Anderson Ranch has sort of shifted its direction; it's become more mainstream art. Haystack seems to be more of a craft base. Penland seems to be craft gone green. I don't know how else to describe [the differences].

MS. RIEDEL: Is there a community that's been important to your development as an artist? I'm thinking in particular of NCECA, but—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, NCECA [was important to me].

MS. RIEDEL: You really have been involved with NCECA from the very start.

MR. WINOKUR: From its inception.

MS. RIEDEL: Would you talk about how that evolved? Because it would be wonderful to have that insight.

MR. WINOKUR: I'm not sure exactly. Ted Randall had a lot to do with it; it was [conceded to be] his baby. We were visiting John Wood, or we were visiting Alfred in general for some reason. It was in the summertime, so we—but we were walking through, and Randall said, "I'm starting this organization. Would you be interested?" I was flattered [to be asked].

MS. RIEDEL: This was 1963, I think.

MR. WINOKUR: Oh, it could be.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, very early on.

MR. WINOKUR: Actually, I may have still been in Texas at that point. NCECA was Ted Randall's headset, and I think the best way I could describe it is it was a kind of mechanism for developing a community of ceramic people.

I remember a meeting I was at, and we were sitting around. There was a question of deciding what should we call ourselves. It was to be the National Council on Ceramic Arts [and it was to meet all over the country]. I think I, or somebody else, pointed out that if you want to hold these meetings all over the country, we can get travel funds from our respective colleges and [universities], if it had something to do with education. Without dropping the ball once, Ted said, "Okay. The National Council on Education in the Ceramic Arts." That nailed it down, at which point I could—if the meeting was in Chicago, I could get travel money from Tyler to attend the meeting, and so could everybody. They all went to their respective institutions and were able to get travel funds.

Early on, the schools of the members [hosted] the conference. It wasn't until maybe 2000, '99, somewhere in there, that the meetings became so big that we had to—you couldn't rely on using the ceramic facilities at a school to hold the conference; it was just overflow.

MS. RIEDEL: Got to be 4,000 and 5,000 people attending, right?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. I did one here in Philadelphia. In 1975 the hotel went bankrupt after we left.

MS. RIEDEL: Did it really? No.

MR. WINOKUR: They closed. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: When was that?

MR. WINOKUR: Seventy-five.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: I think it was '75, because we were going to—

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, yes, you were the program chairman for the annual national meeting.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: What did that involve? What didn't it involve? [They laugh.]

MR. WINOKUR: Well, that's it; it involved everything.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: It was finding a space—I was the on-site [program] chairman. It involved nailing down a hotel, getting reservations, setting up a program, finding meeting rooms, scheduling it—

MS. RIEDEL: These were various panel discussions, individual presentations?

MR. WINOKUR: Panel discussions, individual presentations, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera [just like today.]

MS. RIEDEL: Were there workshops and demonstrations as well?

MR. WINOKUR: No. [Not then. As it grew, it expanded.] . . . At one point, somehow or other we were going to do a kiln-building symposium and set it up to have all these people in this room, with some engineers from Pyronics at the meeting. They would answer questions—all the nuts and bolts [of burner design]—

MS. RIEDEL: How to build a kiln, yes.

MR. WINOKUR: —of building kilns. I don't remember exactly. Dick Hay may have been involved in it, but Marge Levy was responsible for setting that up.

So here I am at the conference, and I'm running around like I'm a chicken without a head, seeing that every—looking in rooms, seeing how everything's going, did anybody need anything. I got into this room, and there are all these people sitting around and no engineers, so I went and made some phone calls. Then suddenly there was a phone call for me from the engineers, and they were in Indiana. What are you doing? The conference is here in Philadelphia. They said, "Oh, Marge Levy never told us, and we assumed that Marge Levy was in Indiana so we ought to go to Indiana." [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: Wow.

MR. WINOKUR: There were these kinds of glitches to deal with when you ran a conference. [The engineers] hopped on a plane, and I think within an hour they were in Philadelphia.

MS. RIEDEL: From Indiana?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. I don't know how they—but I decided, okay, this isn't going to work [this way]. . . . You've got to get all these ceramic artists talking to each other, asking each other questions, and it became an interchange on kiln building, without the engineers. Maybe the engineers didn't show up till later that afternoon. The details get blurry, but I do remember that.

MS. RIEDEL: So it was a real exchange of technical information as well as personal contacts and—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. And [there was always the opportunity] to see old friends.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: That was the leitmotif, the understructure for us. And you got to see the same people, so you networked—that's the new term, but we didn't use that term then. There was a lot of networking. So you were invited to shows; you invited other people to shows.

There was money for speakers. I ran the speakers bureau for NCECA for a couple of years. If people wanted to do workshops, they'd send [me the information]; I'd collate, and would publish them. Then it was available, so if anybody wanted a speaker, they could contact NCECA and see who was available to talk or demonstrate on [something your program needed].

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, that's interesting. So you ran sort of a library or a file—

MR. WINOKUR: A speakers bureau.

MS. RIEDEL: A speakers bureau, mm-hmm [affirmative]. And did you see particular trends in what people were interested in or what they were talking about?

MR. WINOKUR: No, it was ceramics, and I don't think there was that much difference: we all made pottery; we all built kilns. [The Don Reitz story of his] being invited to deliver a workshop at his own school because he was on the road so much, it was kind of like burlesque. You could be on the road doing one night stands, the Keith Orpheum circuit. It was personalities that went from school to school.

MS. RIEDEL: So even more than residencies, there were sort of weekend-long workshops where somebody would come and teach raku or building a certain type of kiln or a certain type of salt glazing and—

MR. WINOKUR: And talking about their work.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, okay. Did that peak and then—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, it seems to have.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, I suspect I know what happened. The schools got tight; budget was cut—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —and the first thing to go was speakers money. What do we need speakers for? We've got faculty right here, teaching. Why bring in somebody else? So the speaking thing died. Now they go to NCECA by the thousands.

I don't know that much was accomplished. [Being retired,] I don't get travel money anymore. We save up our pennies and pick and choose what conference we're going to go to. So that's changed too; yes, it's changed.

MS. RIEDEL: You've also had a long-term involvement with the Clay Studio in Philadelphia, correct? And is that an exhibition space? I've never been.

MR. WINOKUR: The Clay Studio is—it's hard to describe. Ken Vavrek taught over at Moore College of Art. He and his students wanted a place where they could do their own work. For a while they rented buildings in downtown [Philadelphia]; gradually he withdrew from that. A lot of the original members withdrew and it became an entity unto itself. Now there's a residency program. There's space—you apply for a residency, and they give you a place to work. You can interact with people, other residents, and they have kilns.

MS. RIEDEL: Is it something like an Archie Bray Foundation?

MR. WINOKUR: Kind of like, but not. Clay Studio—this is urban; Archie Bray is out in the hinterlands.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. Are there people who have studios there full-time, and then there are residencies in addition?

MR. WINOKUR: No, the residencies have a time [limit]. I don't know how long, maybe two years, and then they must leave. People coming out of graduate school have a place to work until they can find a [job, set up their own studios, et cetera].

MS. RIEDEL: I see. And how many artists are accepted at a time?

MR. WINOKUR: I don't know. I think there's a rotation system. There may be eight to 10 there at any one time. It's like five in and five out and five remain, that kind of thing. It's got a building; there's a gallery space. They put on shows; they have a gift shop; and they sell pottery.

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: To a certain extent, they're no longer—it's the place you go to buy ceramic art—mostly functional, utilitarian stuff.

MS. RIEDEL: And the shop operates full-time?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: That's interesting. One thing I want to ask you about is the American Hand, because you exhibited there. Will you describe it, when you were there, what that was like?

MR. WINOKUR: They were in Washington, D.C.; it was a great outlet.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: Washington was a [different market; it was a gallery].

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: In other words, it wasn't the store.

MS. RIEDEL: In 1971, that was—

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, early on.

MS. RIEDEL: —yes, very first.

MR. WINOKUR: [It was run by] a gay couple.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you remember their names?

MR. WINOKUR: No, I can see them. One was tall and skinny; the other one was sort of shorter and wore glasses and was Midwestern, business and that kind of thing.

MS. RIEDEL: Business?

MR. WINOKUR: I think he worked at the Department of Commerce, and that kept the gallery going.

MS. RIEDEL: I see.

MR. WINOKUR: The AIDS thing came along and they closed up. I don't know what became of them. But while they were there, it was [classy] exposure in Washington, D.C.

MS. RIEDEL: And was that the first gallery you had work in?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, I think so.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: No, there was Teddy Jacobs—had a gallery, 252, downtown.

MS. RIEDEL: Downtown Philadelphia?

MR. WINOKUR: Philadelphia.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: And she carried my work. I don't remember if she had Paula's or not. And so had shows there, but she closed up too. I was thinking Teddy Jacobs was pre-Helen.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. And was it all functional work in there, or was there a mix of functional and

sculpture?

MR. WINOKUR: No, I had both sorts. Pop art was popular and I was doing funny things with painted clay.

MS. RIEDEL: Were they wall pieces?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, wall pieces of one sort or another. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Because you were dabbling with Pop art?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, I tried that once.

MS. RIEDEL: It wasn't for you.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. I don't think anybody cared. There were no memorable reviews, let's put it that way. [It's not hard to join a parade after it's passed by.]

MS. RIEDEL: Was there a significant evolution in your gallery experience of how artists were treated, how galleries presented work, or was it from the time your work was introduced at the American Hand and Teddy Jacobs through Helen, was it consistent?

MR. WINOKUR: I had a nice relationship with "the boys." I can't remember their names. Teddy Jacobs was nice. I had just gotten here, so that was like, '66, '67, '68, thereabouts. So maybe American Hand and Teddy Jacobs were simultaneous; I don't recall. I don't know when Helen started, but initially Helen was the PCPC—

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: —the Philadelphia Council of Professional Craftsmen, and she would find [places to hold] shows; she didn't have a gallery.

[END CD3 TR1.]

MR. WINOKUR: [In progress.] She would beg, borrow, and steal space to put on exhibitions.

[END CD3 TR2.]

MS. RIEDEL: Yesterday morning, you showed me a PowerPoint presentation upstairs, and there was an image that you used to describe your working process.

Mr. WINOKUR: It was the marshaling yard.

MS. RIEDEL: A marshaling [for trains, with miles of train tracks with cars on it].

MR. WINOKUR: In terms of people reading this, because it will be transcribed, it might it be helpful if I [described] a marshaling yard. It is a center. They're not uniformly placed, but it has to do with railroad transportation.

You have train tracks between major cities all over the country. Goods are put on freight cars and

they go west, say, to Chicago. Some of the cars in the train are destined for Denver; some of them are destined for other locations. The train goes to, say, Cleveland, goes west from Philadelphia to Cleveland. In Cleveland, the train is stopped at the top of a rise, and the engineer takes the engines away and goes on to do something else.

There's a control—[you have to] visualize this. The tracks split up in this marshaling yard, which is downhill from where the train is standing, and somewhere down at the bottom is a control room. The tracks are very much like a neural system, in that they all come together and sort of multiply as a [neuron does]. The person running the trains in the control room has levers and he can shift the tracks.

So car number 2,000 is let loose from the string and it runs downhill, and its destination is from Cleveland to Chicago. It's put on the Chicago track, which is one of 20 or 30 tracks parallel to each other. The trains are lined up for a specific location, so the bound-for-Chicago track gets all the cars from straight at the top of the hill bound for Chicago; the cars destined for St. Louis go on another track; the cars destined for Denver go on another track [and so on]. When the train for Chicago is made up, all linked together, the engine backs in, takes it and puts it on the main line, and when it gets to Chicago, there's another marshaling yard, and it's rerouted and that kind of thing [is reported].

All right, my ideas—how my mind works is that each railroad car is an idea, a complete idea, or a portion of an idea, i.e.: a color, a texture, all elements. The train on the way to Chicago contains all my ideas, this whole string, the whole string of ideas. It's going to affect what I'm working on, or what it is I want to work on, or what's in [progress]. It's not locked in because I can, while the train is in motion, I can pull out a car, insert another car [in its place], and not cause a train wreck.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: [My ideas] can be described as kinds of cars in a sequence; this line of trains. Like I said, one has color, one has shape, one has texture, and some of them have quirky things like carrots or asparagus. If I move asparagus down the line, it connects up with houses, and what's going to come of that?

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

MR. WINOKUR: Or if I move something else in the train and connect it up with something else or reconnect it or make a string of connections, how's that going to impact on the outcome? It's not that I don't know, but I'm sort of surprised at what comes of it all. In some cases I really have nothing in mind for an end. I know I'm going to make houses [with] asparagus but is it going to be tall, is it going to be large, is it going to be deep? Are asparagus going to be green or yellow or orange? I'll sort that out when I get there.

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

MR. WINOKUR: And as an Alfredian, there was an element of purist doctrine. This is what ceramics is. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: That might be one of the cars.

MR. WINOKUR: One of the cars may contain [a shipment of] heresy.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.]

MR. WINOKUR: Why not?

MS. RIEDEL: I think it's very helpful in the way you described it yesterday morning too was that there were all these trains coming into this yard from all these different directions.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: And that you could reroute them. Simultaneously, cars were moving in all different directions, going off in all sorts of different tracks, heading out in all sorts of different directions, and that you could do all this without having any kind of wreck.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. As long as I think enough of the piece to set it up in a gallery and show it to people, it's not a wreck. . . . I don't show the wrecks.

MS. RIEDEL: It's interesting to me, too, that so much of what we're talking about really seems to come from images and how strong of a visual thinker you seem to be and how important that is. You made the distinction while we had the recorder off about the difference between visual thinking and intellectual thinking.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, it's a whole world of difference. It's all in the brain, which is probably why most people don't separate it. But the brain is like a muscle, and if you exercise it, it will grow, which is maybe why somebody becomes a musician and somebody becomes a painter. Genetically, we're all alike; behaviorally, we become who we are. We are who we are because our society made us this way. It's all society, parents, relatives, brothers and sisters, location, climate.

MS. RIEDEL: Personal experience.

MR. WINOKUR: Personal experience, well, that's all in there.

MS. RIEDEL: You told a story yesterday morning about the drawing [done] by the young girl. Do you want to tell that story?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. *The Innocent Eye*, I think it may be in there. I don't know where I got it from, but there's this drawing of a little tiny house. The little girl who made the drawing was asked by the psychologist [to tell him] about the drawing. The little girl [thought for a while and] said, "This is a drawing to be looked at; it's not a story."

I think there's a tendency to want a story when you [look at a picture]. Maybe if you can hold back, if you're really of a mind and could hold back from jumping to the story, which is probably hard and takes [a great restraint], the idea of concluding that you're in the presence of a chair is very easy.

It doesn't take any great intelligence, especially if you're tired; whereas with a good deal of training, you can hold back from coming to that conclusion and see the parts—[line,] form, color, shape

space, et cetera. Perhaps by leaving something out, the chair takes on another connotation. So if you leave windows out of a house, it takes on a sense of being ominous, of being mystical.

MS. RIEDEL: Was it very intentional that so few of your houses had windows or that they had very few?

MR. WINOKUR: I don't have any windows in some of them; sometimes I have windows and a porch.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: The houses without any extraneous things are very different.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: [If you know anything about ceramics,] if you build a house and it's all enclosed, it needs a hole [or it will] explode in the kiln. So my logic was, okay, it's got to have a hole in it, but maybe let's put the hole on the front [instead of underneath] and make it small. Then it becomes a kind of focal point, a contrast in relationship to the hole; with the hole there [it becomes a contrast]. It takes on visual connotations beyond just the physical necessity. You need to open it up. If I go a little further, I can open it up and put figures inside. One thing sort of leads to another, leads to another, but it's not a straight line.

MS. RIEDEL: Right. This line of thinking, in particular about the chair, reminds me of an exercise Don Reitz described giving his students. He would ask them to create something out of clay. And then they needed to be able to use this thing to transport liquid from someplace to someplace else or from the table to their mouth or something. I'm paraphrasing it, but he described it probably at considerably more length than that. What you realized at the end of this is he was talking about a cup or a bowl, but he didn't want to label it.

MR. WINOKUR: You don't label it, because if you label it, you immediately [modify the] image.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: So you put off the visualization or separate it from its intellectual connotation.

MS. RIEDEL: To create greater opportunity, more potential, whatever that might be.

MR. WINOKUR: What I'm doing, if I can take the liberty, is creating a conveyance for your imagination—for the viewer's imagination, okay? [Good!] I think we got something. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, that resonates. Great.

MR. WINOKUR: So it's no longer functional in the sense of drinking out of it. It's functional in the sense of the viewer's imagination, and I can lead them. I can play with the form and lead their imagination, direct it, and sometimes it's necessary to add something on like a ladder or a carrot or a lemon or a pear.

MS. RIEDEL: Or a title.

MR. WINOKUR: Or a title to direct their imagination.

MS. RIEDEL: It seems that series must have been important in this [line] of thinking too.

MR. WINOKUR: Series?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes. . . .

MR. WINOKUR: The reality is that the thing in the museum is one of a series, and if you go back to the artist's studio, there may be 50 or 60 paintings that [were made then], and it may not be the last one. The masterpiece may be one of the first ones [or at the end of the series].

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: But you work in series, particularly in clay because you can't erase. You fire it, it's fixed. You're stuck with it. You can't tear it apart; you can't remove the glaze and put on another. Well, you can, I suppose, but rather than deal with that, you make 15 and you try various glazes; you try various drawings. You mix them, you match them, and you fire them all. And then you go through them and you pick the best one or the best two. You throw a lot of it away.

MS. RIEDEL: Were you ever tempted to paint on them afterwards or to use lower fire glazes afterwards?

MR. WINOKUR: I've thought of it. This whole machine out there—we've got an electric kiln. I could put something in the kiln with low-temperature glazes on it and see what happened there, but I've never reached a point where I felt curious enough to try it. What I'm working with, what works for me, [I tend to] leave well enough alone. The reality is if you think about everything that's ever been made in ceramics and the temperatures and colors and everything, one person can't possibly do it all. You pick [and choose]. A segment, and your life's work [lies] within those parameters. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] Do you see your work in terms of episodes or in terms of series? I mean functional and nonfunctional, of course, but do you think about it as figurative and houses and asparagus? Do you break it down like that?

MR. WINOKUR: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, I didn't think so.

MR. WINOKUR: Let me back up a little. I've got a kiln to fill.

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

MR. WINOKUR: It used to be bigger. It's [now] half the size it used to be, but that means I have to make half as much to fill the new kiln as I did for the old kiln. There was a lapse of time; it took longer to fill the old kiln. It just took time to make stuff and it took time to make the work to fill it. I could fill it with pots; I could fill it with figures; I could fill it with houses—I could fill it with a whole bunch of stuff. It took maybe nine weeks to fill the large kiln, between teaching and everything

else. It could take me as much as nine months [to fill and fire it], and in that interim my interest [would] wander.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, so you might not fire for nine months?

MR. WINOKUR: When I was teaching, yes.

MS. RIEDEL: But you'd be working on work all that time to fill the kiln.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting, yes.

MR. WINOKUR: Which did I make first? Was there any working sequence, yes, but once it was in the kiln, that sequence was lost. I did remember which I did first, and it didn't matter, because I was concerned with what looked good out of it all. . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Well, it's interesting, too, because that's an especially long time, it would seem, to respond to finish a work, if there's a nine-month lag when you're working, and then to see what the finished pieces looks like.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, it has certain attributes.

MS. RIEDEL: What are those?

MR. WINOKUR: You have this little gem of an idea, and you fall in love with it, and so you make it. But by the time it gets fired and comes back to you, the little thrill, the orgasm, is gone. It's over and done, and there's this result, and you get to look at it objectively, no longer enthralled by the novelty of the idea.

So there's that positive quality about it. But even in this new kiln, which is half the size, there's still that. I don't feel I'm killing a child if I throw something away, because making it was long enough ago that there's no longer an attachment [to it].

MS. RIEDEL: Right. That makes me think of that T. S. Eliot poem, "Between the emotion and the creation, between the call and the response, falls the shadow."

MR. WINOKUR: *Wasteland* [1922].

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes. That's a long time.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, when I was teaching, I had—I taught at Tyler. Talking about Tyler, it's sort of out of context, but we went downtown, basically up in Elkins Park, away from the university, and had great advantages. They didn't watch you; they didn't see what you were doing. [At Tyler you had a degree of independence.]

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, take your time.

MR. WINOKUR: The structure was set up so you taught Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, or

you taught Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, and if there were two people in the department, you could swap back and forth. But basically, you were either off Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday or Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, so you had a block [of time] to do your own work, because it was a professional art school and that's what artists need.

The art faculty needed it. It wasn't academic; we didn't conform to the university schedule. For example, I taught Monday. Sunday was prep time, preparation for Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. Wednesday was the overlap, so everybody on the staff, all the faculty, was there on Wednesday, and that's when they had committee meetings, department meetings, that kind of thing. . . . On Sunday, I did a sort of Julia Child's demonstration thing.

MS. RIEDEL: For your students?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. On Sunday I would prep notes. That didn't take too long, but if I was going to do a throwing demonstration, it became very difficult to wait for something to dry so you could trim it.

MS. RIEDEL: I see.

MR. WINOKUR: So I would throw it here and let it set up; I'd keep it under plastic. And then I would get down to Tyler and do the throwing part and put the freshly thrown stuff off to one side and let the hard stuff out from under the plastic and do the trimming. I'd compressed the drying time for the students.

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

MR. WINOKUR: When my week was done, I was back here. Essentially, what I'm getting at here is I had three days to myself.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: Domesticity being what it is, maybe I had two days to myself and a day to do errands and deal with stuff around the house. I had two fairly good days . . . to fill a kiln that's three foot by three foot by three foot. That's 27 cubic foot, give or take, so it could take a whole semester to get enough work to fill it. That's what, eight weeks, six weeks?

MS. RIEDEL: So things would just sit around, leather, hard-bone dry, and then you would glaze them and fire them.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. I would bisque them.

MS. RIEDEL: Oh, so you would bisque at this point?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes.

MS. RIEDEL: Because yesterday we were talking about salting and it was just—

MR. WINOKUR: Well, the traditional saltings were once-fired, but I'm not traditional. I'm salting, but not traditionally speaking.

MS. RIEDEL: So all of these pieces are bisque?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, and then I apply glazes.

MS. RIEDEL: That's helpful to clarify.

MR. WINOKUR: Colors, liners, et cetera.

MS. RIEDEL: Did you spend a lot of time formulating the glazes for these pieces? Because the colors are so saturated; they're very rich, deep colors.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, the glazes I use now are an accumulation of 40 years of ceramics. I'm still using a few Alfred glazes; the slips and engobes are from Alfred, but then I've picked up other stuff and made substitutions along the way. I don't know where I picked up the engobe that turns orange, but I think it had to do with [Patty Warashina's] husband, Fred Bauer. It's actually F.B. engobe, Fred Bauer orange. And the Shaner glazes, we use those up on the farm.

MS. RIEDEL: I worked in a studio in San Francisco 20 years ago that had Shaner red.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, it was a staple. Prior to Rhodes, when I was at Alfred, there weren't very many books.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: One's aesthetic style was hinged on your research, and so a lot of people were pretty close about it.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: At Alfred, glaze research was done by the whole class, undergraduates. . . . Each person in the class had an assignment, and therein each person did variations on that assignment. Then when it was all fired, it was all set out on the table, and you could go through it all and write down what appealed to you, take it back and do color runs on it, or maybe the color runs were the next assignment. It was committee research, but a lot of ground was covered, [more] than an individual [could do].

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: And over the years, books started coming out [to fill the void]. One of the reasons I stopped teaching ceramic materials was that they can [now] get it [all] off a computer. They get prepared glazes; they [don't] have to do the research.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: Or you can buy it [and get it] fired at the local ceramics supply [store]. . . .

Miriam Shapiro said, "Oh, you want to ask your grandmother, if your grandmother did ceramic decorating as a hobby. She had all this information; use it. . . . You don't have to reinvent the wheel."

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: Research your past, research your history, research your ancestors. The neat thing in Asia, China, Japan, too, is what's called ancestor worship. But they believe that if you don't have ancestors, you don't exist, because you are the [totality] of your past. I don't know what that has to do with anything; it just came to me. [Laughs.]

MS. RIEDEL: So a couple of final questions about the work that I think still need to be addressed. We've certainly covered, I think quite clearly, the fact that the form was of primary importance to you, but it wasn't what form it was; that was secondary. I do want to ask, given this big transition after many years of focusing on the house and the shrines, what prompted the transition back to the figure after all those years?

MR. WINOKUR: At some point I had these houses with a little hole; I was inviting you to imagine what was inside.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: The next logical step in my mind was open it up and let you see what's inside.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: Initially they were shrines, houses within houses.

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

MR. WINOKUR: I used to do figures as a student and I was pretty good at it. Put some figures inside and I could tell a story.

MS. RIEDEL: And that would be something like *My First Annunciation* [2004], a piece like that.

MR. WINOKUR: Northern Renaissance painting?

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes, with the story working its way through.

MR. WINOKUR: You could read it like a comic strip.

MS. RIEDEL: Sure.

MR. WINOKUR: It involved a church, and you [could] see what was going on inside the church [because] the painter removed the wall; you could see [into the church where] figures were interacting with one another.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: That's a painting. [I thought, "But] I can do that." So I opened the houses up and I put figures in. Initially they weren't figures. There were houses in houses; there was a Madonna of Guadalupe. I was real tentative about it, but one thing led to another, and the figures inside [grew].

MS. RIEDEL: There was also that sense of humor [surfacing] again. I'm thinking of *The Fox on Top of the Chicken Coop* [*Fox on the Henhouse Roof*, 2004], pieces like that, *The Drunken Horse* [1998].

MR. WINOKUR: I wanted to introduce narrative.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: Here and there I would—I have an annunciation that I don't show very often, but it shows Gabriel giving Mary the Good News. It's funny, but I'm reticent to show it.

MS. RIEDEL: Why?

MR. WINOKUR: Oh, I don't know. Somebody [might] get angry. . . . There are little flashes, sparks; [you] don't know where they came from. Just suddenly it was in that moment, and it was there, and that's what happens when you're working.

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

MR. WINOKUR: But anyway, to answer your question, yes, there's a transition. The houses opened up, and if they were open, I could do things inside. Initially I had this *St. Francis of the Ladder* [*The Shrine of St. Francis of the Ladder*, 2004]. I opened it up and I treated it like an altar. I put a figure inside and then thought, "What am I going to do about this other side?" It's really this monolith; it's blank. I'll put a ladder back there because a ladder hanging on a wall is kind of a nice image. So once the ladder was back there, it became *St. Francis of the Ladder*.

MS. RIEDEL: The ladder was interesting because you'd actually seen that image of ladders hanging horizontally in your travels, but also metaphorically, as a symbol, it was compelling.

MR. WINOKUR: There's this guy who's just became the poet laureate [M. S. Merwin, poet laureate 2010-11]. But he has a book of poems called something of the ladders [*The Carrier of Ladders*, 1970]. Somebody met a man carrying a ladder and it was a good day for ladders; it's very recent. I was impressed with this business of using a ladder in a poem context.

MS. RIEDEL: Do you read much poetry?

MR. WINOKUR: I read whatever comes to me, as it were.

MS. RIEDEL: It seems like you read a lot.

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, I read a lot. Actually, I prefer novels as opposed to technical journals.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] I'm sure.

MR. WINOKUR: Steven, my oldest son, reads technical journals. I think, how can you read that stuff? He gobbles it up.

MS. RIEDEL: Are there any novels in particular that have been significant over time? We talked about *The Catcher in the Rye* earlier.

MR. WINOKUR: *The Medium is the Message* [Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, 1967]. *The Conduct of Life* by Lewis Mumford [1960]. Let's see, *Symbolism* [Alfred North Whitehead, *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect*, 1927]. I'll grab a few that are just hanging. God, there's the—

MS. RIEDEL: Did you read those Paul Klee notebooks?

MR. WINOKUR: Parts of them, I think, because—I don't know if I read it so much or I was told. I pick up things without—I know plots [when] I don't know the name of the movie.

I remember there was this bit about Klee, who lived in Switzerland and he went up to Germany. He intentionally went to Germany to seek out a critic and he befriended the critic. They became pals. But he did this intentionally. The critic introduced him to a gallery. The gallery wouldn't have taken him if it weren't for the critic, because the gallery owner knew that the critic would write favorably about Klee's work. It was an arrangement, which basically got Klee what he wanted—exposure.

MS. RIEDEL: Interesting.

MR. WINOKUR: We think of that as immoral. [Clement Greenberg,] from the Marlborough Gallery, had to do with the Abstract Expressionists. It turned out he was a critic, a major critic, I think at that time, which was the '50s, who promoted—wrote favorably about the Abstract Expressionists.

MS. RIEDEL: Right.

MR. WINOKUR: He was also a part-owner in Marlborough Gallery. Yes, Clement Greenberg. But it's strange because it's considered unethical. Not that it hasn't ever been done; it was how Klee got along.

MS. RIEDEL: It was considered a business move, I would think. It's a savvy political business move.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, yes, but there's an interesting—we were talking about East and West yesterday, about how art is viewed in the West [and how it is viewed in the East], I think the term is *guanxi*. In China and Japan it's the giving of gifts. You go visit somebody, you bring a gift; you give your teachers gifts. You want an introduction to somebody to do business with, you give a gift to the person making the introduction. And it's all considered part of the social structure; it's the social contract.

If you do that, if you give a gift in this country to seek favor, it's considered a bribe. Bribes are illegal, so there's really a definite difference about how the social process is carried on and what's considered [acceptable]. [What is considered acceptable in the East] and the West and how things are conducted [varies].

At any rate, I don't know how I got [here].

MS. RIEDEL: Well, we were coming around from the evolution from the houses to the figures.

MR. WINOKUR: Okay.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, and we talked about people being inside the houses and the shrines, which is, I imagine, why so many of them have a religious significance to them—the *Annunciation* or *St. Francis*—as they came from material shrines.

MR. WINOKUR: And [the fact that] I know there's people out there who will understand it; there's an audience. To a certain extent it's showbiz; I know all about showbiz. [Laughs.] Showing your work is showbiz.

MS. RIEDEL: After all these years, you still are so committed to ceramics. Would you discuss—or are you not?

MR. WINOKUR: I knew this question was coming.

MS. RIEDEL: [Laughs.] I hope that doesn't invalidate it.

MR. WINOKUR: No.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes.

MR. WINOKUR: On a very basic level, it's all I can do. I really don't know. I mean, I can build a house, but in my mind that's all I'm trained for; that's all I've focused on. I certainly cannot do stocks and bonds; I'd probably be terrible at public relations. I don't know what is the most diplomatic thing to say at any given moment.

MS. RIEDEL: Is there something in particular about clay as a medium, though, that has held your attention over all this time, that it does—

MR. WINOKUR: It feels [so nice to touch it].

MS. RIEDEL: Okay.

MR. WINOKUR: You put your hand in wet clay on a hot day, [there's] a tactile kind of quality about it; it feels nice. You open the kiln up and take a piece out and think, "God, did I do that? Aren't I wonderful?" I don't know how else to describe why I'm still doing it. [There is] certainly enough of a reward there to keep me at it, one way or another.

MS. RIEDEL: Well, what about your work in particular? This is the final question I have. What about the work in particular matters to you?

MR. WINOKUR: God, I don't know, that it's received well? That somebody would [think] to write about it? . . .

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes. I make this stuff [and I really] have no sense of what people out there think about what I do; I really don't. Sometimes somebody says, "Oh, you're awesome." I think, "God, really?" I cannot go any further with this. [It's strange, but I think,] "Who would want what I make for a gift?"

MS. RIEDEL: Well, clearly, it's in collections all over, so somebody must see something.

MR. WINOKUR: Well, collections are somehow different; collections are impersonal.

MS. RIEDEL: Really?

MR. WINOKUR: It's an institution.

MS. RIEDEL: Or a private collection, somebody's building a collection based on pieces.

MR. WINOKUR: . . . There's subtle differences in my mind.

MS. RIEDEL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So that's important, is it? That somebody is drawn to it and responds to it?

MR. WINOKUR: Oh, I'm flattered as hell. You have no idea how up I am about your being here. [They laugh.] Somebody's paying attention.

MS. RIEDEL: Yes, yes.

MR. WINOKUR: There is that. We are all with ego, more or less, some more and some less.

MS. RIEDEL: Your work, though, often has a feeling that I think people respond to; many people may, because it does have a sense of soul, and you're using symbols that I think many of us can relate to; everybody relates to, in one way or another, the house, the figure.

MR. WINOKUR: If you're asking about the universality of [symbols]—

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

MR. WINOKUR: —a house is a universal [symbol].

MS. RIEDEL: And then is it gratifying for you that somebody is responding to your interpretation of that symbol?

MR. WINOKUR: Yes, it's nice that somebody can see it my way. [They laugh.]

MS. RIEDEL: A meeting of the eyes, if not always the minds.

MR. WINOKUR: [They laugh.] This is how I feel about stuff, and I'm sure it will change in an hour or so if you wait.

MS. RIEDEL: We'll turn this back on if we need to then. Thank you very much.

[END CD3 TR3.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

Last updated...January 6, 2008

